Pedagogy, governance and moral judgement

Abstract
This article wants to show how it influences pedagogues' judgement when models of governance are implemented in residences where children and young people are placed. Foucault’s concept of governmentality is used (Foucault, 1988) and explains how these models of governance result in pedagogues altering their conception of what a good pedagogue is and what they do. The article then argues for the existence of a correlation between implementation of models of governance and an influence on pedagogues’ judgement.

Over the last 10 years governance models have been implemented at residences which have given them a great degree of autonomy, but which also create competition among them. (Nørelykke, et al., 2011). These governance models have created a greater awareness among pedagogues of the connection between sound finances at the place of residence and the importance of delivering what is demanded by the public authority responsible for the placement. In this, plans of action (POAs) are a key tool. These are drawn up by the placing authority and define the task(s) the pedagogues must resolve in relation to each individual placed child. (Bjørn, 2010)

The plan of action is accompanied by a requirement that pedagogues must supply quantifiably expressed documentation regarding the goals contained therein. This must be submitted to the authority so that they can monitor how the initiatives the pedagogues deliver align with the goals the authority has outlined in the plan of action.

In this way, the pedagogues’ work is targeted through the models and the pedagogues become preoccupied with delivering what has been requested. And when one incorporates Arendt’s theory of judgement, there may be grounds for concern that this means that the judgement of the pedagogues

1. In Denmark, a pedagogue is a practitioner of pedagogy. In this paper we refer to a practitioner of social pedagogy: Social pedagogy describes a holistic and relationship-centred way of working in care and educational settings with people across the lifecourse.
may become shallow. They risk becoming ‘accountable’ rather than ‘responsible’ (Eide, 2012) and thereby focusing more on fulfilling the demands than on taking moral responsibility for the pedagogical practice they are a part of.

**Introduction**

The neoliberal government of the state over the last decades has brought great changes in the way pedagogical initiatives are planned and carried out in those residences where children are placed. A large municipal reform was carried out in Denmark in 2007. In its wake, a market rationality spread into new areas and “quasi” markets were created. This entailed a subdivision of larger organisations into smaller units with a certain autonomy who then needed to compete to attract clients by offering a good and efficient service. (Gregersen, 2013). These are artificially created markets within areas that were previously the responsibility of public sector providers.

As part of the neoliberal governance of the social educational field, ever more governance models were introduced at places of residence to ensure quality and efficiency in the educational work with children placed in out-of-home care. In line with the implementation of the governance models, new and more static boundaries were fixed for the pedagogues’ work.

According to Professor at University of Agder Solveig Botnen Eide, who conducts research into the evolution of welfare professions, this means that these professions have lost their autonomy, in that targets, regulations, procedures and quality criteria are now defined by other parties rather than the professionals themselves. (Eide, 2012).

Eide does not think that setting quality requirements is a novel development, but what is new is that the professionals to a lesser degree determine what the quality criteria are. And thus a sense of ownership in pedagogues is potentially diminished. In addition, the increased number of demands and procedures originating externally shrinks the space that formerly existed for professional assessment. Bureaucracy, governance and regulations and procedures dictated from above risk blunting the pedagogues’ thinking and judgement, which are crucial in an ethically responsible practice (Eide, 2012).

**Methodology**

The theory of scientific method for the project is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation of texts. Interpretation of meaning is the central theme. The purpose of an hermeneutic interpretation is to obtain a valid and general understanding of the meaning of a text. As Kvale and Brinkmann formulate it:

_Hermeneutics teaches qualitative researchers to analyse their interviews as texts and to look, for example, beyond the interview situation and pay attention to the contextual interpretation horizon conditioned by history and tradition_ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 81).
This is the approach we will adopt in relation to our interview material and the interviews have therefore been transformed to text via transcription, after which the meaning is extracted through a meaning condensation analysis strategy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The research question of the project is:

*What connections are there between judgement and governance intentions as well as practices linked to the work with plans of action at a residential home?*

To investigate this, we made eight semi-structured qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) with pedagogues and leaders at two residences in North Jutland.

