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# When Anger Arises in the Interaction with Children in Kindergartens – The Staff’s Reactions to Children’s Resistance

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## ABSTRACT

Research on educational activities generally focuses on the importance of positive emotions in the interaction between teachers and children. This article will focus on the challenging emotions that can arise when kindergarten staff interact with the children. The empirical material has been collected from a qualitative study of conflicts between children and between children and the staff in four Norwegian kindergartens. The focus of the article is limited to children’s resistance in conflict situations with staff. The data material is based on the staff’s written narratives about their practice and focus-group interviews where they discuss their emotions and actions in events where children demonstrate resistance. The authors discuss how challenging emotions arise in everyday life in kindergarten, reasons for these emotions and how they may affect the development of professional judgment.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## KEYWORDS

Kindergarten staff; emotional practice; conflicts and resistance; professional judgment

## Children Showing Resistance in Interaction with the Staff

This article, based on a Norwegian context, is about everyday life and the staff’s emotional reactions to children’s resistance. Kindergartens (internationally called preschools, day-care centres or ECCD centres) are the first stage in the educational system and are governed by the Kindergarten Act (Ministry of Education and Research [MER], 2005), and the Kindergarten Framework Plan (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training [TNDET], 2017).<sup>1</sup> Norwegian kindergartens are based on child-centred values and a social-pedagogical tradition. The kindergarten teachers take an active part in both structured and unstructured activities. Trained kindergarten teachers make up approximately 43 per cent of the staff (Ministry of Education and Research [MER], 2018), while the rest of the staff comprises non educated assistants or childcare and youth workers with a trade certificate from upper secondary school. In this research the informant groups consist of the entire staff in each kindergarten.

In a frequently cited article, Hargreaves (1998, p. 835) states that “emotions are the heart of teaching”. Teachers and all staff who are working with educational activities are required to deal with the children’s emotions and emotional expressions and have to deal with challenges to their own emotions. Emotions colour the educational activity (Kitching, 2009; Shapiro, 2010; Sutton, 2007; Zembylas, 2003) and are extremely important for the relationship a teacher has with children (Brown et al., 2018; Chang & Davis, 2009, p. 97; Hargreaves, 1998, p. 838). In the professional context of school and kindergartens, much of the literature and research has a focus on such emotions as

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<sup>1</sup>In Norway, kindergarten is not obligatory. In 2018, 91.8 per cent of all children aged one to five were attending kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2019). Parents pay a maximum fee decided by the government, regardless of whether the kindergarten is private or public (The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, 2019).

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delight, engagement or appreciation in educational practice (Alsanian, 2015; Oplatka, 2007; Shapiro, 2010). Recent research has highlighted challenges that might arise in conflict situations, which means that people have different perspectives, values or aims for their thoughts and actions (Doppler-Bourassa et al., 2008). Different types of resistance can occur in such events (Johansson & Emilson, 2016; Markström & Halldén, 2009; Skoglund, 2019). In the Scandinavian countries conflicts and resistance are considered important for democratic learning, where expressions of different interests, perspectives and resistance are important events in everyday life in kindergartens. Children are expected to handle conflicts verbally, and through negotiations and compromises, while teachers are expected to support these negotiations in a democratic and rational way (Grindheim, 2013; Johansson & Emilson, 2016; Skoglund, 2019).

Despite the focus on children's resistance, little attention has been paid to the emotional experiences of the staff in such episodes. Research reveals that resistance from children can challenge teachers' goals for activities and expectations for children's behaviour (Johansson & Emilson, 2016; Skoglund, 2019). The aim for this article is to illuminate the staff's perspectives on events where they experienced challenging emotions when meeting children's resistance and to discuss how collective reflections about such experiences can contribute to development of professional judgement. Thus, the research questions are: (1) How do the kindergarten staff experience such emotions as anger and frustration that arise when faced with children's resistance? (2) How do they explain the reasons for these emotions? (3) How can actions involving challenging emotions contribute to developing the professional judgment of kindergarten staff?

