



International expert workshop

Parent-teacher partnerships – collaboration with families – parental participation:
relationships between ECEC institutions and families from the perspective of inequality research

Monday, 9th September 2019 – Public Lectures (Georg-Forster-Building, Room 01-611)

1:30 – 2:00 p.m.	Arrival at Georg-Forster-Building, First Floor, Room 01-611	
2:00 – 2:15 p.m.	Welcome & Opening <i>Tanja Betz & Sabine Bollig</i>	
2:15 – 3:15 p.m.	Public lecture by <i>Mathias Urban (Dublin City University, Ireland)</i> (E)utopia: The local, the global, and the imaginary in early childhood education and care	
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	Public lecture by <i>Dominik Krininger (Osnabrück University, Germany)</i> The family as a domain of struggle	
4:15 – 4:45 p.m.	Coffee Break	
4:45 – 5:45 p.m.	Public lecture by <i>Karen Ida Dannesboe (Aarhus University, Denmark)</i> Transgressing boundaries of families. The role of early childhood and care institution in promoting home learning in families	
5:45 – 6:45 p.m.	Public lecture by <i>Tanja Betz (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany) & Sabine Bollig (Trier University, Germany)</i> Partnerships in early childhood education and care – a Childhood Studies perspective	

All interested persons are welcome to attend the public lectures.

Admission is free, and registration is not required.

Mathias Urban (Dublin City University): (E)utopia: The local, the global, and the imaginary in early childhood education and care

Early childhood education is important, beneficial, and, if organised well, highly effective. This, in short, is the bottom line of a broad international consensus, and a conviction shared by educators, scholars and policy makers alike. With early childhood having gained a prominent place on national and international policy agendas, and globally increasing rates of participation, surely we have come a long way, and can tell a story of success?

But beyond the overall consensus critical questions arise: who, exactly, benefits from early childhood services? What, and who, are they important *for*? Fundamental concepts that underpin early childhood education are highly contested; they mean different things to different people: education, quality, participation – to name only three examples. Which values should orient early childhood education, who should provide the services, how can they be resourced, and whom should they be accountable to?

In my contribution I explore these and other questions from three vantage points: First, that early childhood education is an (inevitably) *local* practice. It *takes place* somewhere, between children and adults, is hands-on and concrete. Second, in a globalised world, these local practices no longer exist in isolation, as ideas, concepts and practices travel freely, and transnational actors influence the debate. Third, while early childhood education at both local and global levels take place in the *here and now*, it also provides the necessary space for utopia: to imagine and create the future for children, society, and the planet – based on children's rights, diversity, social justice and democracy.

Dominik Krinninger (Osnabrück University, Germany): The family as a domain of struggle

The talk takes up current developments as a phase of differentiated normalisation of public childcare. These developments, also described as "de-familialisation" (Lange 2010), change the relationships between families and ECEC-institutions. Important aspects here include differing orientations on the part of parents towards the well-being of their children and on attachment and education on the part of the institutions. Cooperation between parents and institutions, framed as partnership, is often addressed in research in such a way that parental commitment is put in relation to the childrens' academic achievement. Other contributions critically highlight the dominance of institutional perspectives in these cooperations. I will argue that the relationship between family and ECEC institutions is figured around the aspect of academic achievement – in programmes of partnership cooperation and beyond. Research on pre-school-aged childrens' learning considers the family as a learning environment for the development of required competences. Discourse-analytical approaches, on the other hand, criticise that families and parents in particular are either exposed to strong expectations of cooperation or become addressees of preventive-compensatory programmes. Against this background, I will advocate for more complexity in the struggle between system-affine and system-critical positions. In this sense research on the family's internal perspective can be an important complementary.

Karen Ida Dannesboe (Aarhus University, Denmark): Transgressing boundaries of families. The role of early childhood and care institution in promoting home learning in families

This paper explores how early childhood and care institutions intend to promote home learning in families in Denmark as a tool to improve small children's learning. In many western countries investment in small children are seen as crucial for the development of future citizens. This is also the case in Denmark. Denmark has a long tradition for early childhood education and care (ECEC) and 97 % of all children aged 3-6 attend ECEC institutions. In Danish ECEC institutions, children's social relations and play have been central aspects of the pedagogical work. However, since the 90'es there has been an increased political focus on learning in early childhood education and care institutions, and recently, ECEC institutions have been assigned with the task of improving children's learning at home. I will present some preliminary findings based on a small ethnographic fieldwork in Danish ECEC institutions. In this study I investigate pedagogues' use of home learning technologies (games, books, etc.) and how they collaborate, invite and instruct parents to create so-called 'learning situations' with their children as part of family life. The main question is how the use of such home learning technologies in collaboration with parents produce certain understandings of learning, childhood and parenthood and transgress or reconfigure the boundaries between families and ECEC institutions within the Danish welfare state. In a broader sense, the paper discusses the family as a learning context for the education of children and the construction of good parenthood.

Tanja Betz (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany) and Sabine Bollig (Trier University, Germany): Partnerships in early childhood education and care – a Childhood Studies perspective

In many countries, like in the case of Germany, parent-teacher partnerships in the child's best interest and increasing parental involvement in ECEC institutions have become established targets to improve the quality of practice in ECEC institutions. Hence, it is still easy to sum up research on these partnerships, especially from a critical stance. There are some studies on the ambiguities of partnership discourses, the struggling of parents and professionals in enacting those partnerships and also there are first critiques who claim that the promises of partnerships – to enhance children's well-being and learning and to compensate for social inequalities – are not only hard to reach. Instead, it seems that inequality is also very much reproduced along those 'partnerships'.

In this talk we will take those partnerships as a starting point to raise questions of family-day-care-relations and a good childhood from a childhood studies and inequality perspective. In particular, we will argue that the reproduction of inequalities within those partnerships is very much related to the complex nature of family and day care relations. To highlight those complexities analytically, we propose to take into account, first, that those partnerships are embedded in a multiply of representations of 'family' within ECEC organizations according to the multiple family-related functions of ECEC; second, that those multiple representations of families and family-day-care relations are simultaneously present within the complex socio-material web of practices which constitute ECEC organizations and not just within the actual events between parents and educators; and third, that children are very much part of those organizational doings of family and relationships/partnerships. The talk will discuss these foundations of the ongoing PARTNER study and outlines its research design and the research questions.