**Power, governance and judgement**

In advanced liberal societies, governance is addressed to technologies for shaping self-government. French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) termed this governmentality (Foucault, 1988). The essence is that technologies of governance are employed that connect to the individual’s technologies of the self.

Technologies of the self are, according to Foucault, when individuals in order to achieve a specific goal, work to change themselves by, for example, consciously thinking and doing something differently (Foucault, 1988).

Something is introduced (technology of governance) that causes individuals to want something definite of their own volition (technology of the self). Later we will show how the BUM (a Danish acronym for *Bestiller, Udfører, Modtager* meaning Procurer, Performer, Recipient) model of governmentality and the young peoples’ plans of action can be interpreted as such technologies of governance. Foucault believes that power is embedded in a network of relations, that create, stimulate, activate and develop certain competences and/or certain actions in individuals. (Foucault, 1980)

The main principle in this concept of governmentality is *the conduct of conduct*. (Dean, 2006) (Dean 2006: 111). That is, the question of how people can be influenced to conduct themselves in accordance with governmental interests. Or how outer control can prompt a type of inner control that motivates individuals toward a certain behaviour and expression of their freedom. In this perspective, technologies of the self are modes of working with oneself that to a large degree reflect the expectations of society.

These technologies are connected to recent decades’ neoliberal governance of the state in Denmark. One aspect of neoliberalism is marketisation. In Denmark, we also observe this in the field of residential institutions, where privately run residences are a widespread phenomenon and where both public and private institutions operate according to market conditions and in competition with each other. We will return to the establishment of this later.
This marketisation can be seen in the following quote from Kommunernes Landsforening (National Association of Municipalities), where the association offers advice to municipalities on the management of social institutions:

*Many institutions exhibit a great interest in exploiting market potentialities and taking responsibility for direction. The municipality should take advantage of this so that the individual institution has an incentive to operate efficiently. (...) The more responsibility the institution has for rewards and risk, the greater the incentive to generate service offers that, in their professional content and competitive pricing, are in demand.”* (Kommunernes Landsforening, 2007 p. 2)

Among other signs of neoliberal governance, we can mention a new variation of the view of the person as *Homo Economicus* – that is, the view of people as economic actors who have the right and opportunity to rationally calculate choices based on their interests and an analysis of costs and benefits (Dean, 2006). Rather than see the person as an individual that makes rational decisions independently of influence from external factors, a link to behaviourism can be seen, in which people can be directed to make “wise decisions”. The person is now seen as a “type of manipulable person” who can be modified by circumstances. That is, society’s economic growth and prosperity are connected to the individual’s will and ability to work with himself (Dean, 2006).

In this project we are concerned with the neoliberal governance aspects, as we observe them both in the pedagogic work that the pedagogues perform with young people in residences but also in the way the sphere is governed – that is, are these aspects also in play in the ways in which pedagogues are governed and/or govern themselves? Governance of pedagogues may be interesting in light of Hannah Arendt’s work on the concept of judgement where she explored how an expansion of external governance can lead to the power of judgement becoming shallow. (Eide, 2012)

Arendt's understanding of judgement is based on an understanding of man as a *zoon politikon*. That is to say, a being who through interaction and participation with others succeeds in creating society and communities. According to Arendt this presupposes openness, dialogue and a willingness to “allow one’s own understanding of reality to be formed by the community and to enter into the community in a manner where one takes the community, including its pledges and contracts and relations that arise therefrom, seriously.” (Pahuus, 2003 p. 69)

An pedagogue who does not possess such openness, sensitivity and attentiveness may overlook important signals from young people at the residences.

A civic engagement may be said to be a prerequisite for developing a sense of what is shared that one draws upon, together with the imagination, when one needs to make a decision. Arendt also terms this the ability to “think representatively” or be in possession of an “enlarged mentality”(D'Entrèves, 2000).
To possess power of judgement means one is open and registers what occurs, what is new and possesses the ability to evaluate this, not just from one’s own perspective but also from that of others and more general considerations. An pedagogue must possess this ability in order to appraise the technologies of governance he/she encounters in pedagogical work. If this does not occur there is according to Arendt a risk that the judgement may become shallow.