Below, the authors will give a brief presentation of the research literature on teachers' emotions that is relevant to how they react to kindergarten children's resistance. The connection between emotions and judgment is outlined in the theoretical section. Analysed excerpts from the staff's written narratives and from focus-group interviews will then be presented. Moreover, we discuss how an awareness of challenging emotions that might arise when interacting with children who offer resistance can contribute to improving professional judgment.

### ***The Terms “Emotions” and “Personal Feelings”***

The terms “emotions” and “feelings” require clarification. We find support in Scherer's (2005, p. 698) description of emotions as a multi-modal component process with five main components: (i) cognitive, (ii) neuro-physical (bodily symptoms), (iii) motivational, (iv) motor expression (facial or vocal expression) and (v) subjective feelings. In the Norwegian language the concept “feelings” is synonymous with “emotions”, but in English terminology feelings seem to be more like affections, which are rawer than emotions, more immediate and without cognitive reflection (Banks, 2016, p. 42; Vetlesen & Nortvedt, 2000, p. 27). Thus, feelings are seen as one of the components connected to subjective judgments as they integrate the central representation of appraisal-driven response organisation in emotions. All these five aspects of the emotions concept are relevant in the analysis of the empirical material and in the discussion on the importance of an awareness of challenging emotions and the development of professional judgement.

### ***Challenging Emotions and Professional Performance***

In a professional context, the emotions most often in focus are the ones that convey engagement and motivation and contribute to collaboration and the willingness to have new experiences. Emotions such as anger and frustration, which may suggest uncertainty, disappointment, guilt or grief, are more rarely in focus (Banks, 2016; Liljestrom et al., 2007; Winograd, 2003). A teacher's anger and frustration occur when children are indifferent or behave badly, or when other impediments undermine their educational work (Hargreaves, 1998; Sutton, 2007). Emotions like anger and frustration, which in this article are characterised as challenging emotions, have been called dark emotions in earlier research (Winograd, 2003) or even negative emotions (Sutton, 2007). According to Sutton

(2007, p. 263), social psychology denotes emotions as negative to indicate relations between emotions and goals but not to establish whether the emotion is “good” or “bad”. Quite to the contrary, negative or what we call challenging emotions can imply a justified reaction and lead to constructive actions. We choose to use the term “challenging emotions” to avoid negative connotations and because anger and frustration can be seen as challenging to manage (Hochschild, 2012; Winograd, 2003). Nonetheless, anger and frustration can also lead to loss of emotional control or loss of temper which can hurt relationships with other people. This can also lead to inaction and self-flagellation for the teacher who expresses these emotions (Sutton, 2007, p. 269; Winograd, 2003).

A key element in anger or frustration is the sense of being powerless in relation to educational goals (Shapiro, 2010, p. 617). Professionals are expected to have control and to be emotionally balanced and stable (Kitching, 2009, p. 142; Liljestrom et al., 2007, p. 281). Meaning is constructed from one’s own emotions and those of others by following so-called emotional schemata that determine the socially accepted reactions in any situation (Bjørkelo et al., 2013, pp. 29–30; Brown et al., 2018; Hochschild, 2012; Kitching, 2009; Shapiro, 2010). Emotional dissonance occurs when we feel that there is a discrepancy between the perceived emotion and the emotional reaction that is expected in the situation (Bjørkelo et al., 2013, p. 30; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 124). However, Nias (1996) claims that there may be deep emotional power behind controlled behaviour and professional calm. This may include despair, anger, ambition and delight, feelings that are not expected to be shown in the performance of the profession. Moreover, teachers’ challenging emotions are often perceived as private and are rarely discussed as important when developing professional practice (Kitching, 2009; Liljestrom et al., 2007; Shapiro, 2010; Sutton, 2007). Bjørkelo et al. (2013) claim that research on the emotions of teachers shows that teachers who experience anger often feel stressed. They may focus more on their own inadequacy than on structural circumstances and expectations in working life.

