

PAPER 5a & 5b

Children and Youths in Need of Special Support - in research and legislation

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Abstract

This paper is the fifth in the series of fourteen electronic publications about the Danish research project “Action competences in pedagogical work with socially endangered children and youths – effort and effect” (The ASP-project).

The ASP-project uses the term “socially endangered children and youths” to refer to its studied target group. This term is one of more ways of referring to children who receive special attention from adults working in day-care institutions, residential homes and other administrative organs within this field of profession. Other terms in use are “disadvantaged children and youths”, “children in placement”, “impossible children” or “problem children” etc.

Legislation tends to refer to this group of children as “children in need of special support” and with reference to this term, guidelines for the services provided for socially endangered children are issued. Moreover, the ‘label’ forms the foundation the way publicly employed workers who encounter and interact with these children should act. When the legislation is changed it affects the social work the professionals do with these children. For that reason, this paper explores the nature of these legislative changes in the recent 15 years and it examines more thoroughly what is meant by *disadvantaged children* in the Danish legislation. Furthermore, the paper presents and discusses 1) how the national legislation describes the appropriate organisation of efforts that is based on this perception of disadvantaged children and 2) how the legislation is based on the research. (5a)

For approximately a decade the term *social inheritance* was used as the overall concept for governmental research in this area; however, in 2003 field analyses turned the definition very broad and imprecise and, as a consequence, the definition rarely occurs in successive analyses. Moreover, the imprecise definition places great demands on the independence and self-orientation of social educators and pedagogical practitioners. A number of research publications do, however, present central advices and directions for the professionals and their work of identifying and supporting socially endangered children and youths. The author discusses, that the research is often referred to and discussed in specialist journals, at educational institutions and in various fora for social workers. Consequently, this area is characteristic of a very limited critical research mass.

As an attempt to provide a critical view, this paper offers an overview of a number of surveys. The aim is to examine how this type of research define and describe children and young in need of special support and how this influence the way the legislation is built. (5b)

[Click here for full text in Danish \(5a\)](#)

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