**Changes in the governance of the social area**

Following the municipal reform of 2007, the country’s municipalities were fused into larger entities and also assumed the running of residential institutions for children and young people in socially vulnerable positions (Nørelykke, et al., 2011). These elements (and others) forced the municipalities to look elsewhere for models of governance – and their selection was the so-called BUM model (Nørelykke, et al., 2011).

The new element to be implemented in the BUM model is a clear separation between authority (procuer) and the operational responsibility (performer – two roles that were not formerly clearly separated (Kommunernes Landsforening, 2006). When one reads the arguments for implementing the BUM model, it can be seen as a technology of governance whose purpose is to regulate the area.

By highlighting the residences’ role as “performer” a marketisation occurs in which various residences enter into competition with each other to provide the best and cheapest service. A “quasi” market is created that influences the pedagogues’ thinking and practice. Competition with other residences becomes clear to the residences and the pedagogues employed there and that it is crucial for them to provide a high-quality service.

**Plans of action and documentation systems**

The state’s increased governance of the pedagogic sphere entails demands that services are arranged and performed based on new models. The pedagogic work at residences is planned and executed based
on two new models which can be considered as technologies of governance: plans of action and documentation systems.

The plan of action plays a key role in the BUM model as it is the central means of governance that binds the 3 parties.

Institutional plans of action have become institutionalised as a standard for the way residential institutions and their clients (children, young people and their families) conduct a dialogue on how collaboration is to be done and on what (Bjørn, 2010).

The requirement for plans of action is present in Danish legislation. It is the job of the authorities to ensure that a POA is prepared that outlines what the target is and how work is to be performed.

The POA is drawn up based on the study that is carried out to reveal the child’s/young person’s circumstances and need for support. The POA’s task is to define what the performer, in this case the pedagogue at the residence, must work on.

Governing pedagogues through technology of governance, “Bostedet” (title of a documentation system)

Pedagogues experience that other demands are made of them than previously. Here an pedagogue responds to whether work with POA’s occupies more time than formerly:

Pedagogue: Yes, it does. There are more demands and we have to document more. Yes, there’s lots more documentation. They focus on our documentation in Bostedet (documentation system). I wasn’t used to that before, but now they can keep an eye on whether we actually complete it.”

The pedagogue is here referring to a documentation system that was recently implemented at the residence. What is new in the system is that some individual partial goals must be formulated for each child/youth. For each partial goal, an pedagogue is required to make a daily evaluation, on a scale of 1 to 5, of how well the child/youth has progressed toward fulfilling the goal. This statistic can then be extracted as a graph and social workers can access the system at all times.
It is interesting that the pedagogue in the above citation uses the term “they”. “They” refers to social workers who “procure” the provision of a service from the residence. A clear division of roles has thus been clearly established in which how they are perceived by the authority (social worker) becomes a decisive factor for the pedagogues. An interpretation of the last comment by the pedagogue also indicates that the pedagogues perceive that social workers are monitoring how they perform their work. Another pedagogue also feels under surveillance:

Pedagogue: “Well, they can check how many statistics we keep a record of and so on. So that’s what they keep an eye on.”

Interviewer: Who are they keeping an eye on? You or the children?

Pedagogue: Well, at the end of the day it’s us, because we’re the ones who get this (raises middle finger) if we don’t do it. That’s what it is.”

With the POA and associated documentation there are actually two technologies of governance at work. Villadsen describes how these are instruments for both governance and monitoring, in that they highlight and direct the attention towards certain objects (Villadsen, 2007). The purpose of the instruments is both to influence the individuals’ behaviour – in this case the pedagogues – and subject them to specific goals (Villadsen, 2007).

The above citation may indicate that it both sharpens pedagogues’ focus on reaching the goals defined in the POA and that a form of dominance relation is established – then the question becomes if this alters pedagogues’ mode of understanding themselves and their work – or, in other words, do technologies of self play a part in this? One pedagogue describes how the technologies of governance have disrupted their mode of working:

“My experience of it – when it arrived, this ‘Bostedet’ system and the documentation – there was great dissatisfaction, no, not dissatisfaction, but I think it’s due to uncertainty in relation to: What is our work process now? Will this change the way we’ve worked up to now?”