The values and attitudes of teachers and other staff, their behaviour and actions are often expressed in educational practice and in the interaction with the children they have a close relationship with over time. Nias (1996) argues that when teachers have emotional reactions to apparently trivial events, they have a moral perception of their tasks and responsibilities for the children. Hence the perception of “self” as a professional performer is also vulnerable and continuously challenged. Each professional has to make complex decisions that occur in a morally ambiguous context (Banks, 2016). This often means that they will rely on social and personal perceptions of what good educational practice is, and act in accordance with this (Zembylas, 2003). Both Nias (1996) and Kitching (2009) point out that the emotions of teachers, particularly the feeling of guilt when their practice is challenged, do not reflect emotional immaturity, but rather a connection to values and ideas about what it means to be a good teacher. Teachers also feel that they are too isolated to talk about emotional aspects of their educational actions (Liljestrom et al., 2007; Shapiro, 2010; Zembylas, 2003).

### ***Emotions and Professional Judgment***

The concept of professional judgment has a clear moral/ethical component that refers to the ability to make good decisions about practical actions. Professional judgment is related to actions that cannot be fully regulated by laws and regulations, but which require discretionary judgment when interacting with an individual in a particular situation (Banks, 2016; Christoffersen, 2011; Hennem & Østrem, 2016). However, Fossetøl (2012, p. 18) maintains that professional judgement is often used as a miscellaneous category where rules and regulations cannot fully prescribe practice, and where morality and ethics come into play. However, the concept of professional judgment may show that morality and ethics are not elements banished to a miscellaneous category, as it applies to all practical actions when interacting with people one is professionally responsible for.

Professional judgment requires different abilities and properties, thus not only implying that action is based on professional knowledge and familiarity with the rules and regulations, but also

implying that we view ourselves through normative assessments connected to action in “here-and-now” situations. This requires decorum, tact and understanding of situations rather than methods, rules or theoretical reasoning (Juul, 2013, p. 38). Professional judgment is developed in the interplay between theory and practice and is the connecting link between them in a hermeneutic process, as practice has impact on theory and theory has impact on practice (Christoffersen, 2011; in Fossetøl, 2012, p. 17).

Christoffersen (2011, pp. 75–76) points out that judgment is not an emotional but intellectual process: “even if emotions also are included in the process”. Vetlesen and Nortvedt (2000, p. 21) and Banks (2016, pp. 41–43) claim that it is important to connect emotions to professional judgment. They refer to Aristotle who claimed that emotional reactions are a way of perceiving a situation. Emotions are intentional, they focus on an object and include interpretations and judgments about this object. Hence, emotions are part of an interaction between perception, judgment and more intellectual interpretative abilities. Emotions can be formed by our perception and also form it, we can be more aware of them, and train and cultivate them.

When we examine emotions in connection with teachers’ professional practice, understanding the importance of emotions is seen as a personal and moral affair and as the obligation and responsibility of the individual (Kitching, 2009). We can never ethically waive the personal responsibility for our feelings, emotions and actions when interacting with the Other (Eide et al., 2009). However, more cultural, political, social and institutional forces are also involved in creating the conditions according to which emotions are perceived and expressed in educational activity, in both good or less appropriate directions, and in direct or indirect ways. It is important to understand these contextual aspects to realise the complexity of emotions and individual experiences (Banks, 2016; Hargreaves, 1998; Nias, 1996; Zembylas, 2003).

Høilund and Juul (2005, p. 68) point to three types of professional judgment: personal, institutional and social judgment. Personal judgment is influenced by the cultural context people are in, their life experiences, education and value assessments. This forms their world horizon. However, personal judgment is also affected by institutional and social structures, and not least by the political rules and regulations governing the practice in question (Juul, 2010, 2013).

Institutional judgment means that staff in kindergartens must comply with formal and political guidelines and regulations that govern their practice (Juul, 2013). Common practices are also often developed by the staff, and over time these practices are embedded in various ways of thinking and acting, then becoming routines and ways of dealing with children in different situations. The language and the way events, incidents and actions are talked about, will reflect not only each professional, but also hegemonic discourses, the institutional culture and the practice community the professionals belong to (Juul, 2010, 2013, p. 110). Practitioners of a profession are socialised into a language that expresses meaning which comes into play when relating to children in the practice (Zembylas, 2003).

