

# **Report on Parents' module 2 May 2007**

## **Place:**

Verdenshuset, Vollsmose, Odense

## **Aim:**

The aim of the course was to empower migrant parents to help their child's success in school by introducing them through discussion, dialogue and information to the Danish public school.

## **How:**

Alongside with presenting slides with very little text on the participants were asked to discuss to make them reflect on school relevant questions and reflect on possible prejudices and own background compared to present time.

## **Participants:**

3 pedagogs from the Verdenshuset and the person in charge of kindergartens in District East, Odense

2 mothers from Libanon

1 mother from Iraq

2 fathers from Somalia

1 interpreter from Libanon

Solveig Gaarsmand, instructor

## **The setting:**

The pedagogs paid full attention to the meeting. They were interested themselves in the training. They had prepared the meeting with coffee, tea and cookies. The atmosphere was very pleasant. The invitation had been willingly distributed among the parents by the pedagogs. The invitation informed of the contents of the meeting and the time the training would take.

There was no child care prepared.

The pc was used as screen for the power point presentation.

## **The training:**

The training started with each other presenting him- or herself and with a debate among the Danish pedagogs, the Somali dads and the Arab speaking mums – helped by the translator. The issue was to describe one's own school experiences. It turned out that all could describe experiences with violent teachers, great demand of respect of teacher, authoritative teachers and physical punishment. They all described different types of punishments and humiliations against pupils. They were asked to tell what they liked in school and what they did not like. None of them liked the screaming and punishing teachers, but they liked when it was peaceful in the class room and they learned something.

The parents were asked what they expected from school. They expressed a fear that their children would not be able to meet the challenges of school because of language problems.

They wanted a high level of academic skills for their children and they said directly that they were not satisfied with the schools in their district and wanted to choose other schools (the kindergarten is situated in a ghetto like area in which almost all pupils in the local schools are migrant children). The only problem was the distance to other schools and the fact that they had been told that they did not have a free choice of school which SG informed is not true as according to the Danish School Act parents have a free choice of school which can only be limited by a few local restrictions. A dad concluded that even if all was not satisfactory it was better than what they came from. They were asked if they did not have any prejudices about Danish schools. They said no. One mother told that all in her family had managed to get an education after the Danish Folkeskole. The interpreter however told SG silently that parents in general feel that teachers do not treat children of migrants the same way as they treat Danish children. Migrant parents feel that their children are the scapegoats. They also find school too chaotic because the teachers are not allowed to punish pupils.

The parents discussed what parents can do to support school. A dad mentioned that parents should make sure that their children had enough sleep and got their breakfast before leaving for school as this would ensure that children were ready and quiet enough to learn. The mums agreed and said that parents should speak in a positive manner about the school.

The pedagogs mentioned how important the social life is to children, and that parents should be aware of home work and checking the children's schedule.

It was agreed among everybody that it was important to talk with the children every day.

At the end of the training the parents and the pedagogs got a folder about school and a poster on the needs of the child to be successful in school. In the introduction of the folder one of the pedagogs mentioned that it was important to remember that parents should inform school when a child was ill more than a few days.

### **Evaluation:**

Both the parents and the pedagogs were very satisfied with the course. The parents came to the trainer to talk after the module had finished to discuss different loose ends and the pedagogs who had not tried to have a course of this kind for parents before expressed that they would like to do that again next year.