

Legitimate suffering – Young people’s psychiatric language between recognition and exclusion

By Manuel Gallego Zinckernagel

Young people in Denmark report increasing levels of psychological distress alongside a marked rise in psychiatric diagnoses. This article explores how diagnostic and psychiatric language function as strategies of legitimation for young people navigating late-modern welfare and education systems. Drawing on Foucault’s concept of biopower and later work by Rose and Hamre, I show how health, normality and productivity have become central governing ideals, and how access to support is increasingly tied to diagnostic categories. Empirically, the article is based on a digital ethnographic study of TikTok videos and comment threads in which young people talk about diagnoses, neurodivergence and mental health. The analysis introduces the concept of a “normalisation paradox” and develops the notion of a “psychiatrisation dispositif” to describe how self-diagnosis and psychiatric language become flexible tools for claiming legitimacy, belonging and relief from moral blame. Finally, the article discusses these implications, arguing that rather than moralising young people’s “diagnostic talk”, professionals need to recognise it as a rational adaptation to existing structures, and work to expand the linguistic and institutional space for experiencing and expressing distress beyond diagnostic labels.

The psychology of the community – Visibility in the social landscape

By Klara Scheuer

In this article, I discuss how psychiatric diagnoses can impede and even harm well-being and development in children and young people, if the root of the problem is mainly to be found in the dynamics of the group in the community, in the daycare centre or school. I utilise the term: “The psychology of the community” to bring focus on another type of intervention. My work has its roots in social constructivism, social psychology, community psychology and sociology, and I introduce the philosophers Buber and Honneth, in order to focus on the importance of recognition

and social visibility. This calls for a new organisation of the collaboration between daycare centres, schools and psychologists working in PPR (Educational Psychological Services) in the municipality. This form of intervention is proactive in the form of ongoing supervision and focuses on having the leader participate and play an active role in the supervision of the teams.

When children *want to*, but *can't* handle being in school – a qualitative study of parents' experiences of worrying school absences of children with autism spectrum disorder

By Katrine Straarup Fritsen & Lise Bagger Hviid

This study investigates causes and maintaining factors of school absenteeism problems (SAP) of children and teens with ASD, as well as how interventions targeting absenteeism can be effective. Through semi-structured interviews with eight parents of six children with absenteeism and ASD, half of whom had participated in Back2School (B2S), and the other half in treatment as usual (TAU), the study suggests that these factors are multifaceted and systemic and involve interactions between individual, familial, school and societal elements. Challenges such as sensory overstimulation, lack of teacher knowledge of ASD, and insufficient structure in school contribute to absenteeism. Additionally, late diagnosis, lack of security in relations at school and inadequate systemic support exacerbate the difficulties faced by these children/teens and their families, highlighting the need for earlier and more tailored interventions. The study's implications include 16 general focal points for intervention and present adjustments to B2S to better accommodate the needs of children/teens with ASD.

Learning readiness and security in public school communities – a description of a co-creation project that supports attachment

By Niels Peter Rygaard

Fewer Danish students in public schools succeed in passing the 9th grade exam. As research suggests a link between attachment security and learning capacity, this decrease may be linked to a rise in the number of students with mental health challenges. The paper describes a pilot study: the cross-professional attachment-based program Security, Thriving and Learning, developed from 2023 to 2025 in cooperation between the Danish Fairstart Foundation, the school administration, and two schools in a low-income municipality. The discussion pertains to an ongoing debate on how pedagogical-psychological counselling units (PPR), nurses, and social workers can shift some weight from individual counselling and diagnosis to working with safe environments in schools.

Easily accessible treatment and parenting course in Educational Psychological Services (PPR)

By Merete Brund Sundwall

The article describes the implementation of parenting courses as part of the easily accessible treatment services within the framework of Educational Psychological Services (PPR), with a focus on Ballerup Municipality. The background is a national initiative aimed at providing quick and relevant support to children and young people experiencing psychological distress. The parenting course, *The Incredible Years*, was tested as a preventive measure and later replaced by *Invest in Play*, which is culturally adapted to Danish conditions. The article emphasises that children's well-being depends on the relationships and contexts they are part of, including the family. The article explores the effects on parents and children through practical observations. The parenting courses strengthen parental competencies and create new opportunities for action in everyday life, thereby enhancing children's skills. The article argues that PPR's work with parenting courses represents a meaningful and holistic approach to preventing distress and promoting inclusive communities. Parenting courses can be seen as an extension of PPR's services, contributing to the ongoing work of experimenting with and developing practices to address the complex issues PPR addresses. Observations and reflections from practice support the need for continued development and adaptation of these interventions.

Children's experiences of teacher support in suicide prevention at school

By Fatima Osman

This article explores how children perceive the role of teachers in suicide prevention within the school context. Drawing on qualitative interviews with three adolescent girls who have experienced psychological distress and suicidal thoughts, the study uses a critical psychological framework to examine how relationships with teachers shape children's ability to seek help. The findings show that emotionally available and predictable teachers foster trust and agency in vulnerable students. In contrast, when teachers appear distant or avoidant, children are more likely to remain silent. The article argues that suicide prevention cannot be reduced to policies or checklists but must include relational presence, empathy, and everyday engagement. Children's voices provide crucial insights into how school structures can either support or hinder meaningful help-seeking behaviour.

Opportunities for play and development in kindergarten – A qualitative study in a Danish daycare centre

By Laura Foldager Scharff, Andrea Brun Tengs & Sille Schandorph Løkkegaard

This article explores preschool children's opportunities for play and development through a qualitative study based on participant observations in a Danish kindergarten. The theoretical framework draws on cultural-historical psychology, Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (1978), and contemporary Danish play theories by Winther-Lindqvist (2017; 2020) and Sommer (2020). The empirical findings show that play is facilitated and supported by staff, who navigate within the institutional framework, while children's play also influences the institutional frame. The article discusses the role and legitimacy of child play today from a research and societal perspective in terms of play serving a learning objective and/or play being the purpose in itself. Finally, the article's findings are intended to offer inspiration for pedagogical staff and management on how play in daycare can be supported, nurtured and given space to unfold.

Embodiment in pedagogy education

By Aske Glindvad Nørgaard

This article presents a project conducted at University College of Northern Denmark (UCN), where pedagogy students engaged with developmental psychology concepts through embodied learning in their coursework. The article critiques the prevailing theoretical, academic, and top-down approach to teaching in the pedagogy programme and explores an alternative, embodied method for teaching theoretical content. Using hermeneutic phenomenology, the study investigates how pedagogy students experience theoretical concepts through physically grounded exercises. Empirical data were collected through experiential descriptions, video observations, and unstructured interviews. The findings demonstrate how theoretical concepts can be embodied in the movement and drama studio, accompanied by ongoing academic reflection. These concepts take on new meaning and significance through students' lived experiences and embodied understanding. The article concludes by advocating for a broader integration of this embodied approach to learning in the future of pedagogy education.

Epilepsy and cognitive consequences in school children

By Camilla Skødt Bonde

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological disorders in childhood and often affects more than just seizure activity. Even children who are seizure-free may experience hidden cognitive difficulties that impact learning, attention, and social interaction in school settings. Recent Danish research documents that children with epilepsy perform significantly worse in national academic tests than their peers, regardless of seizure severity. These findings underline the importance of early identification and interdisciplinary collaboration. This article outlines key risk factors and cognitive profiles associated with childhood epilepsy and provides specific recommendations for PPR professionals and school staff. By tailoring educational support and promoting awareness, schools can help children with epilepsy reach their full developmental and academic potential. Epilepsy is much more than seizures.