Social judgment requires intimate knowledge when it comes to interpreting the child and its utterances in any given situation (Høilund & Juul, 2005, p. 70). The encounter with an individual child and the situation one is in may also include elements that are radically new and unknown so that what we have learnt from past events cannot furnish us with the know-how to fully “capture” what is taking place (Biesta, 2015; Vetlesen & Nortvedt, 2000, p. 19).

Tensions will often arise between the different forms of judgment. Juul states that institutional power has different forms and is exercised in what he calls “a twilight zone where legal authority enforcement, support, negotiations, persuasion, disciplining and control are mixed” (Juul, 2010, p. 352). This means that the kindergarten staff must deal with social and institutional ways of thinking that they are unable to avoid or transcend. This does not mean that they are not responsible for the development of the kindergarten as an institution or for how the interaction with the children takes place. Høilund and Juul (2005) see the concept of professional judgment as a hermeneutic concept, on the one hand emphasising that staff in kindergarten act in historically concrete contexts, and on the other hand conceding that there is an opportunity to deal reflectively with institutionalised

practices and ways of thinking. A historic process of effects can change them (Juul, 2010, p. 352). The individual can deal critically with the established truths in force (Høilund & Juul, 2005; Juul, 2013, p. 112; Zembylas, 2003, p. 119). This also requires continuous reflection on what the overriding goals and intentions of the practice are (Biesta, 2015; Juul, 2010).

To summarise: Professional judgment is something that is performed, based on a person's professional knowledge and experience, institutional practice and the interaction with specific children in specific situations. The power the staff have as adults and professional practitioners and the institutional power that is exercised are very decisive for the children affected by the staff's judgment.

## **Methodological Approach, Empirical Material and Analysis**

The focus of this article, the kindergarten staff's emotions when children show resistance, is a limited part of a larger micro-ethnographic (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) study from 2013/2014. The overall theme for the project was about conflicts between children and between children and staff. The involved kindergartens volunteered after they had been informed about the project and invited to join during a course for kindergarten directors from a number of municipalities in the western part of Norway. The first four kindergartens that signed up became participants in the project. Two of the kindergartens were divided into four mixed-age groups (approximately 60 children and 12–15 staff), and two were divided into six separate age groups (approximately 80–100 children and 20 staff). At one of the centres, only children and staff from the youngest age groups (1–3 years old) were involved in the project (approximately 12–15 children and five to six staff).

To obtain more knowledge about the involved kindergartens the first author attended each kindergarten for a week and wrote fieldnotes. These notes provided information about the interaction between the children and between the staff and the children, but also about conditions and routines for everyday practices in each kindergarten. These fieldnotes were important for the further development of the project and for the analysis and interpretation of the overall data material (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this article, the answers to the research questions are based on the staff's written narratives and on focus-group interviews with the same staff. Thirty written narratives were delivered about events where the staff had been involved in a conflict with one or more children. They were instructed to state the time and location of the event and who was present, and to reflect in writing on how they perceived the event.

Thematic analyses were used to search for patterns and develop categories from both the fieldnotes and the written narratives (Gibbs, 2007; Peräkylä & Ruusuvauro, 2011). These analyses also helped the first author to formulate relevant questions for the semi-structured interview guide for 12 focus-group interviews with the staff. The interviews had from three to five participants in each group. The first author was responsible for the first review of the data material. The second author then took part in selecting and analysing relevant sections of the data material so that the presented findings and the discussion are based on joint analysis. We carried out a dialogical analysis of the transcriptions of the recorded interviews where the participant's exchanging of utterances became the starting point to develop different thematic aspects (Linell & Gustavsson, 1987).

The project was registered with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, and the researchers were obliged to inform the staff as well as the parents about their research in the kindergartens. Written consent from the staff and parents was obtained after oral and written information about the project was provided, and after assuring them anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time (Backe-Hansen, 2016). The informants and kindergartens presented in the excerpts have all been given pseudonyms. Due to anonymity the direct quotations are condensed and the kindergartens the informants belong to are not described, except the sizes which are quite ordinary in Norwegian context.

