

PAPER 9

Efforts and Effects on Children and Young in Residential Homes - a literature review

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Abstract

This paper is the ninth 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 paper is a review of previous research concerning “what works” in social pedagogical work with institutionalised children and adolescents in residential care. Much international research on residential care indicates that efforts aimed at children and adolescents in such institutions are likely to have an effect if they are multi-faceted, contextual and adopt a holistic perspective. In fact, the greatest challenge seems to be the transition between the institutional life and everyday life outside the institution both during and after the placement.

By examining the collected results and experiences from primarily international studies and research reviews, this literature review seeks to identify what is pointed to as most effective in pedagogical efforts targeting socially endangered children and youths in residential care. Questions that are sought answered are: What are the areas of focus in research? Which intentions are most influential according to research? Which recommendations are most appropriate for future pedagogical efforts?

Socially endangered children and youths in residential care constitute a highly complex target group. Moreover, the children struggle with very diverse problems and they may be in care due to a number of different reasons or they may live in various types of heterogeneous residential institutions. This review is an attempt to define and delineate vulnerability and being socially endangered seen in relation to children and adolescents. The first part of the paper discusses research on a wide sample of children and adolescents within the mentioned target group. The second part, i.e. the description and analysis of the actual literature study, takes a closer look at children and young who, as far as possible, match the target group of the sub-study on residential care within the ASP-project.

Overall, the review points to four types of interventions which results suggest are worth improving. Changes can profitably be directed at intervention by 1) creating a correlation between the institutional life and society, 2) improving interdisciplinary collaboration between family, school, spare time, institution and administrations, 3) cooperating and involving the family in the treatment and placement and 4) ensuring aftercare, i.e. the establishment of resources in the child’s home environment to which s/he returns after ended treatment.