There are also signs that the technologies of governance affect the understanding of what a good pedagogue is and what they ought to do:

Pedagogue: “Yes, well there are some who feel that they won’t write this (documentation in Bostedet) – that’s not good. I think that’s disloyal (to colleagues) – to avoid writing or doing anything”

A notable feature of the new documentation system is a requirement for quantification of results. That is, evaluations on a scale of 1 to 5, from which data is extracted that, according to pedagogues, also indicates how well a particular residence fulfils their assignments.

Coupled with the fact that several pedagogues say that the targets in plans of action are often homogeneous, no matter which young person it is, then social workers have the opportunity, to some extent, to use this data to compare institutions with each other. For example, one residence might spend 3
months to get a young person to progress to stable school attendance while another might spend 6 to 9 months on this. The question then becomes, where will the social worker purchase the service?

In instances where this data is used to compare institutions this can be classed as benchmarking. Triantafillou defines benchmarking thus:

“a systematic measurement and comparison of individuals’ and organisations’ activities in order to increase the efficiency and quality of their service” (Triantafillou, 2006 p. 22)

According to Triantafillou, benchmarking can be seen as a component of an advanced liberal governance rationale that is characterised by governing individuals’ and institutions’ capacities to self-govern and this is just one of several techniques to promote efficiency, quality and liability (Triantafillou, 2006).

Benchmarking encourages/compels institutions, in Triantafillou’s opinion, to consider how they must act to achieve best practice and thus benchmarking creates new opportunities for governance through institutions’ self-governance (Triantafillou, 2006).

The form of documentation that requires quantification thus governs both what the institution as a whole body must do and consequently how pedagogues ought to act in their daily practice. As the pedagogue mentions in the above citation, in her view it is not good if some pedagogues do not fulfil this part of the pedagogical work as it can give rise to negative consequences for the institution and thus the pedagogues and children/youth who have been placed there.

Governing pedagogues through technology of governance, plan of action.

The plan of action is a tool of governance that requires pedagogues to prioritise their focus on the plan’s target(s). Being a “good” pedagogue now includes daily efforts to work on the various partial targets and ensure that this is documented.

One possible consequence of this is that the pedagogue increases their focus on their own ability to deliver what is required, and this becomes his/her new standard.

Villadsen defines technologies of the self as tools or procedures that assist individuals to isolate certain aspects of themselves as objects to be governed (Villadsen, 2007).

Work on translating the targets of the POA to measurable partial goals to be written into the documentation system, which they must then appraise daily, becomes in this way governing for the pedagogues’ choices and actions in daily pedagogical practice. And this will also have significance for the pedagogue’s self-understanding.

There may be some benefits in this. Power is productive, as Foucault expresses it (Foucault, 1982).

One pedagogue says:

“My immediate response is that I think it’s been really good that we have added something more systematic and structured - what do we actually want? - and what must we do?”
In this expression we see the linking between “what we must do” and “what we want”. In this way, the technologies of governance, as mentioned previously, work with the technologies of self. As pedagogues we must work with POA’s and this thereby becomes influential on what we, as pedagogues, want.

**Concerns about work with POA’s**

Even though pedagogues can see positive elements in the POA work, it also leads to concerns:

“So, I think that the initiative may be more qualified in relation to the individual child but it can also be very weak in that we may not actually gain a true picture of the child. (...) There are two targets for each child and I must document these at the end of each shift. I do that, but gaining an holistic view of the child throughout the whole day isn’t always achievable, because we’ve been preoccupied with measuring those two targets.”

Here the pedagogue expresses a concern that the knowledge that is gathered in POA work may be detached from its context. (Bjørn, 2010). When the pedagogue cannot perceive an opportunity to give a true picture of the child in the documentation system they use, then the knowledge they gather becomes decontextualized.

The question of what significance social workers attribute to the graphs is a growing concern for many pedagogues. One pedagogue says:

“(..) but I think if that is the curve (that social workers look at) then they forget to look for the overall picture - and I’m somewhat afraid of that. This is people we’re talking about - kids and young people!”

