Reflections on an education policy paradox: how did social sector occupational groups get a dominant position in early education

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In the current situation when early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a part of the education system, more staff members than ever before have a social and health sector education while less than 20% are kindergarten teachers. In this article, the development, which has led to the current situation called ‘the education policy paradox’, is examined from different perspectives. In the article the molding of staff structure and factors having influenced how it has taken shape are described from the 1970’s to 2010’s, focusing on those who work as kindergarten teachers at ECEC-centres. The course of changes is examined through official documents and literature. The framework of the study is the tense relations between, on the one hand, social welfare administration and educational administration and, on the other hand, between universities and polytechnics in different phases of ECEC. The perspective of social welfare administration and the interests of trade unions appear to be emphasized in decision making concerning staff structure and the need of education of different occupational groups in ECEC settings. Due to the fact that ECEC was earlier under the administration of the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs and has only recently been transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the need of kindergarten teachers was not estimated in the same way as that of other teachers. As a consequence of this the intake of Kindergarten teacher students in universities was too small for a long time. At the same time, polytechnics expanded heavily, resulting in an imbalance between university-trained kindergarten teachers and social pedagogues (polytechnic) working at ECEC-centres. The impact of certain influential nationwide action research projects on the formation of staff structure has also been analysed in the article.

The code of joy: children’s dialogically and culturally shaped moments of joy in the daily lives of day care centres

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The article focuses on children’s shared and co-narrated joy in the context of day care centres. The article does not approach joy from a viewpoint of individual psychology but rather as a relational phenomenon that takes place in between humans. The theoretical and methodological framework draws on Erving Goffman’s frame analysis, Martin Buber’s dialogical philosophy, and a narrative approach. The research material consists of video-observations and diary notes gathered in groups of children between two and six years. The study shows the emerging and multi-level nature of children’s shared joy. On the one hand, children’s joy appears as unexpected, surprising, and dialogically constructed. On the other hand, cultural norms and rules shape children’s moments of joy. The code of joy appears as
children’s capacity to balance between the two extremes.

The digitalisation of early childhood education and the generational order in change? Tensions between early childhood educators and children in the midst of digital technology

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There has recently been a rapid change in the practices of day care centres due to the availability of new digital technology. Especially tablet computers have become part of the daily practices and pedagogy of early childhood education (ECE). In this article, we highlight the tensions created by the use of tablet computers in early childhood education as the children and the ECE teachers strive to navigate the altered technological environment together as well as separately. These tensions seem to have an effect on the generational order within ECE institutions: in technological competence and identity, the children appear as the more capable and competent generation. This is a finding that highlights the interconnectedness of the use of digital technologies and the generational order.