

Abstract

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The problems of plurality

- on the meeting between the Ädel Reform and the nursing home

What happened in the meeting between the Ädel Reform and the established practices at the nursing homes, and how did it affect the definition of work and identities? When the Ädel Reform was launched in 1992 it challenged the medical orientation of the nursing homes with a more service-oriented perspective. This created an ambiguous situation. Firstly, the identity of the nursing homes is floating, due to the reform. Are they a kind of hospital, sites for producing care for the very old or a special kind of housing? Secondly, the status of the elderly is in a permanent state of negotiation. Are they sick, and to be cured, or are they at a special stage of life with a need of special care, or are they tenants with unusual needs? Finally, professional work is also in a continuous flux - is it medical work, or care of elderly people, or service for a particular type of customer?

To be able to understand the effects of the Ädel Reform we need to know more about the content of the reform, the established organisation context that the reform meets, and the way the reform is translated into practice. This means describing the relations between the established discourses at the nursing homes, i.e. the medical discourse and the care discourse, and the 'new discourses', i.e. the economic discourse and the service-oriented discourse. I call this an interdiscursive situation. We also need to translate the meetings between discourses into practice. I do this by using the concept of technologies (Miller & Rose 1990). The nursing homes have become an arena for different discourses with claims of defining work and identity. By studying the interdiscursive meetings we can gain an understanding about the intended and unintended consequences of reforms.

Key words: change, discourse, interdiscursivity, technologies, reform, identity, nursing homes, work definition, plurality

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