This statement can also be interpreted as a protest against the logic that is inherent in the action plan, which is based on the possibility to plan development by way of rational processes - a so-called instrumental rationality. (Bjørn, 2010). Many would agree with Tina Andersen that a child’s/young person’s development is reliant on the interplay of a wide range of factors and cannot be foreseen (Andersen, 2013).

Another concern that Bjørn mentions is that the demand for data for evaluation influences the efforts of pedagogues so that a shift occurs from focussing on the child/young person’s needs to a focus on fulfilling the expectations of management (Bjørn, 2010). An example of how the demand for documentation governs pedagogues’ focus in their work can be seen in this instance, where an pedagogue reflects on the fact that the targets of the POA are often perceived as trivial and imprecise. He adds:

*Pedagogue: (..) “Well, I think, wow, all the things these (kids) have to do.”*

We then asked what they do when the demands they encounter are too great and the pedagogue responded:
Pedagogue: We usually sit and talk about what can be measured (...)"

This citation indicates that there now exists increased focus on the measurable in pedagogical practice and the question then is, what does this focus “steal” attention from? It might be feared that this theft is from work on relations, which is defined as the very purpose of social educational work (Socialpædagogerne, 2015), and which, according to Bjørn is not outlined as a decisive factor in any of the sources in which the plan of action is described. (Bjørn, 2010).

All the pedagogues agree that the relation to the child/young person is a necessary prerequisite for the success of working toward the goals of the plan of action. In contrast this does not appear to be an aspect that is contained in the POA.

“I believe it’s actually only in the residence’s value statement that it is written that our work is relation oriented. I haven’t seen it in the plan of action. I think it’s just expected (...) I don’t think I’ve registered that it’s been stated. Clearly, as soon as someone moves in, it’s the first thing you work on. You can’t do anything, can’t help someone develop, if you don’t have a relation”

Relation work is thus implicit in the pedagogues’ understanding of their social educational work, but this is not encompassed by the technologies of governance that are located in the pedagogues’ practice. When the pedagogues’ nevertheless work intuitively with forming relations with the children/young people that have been placed in the residence, this may be connected to their power of judgement. So we will now discuss how the technologies of governance can influence the pedagogues’ powers of judgement.

Technologies of governance influence pedagogues’ powers of judgement

If the pedagogues’ emphasis on the relation work is well-considered, this may be an expression of good judgement and we see several examples of this in the interviews we conducted with pedagogues. Some places however we see something that can appear to be an unreflective acceptance of the conditions and boundaries that as a consequence of the technologies of governance come to characterise the social educational practice. Here we ask for example if the pedagogue has experienced a change in pedagogical practice over the last 10 years:

Pedagogue: Yes, yes. Absolutely. That is, here we are creating more target oriented profiles. In those days, there was much more care work. Now it’s much more about treatment and development. Where can we move them to? Where are our resources in relation to this child? So, it’s something entirely different, a different way of thinking Entirely different (...).

Interviewer: Do you believe this is related to the plans of action? That they are the focus?
Pedagogue: Yes, they most likely are, because we receive some targets from the social worker that they can see we must work to reach - that’s what they pay us for.

Therefore, in this final part of the article, we will discuss the concept of judgement and how this can be influenced by the technologies of governance that are implemented in the social educational practice. First we will describe how Arendt considers that judgement can become superficial through increased governance and as a corollary of this we will discuss why technologies of governance potentially affect the pedagogues’ powers of judgement and can thereby constitute a risk for the ethics of social educational practice.

