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SOCIAL WORK IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH MENTAL IMPAIRMENTS IN DENMARK AND GERMANY– A COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENTALITY STUDY AND BEYOND

In 2007 the Danish government passed a bill creating a new youth education for young adolescents with mental impairments (in short: STU), which is now the main educational offer for this particular target group. Germany has similar educational offers that mainly includes: “Werkstätte” but also Vocational Educational Training (VET), Arbeitslehre, Berufsschule and others. The difference between the two countries seems to be organizational.

It is my intention to conduct a comparative study of the two educational offers presented by the respective countries with focus on social workers in this particular field with a mixed methods approach of a quantitative and quantitative data gathering triangulating the field of interest.

In an initial research of legislation concerning education for the target group, it seems that the laws in both countries focus on individual training of capabilities gearing towards independent life and participation in the labour market. In my interpretation there is an overarching governing perspective in the laws that can be addressed with Foucault’s notion of governmentality, which therefore will constitute the main theoretical framework employed here. Additionally Martha Nussbaums list of central human capabilities will be utilized to address the capability aspects mentioned in legislation.

The themes in the quantitative survey as well as the qualitative research qua interviews, will concern the governing aspects of legislation as well as the social workers valued capabilities.

Main focus in research:

Quantitative:

- Social workers’ background etc. to identify who works in this particular field and:
- Experienced levels of autonomy as well as governing (e.g. by law)

Qualitative:

- Social workers’ reflections on levels of autonomy in their work
- How they understand their profession
- Valued capabilities integrated in the work with the target group

The quantitative work will be carried out first and depending on the answers it might lead to a revision of the interview questions.