Documents about children and their implications for the transition from Kindergarten to School

*Kira Saabye Christensen

DPU, Aarhus, Denmark

This presentation is based on an anthropological Ph.D. project (2017-2019) that explores how the transition from kindergarten to school is organized, practiced and entangled within norms, expectations and understandings of children, childhood, school-readiness, and smooths transitions and how children experience, handle and are able to become pupils in the school context.

Methodically the project is based on an ethnographic fieldwork (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1995), interviews with the professionals in both kindergarten and school (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) and interviews with the group of children, I have followed during their transition in the spring and summer off 2017 (Anderson, 2004, Carpiano, 2009, Kampmann, 2017).

Theoretically the project is inspired by the institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005, 2006), the sociology of childhood (James, Jenks and Prout 1998), and the pedagogical anthropology (Gulløv et.al. 2017, Gilliam & Gulløv 2012, Löfgren & Ehn, 2006).

The presentation at the conference 'Childhood and Materiality' will be based on my interest in a briefcase that caught my attention in my fieldwork. The briefcase contained a number of descriptions of the children’s skills and needs. The documents were made by the professionals in the kindergarten, and were sent to the school before the children started school. As part of my fieldwork I have been interested in 'the life’ of this briefcase in the school, i.e. how and when the briefcase was used, where it was located, and what kind of value the professionals gave the briefcase and the documents in it. In the presentation, theis fieldwork will be used to demonstrate some of the hopes, ambitions, and understandings of relevant knowledge, good transitions, and school-readiness that the transition work are entangled in. Also the fieldwork will be used to show how these understandings influence the children’s transition and their possibilities to be become appropriate pupils. In the presentation, the briefcase will be understood as a 'social technology' (Foucault 1988) that not only offers solutions, but also support the creation of some of the problems the technology are intended to solve.

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