When judgment becomes shallow
Arendt’s thinking is coloured by her own life history. She grew up in Germany but, being Jewish, was forced to flee. After World War II she was concerned with comprehending the evil that had flourished under Nazism. In pursuit of this she attended the trial of leading SS officer, Adolf Eichmann, who during the war had been one of the main organisers of the annihilation of millions of Jews. Eichmann’s actions in the service of Nazism stood in stark contrast to his life and personality. Eichmann was an ordinary, educated and law-abiding person and thus represented a paradox, for how could an ordinary person exercise such evil?
Eichmann’s testimony revealed a striking absence of reflection about what he had participated in. Arendt’s conclusion was that it was his thoughtlessness that permitted his actions - that is, the absence of reflection.
Eichmann’s defence rested primarily on two arguments. One, that he was no more than a pawn in a larger game and had he resisted another would simply have assumed his role. It was therefore the system and not he that was guilty. The other argument was that he was just following the prevailing orders and rules, i.e. that the responsibility once again lay with the system and not Eichmann himself. (D'Entrèves, 2000).
We cannot draw a direct line from Eichmann to a pedagogical context, but Arendt’s concerns ranged far beyond that which she experienced and observed. What is interesting in this context is that Arendt found that the modern state’s bureaucracy and modern consumerism could, in comparable ways, blunt the personal power of judgement – for example, that of an pedagogue.
In accordance with this, Eide writes about the potential consequences of the New Public Management inspired technologies of governance that have characterised the modernisation of welfare states, the Norwegian and Danish, for example (Eide, 2012).
Setting quality requirements is not a new development, but what is new is that the professionals to a lesser degree determine what the quality criteria are. Here the sense of ownership over the demands set
for the work is potentially diminished. In addition, the increased quantity of demands and procedures originating externally shrinks the space that formerly existed for professional assessment (Eide, 2012). In the worst case, this may have the consequence that, for example, pedagogues focus exclusively on performing their work in accordance with prevailing rules and procedures. This is termed “accountability” and it is something other than “responsibility”. Where to perform accountably consists solely in acting in compliance with the prevailing rules and procedures, a prerequisite of performing responsibly is that one acts in compliance with one’s own conscience (Eide, 2012).

Bureaucracy, technologies of governance and the rules and procedures dictated from above can thus blunt the pedagogues’ thinking and affect her power of judgement. With reference to Arendt, Eide points out that this does not mean the pedagogue ought to discard rules and procedures wholesale, but that these must be assessed and not attributed any greater significance than they warrant in the encounter with a complex reality (Eide, 2012).

One question that may be asked is whether pedagogues judge the demands that come from “above”? One example of a demand that comes from above is that institutions must shift from being a care institution to being a treatment institution:

*Pedagogue:* “Many of us have been here for many years and are still largely shaped by the care work, so we also have to switch over to thinking more about treatment strategy. Fortunately, we receive good supervision and assistance and additional expertise from outside.

*Interviewer:* Why has it changed? Why have you gone from being a care institution to being a treatment institution?

*Pedagogue:* The societal demands that come from above. We too are measured and evaluated on whether we have met the targets.”

In this citation we see how the pedagogue experiences the governance technology as “compelling” her to think in an entirely different way about the pedagogical work she performs – but without (in this context) a critical appraisal of to what extent a treatment institution is better than a care institution for the children placed there. One can doubt to what extent the pedagogues at this residence are aware of the subjectivization they are exposed to when the technologies of governance are implemented.

The pedagogue must therefore at all times engage actively and autonomously with the technologies of governance, which in practice are introduced as new procedures and methods. They must consider the specific situation and the people they impact so that the technologies of governance do not result in the blunting of the pedagogues’ thinking and judgement.
As a corollary to this a larger question arises – do the technologies of governance contribute to creating a better life for the children and youth placed in the residences? This question cannot be answered on the background of this small study, but we believe that the technologies of governance discussed in this article undoubtedly have as their aim to enhance the initiatives and assistance offered to children/young people so that the child gains improved circumstances and the prospects of a better life.

The technologies of governance have good intentions, but they form both the pedagogues’ modes of thinking and acting and not least also their understanding of themselves and the job they perform. They influence the pedagogues’ powers of judgement. The question whether this is good or bad we will refrain from answering but allow this quotation from Foucault to stand as one possible answer.

“My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad.” (Foucault, 1997 p. 256)

Bibliography

Andersen, T., 2013. Dokumentation i socialpædagogisk arbejde. (Documentation in social education work.) Tidsskrift for socialpædagogik, nr 2.


