The Dehumanization of Child Protective Services

Rikke Wezelenburg
August 2014
Nordic Welfare

Bureaucratic Welfare

Child Protective Services

Relational welfare
Bureaucratic Welfare

Child Protective services
Child Protective services
Authority social workers

Time spent:

• 82% on meetings and administration
• 18 % with the families and collaborators
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LEAN-ification of Nordic welfare
### “Shared Language”

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Definition of activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>B1-1</td>
<td>To eat</td>
<td>To take food up to your mouth and eat, to cut or break food into pieces and use eating tools (knife, fork, spoon) when food is served</td>
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<tr>
<td>B1-2</td>
<td>To drink</td>
<td>To take liquid up to your mouth and drink, to mix or stir liquids and use drinking tools (straw, sippy cup) when the liquid is served</td>
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<td>B1-3</td>
<td>To bathe</td>
<td>To wash/dry the whole body with the use of water, soap and towel</td>
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<td>B1-6</td>
<td>To dress and undress</td>
<td>To put on and take off body-worn assistive, clothes and footwear. Including selection of appropriate clothes (social contexts and weather)</td>
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Factors that contribute to alienation and objectification

- Fragmentation and specialization in Child Protective Services
- High Staff Turnover
- Lack of coordination and collaboration
- Standardization of practice:
  - Letter Templates
  - “The Outcome Star” (Forandringskompasset)
  - Journalizing systems and Procedure Manuals
ICS (Integrated Children’s System) Investigation Scheme, Socialstyrelsen DK
Rikke Wezelenburg Nordic Family Therapy Congress 2014
Investigation scheme
Case file
Flow chart
Source: © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise
Følelseshåndtering

Selvstændighed og egenomsorg

Relation mellem den unge og den unges forældre

Det private netværks samlede støtteniveau

Faglig udvikling

Sundhed

Fritidsaktiviteter og venner

Sociale kompetencer

Kriminalitet og bekymrende adfærd

Fravær

1. måling
2. måling
3. måling

Hvordan ser det endelige Forandringskompas ud?

Når du har udfyldt de 10 dimensioner i Forandringskompasset, vil vurderingerne blive bearbejdet i det kommende IT-systems effektmodul. Den grafiske model viser, hvordan barnet/den unge har udviklet sig over tid:

Rikke Wezelenburg Nordic Family Therapy Congress 2014

Copenhagen Municipality: Forandringskompasset
10 dimensions

1. Emotion Management
2. Independence and Self-care
3. Relation between child and parents
4. Level of overall support from the private network
5. School Performance
6. Absence from school
7. Health
8. Free time activities and friends
9. Social skills
10. Crime and worrisome behaviour
“Imagine to sit there and wave it (The Outcome Star) over their head every six month. It’s simply not fair.”

“You sit there and evaluate another person – with numbers.... All our children are here for a reason, but it's really important that you have some ethics... That you think about what it does to a person.”

"The number diagnoses and stigmatizes the child. It is the child who becomes the problem.”

From interviews made by Rikke Wezelenburg and research made by Rikke Liv Sahl Holst, Aalborg university, 2013
• “It feels like being stabbed in the back with your own words”

• “You cannot feel like a human in a room with a robot. There has to be another person”

• “On paper I’ve received a lot of help – but I never really got any support”

Statements from families meeting a “faceless” Child Protection System
“I didn’t know that you folks cared so much for people. I thought you forgot all about us as soon as we went out the door.”
From workshop by D. Epston, Copenhagen 2014

“Sometimes we were so angry with you! But we always knew what you were thinking and where we had you and then things went well anyway”
Quotation from the parents of two children placed in foster care
Jag tror inte att det skulle finnas någon vetenskap alls utan intuition.

RITA LEVI MONTALCINI
(NOBELPRIS I MEDICIN 1986)
Inom partikelfysiken måste man övertyga en kommitté. Du ska då få dem att tro på din intuition. Men det är mycket svårt att förmedla bara en känsla.

Leon Lederman
(Nobelpris i Fysik 1988)
Five languages of suffering:

- Diagnostic language
- Moral language
- Religious language
- Existential language
- Political language

The mere formulation of a problem is often far more essential than its solution, which may be merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science.

Albert Einstein
(Nobelpris i Fysik 1921)
How to move from a Bureaucratic Welfare to a Relational Welfare?
Where – besides academic, professional and technical literature - have I found inspiration?

What keeps me on my professional toes?
The Life Programme

One worker’s engagement with a teenager on their caseload:

- 74% of their time was spent on administration
- 12% supporting the teenager indirectly through contact with other agencies
- 14% in the family home. The majority of this ‘direct’ time was spent collecting information and data to fulfil the reporting duties in the 74%.
”I had so many professionals telling me to sort things out, but they didn't have time to help me.”

"Every time someone knocked, it was another professional trying to give me grief. I stopped opening the front door.”

"In social service meetings, there could be 15 or 20 of them and it's so intimidating. I felt, I couldn't win."
"I got a bit of help and I realised, what I wanted and how I can be."

“When you feel that someone cares, then you care”
Bureaucratic welfare
Relational welfare

- Time reverse divided between computer and families (82% - 18% and 86% - 14%)
- Families being involved in deciding who is capable to support them – and how.
- More “Languages of suffering” than just the diagnostic language
Relational welfare

Elements of “love” and sympathy in the relationships between professionals and families.

“Love” defined as trust, respect, non-judgmentalism, solidarity and a willingness to share who you are.
Every great scientific truth goes through three stages. First, people say it conflicts with the Bible. Next they say it had been discovered before. Lastly they say they always believed it.

LOUIS AGASSIZ 1807–1873
Thank you

Rikke Wezelenburg

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