The staff's written narratives described several conflicts where the children showed resistance and unwillingness to negotiate. Bearing in mind what the staff had written about their own feelings of anger and frustration, one of the questions in the group interviews centred on how they emotionally

reacted when conflicts with children arose. The interview participants seemed to welcome the opportunity to describe their own feelings and emotions that arise when children resist. In line with what Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) write about focus group interviews, they responded actively to what the others had to say. They found support for and received responses to their shared experiences of challenging emotions. The starting point for explicitly focusing on challenging emotions in this article therefore comes from the empirical material about what the informants considered as challenging to their professional practice. In this way, findings from the data material become a guide for the choice of theoretical framework about teachers' emotions and theory of professional judgement. This choice of theoretical approach then helped the authors to discover patterns for new understanding when they once again analysed the material. The research process alternated between reading theory and analysing the empirical material, where both aspects were interpreted in light of each other in a way that Alvesson and Sköldböck (2018) call an "abduction process". Only excerpts which are representative for the overall findings are presented in this article.

## Findings

The material has two crystallised topics referring to challenging emotions and actions that also appear to be interconnected: (i) Structural factors, such as perceived stress caused by lack of time, limitations in facilities and staff shortage, (ii) Frustration over children who offer resistance.

### *Structural Factors*

The staff in the four kindergartens state that stressful situations occur when they are pressed for time and hurrying to get the children outside. When finishing an activity, when there is a meeting to attend or when shifting from one activity to another the situations often become hectic. Several of the staff state that they feel inadequate, and much to their own dissatisfaction, they express anger or frustration in stressed situations. They add that they either feel unsure or think that they should have acted differently than they actually did.

Tone and Carol, from different kindergartens, write that they feel they have no time to listen to what the children are trying to tell them because there is a rush to get outside. Everything is going at full speed, and Carol ends up feeling inadequate and is disappointed in herself:

I get so sad when these busy situations occur. Now we need to get the children outside like that (snapping her fingers), then we don't have time. If something happens between the children, we don't have time to spend five minutes to listen or to understand what happened, just pull some children away from each other, or scold them. Everything has to be done at the speed of light. And then, well, they become ... I think this is incredibly difficult, because afterwards I feel really bad about it, and I'm so dissatisfied with myself.

Tone states:

Then there's things that unfortunately very quickly stress the adults in kindergarten, we enter scolding mode. [...] We have a demanding and tough job. That's what provokes me when I see that politicians have no clue what they're talking about. Come here! You can be with me and the kids for three months if you want. [...] There'll always be sickness absenteeism in a kindergarten. There's something about how I feel then, I blow a fuse more quickly when there's a conflict than when I'm in a way my regular self...

In summarising these and similar statements it appears that the staff are dissatisfied with themselves when they do not have time to listen to the children or see things from their perspectives. Because they feel pressed for time, they choose actions which overlook the children and are not consistent with what the staff usually are motivated for and believe is the proper way to handle children. When things become stressful, the adults may go into scolding mode. Working in kindergarten is a hard and demanding job with a high level of sickness absenteeism among the staff. This affects their patience and tolerance levels. For Tone, it is important to get the politicians who control the

job descriptions and budgets to learn about the stress and strain of this profession first-hand over a period of time. The sense of being powerless appears to be important to her.

### **Children Who Resist**

In several narratives, the highlighted challenging emotions are related to direct encounters with certain children who resist expectations, demands or structures. It appears that the perceived lack of time or other types of stressful experiences lead to situations which breed challenging emotions in relation to the children. Malin is feeling pressed for time when the children are rushing around waiting to go for a walk. She is dealing with a child who often acts out and describes her irritation:

The children are going out for a walk and half of the group are in the cloakroom getting dressed. The noise level is high. Some children are playing, some are running and some are hiding (we should be quick because we're going out for a walk). Tom, four-years-old, wants to wear a soccer jersey indoors and outdoors. He protests loudly against the clothes I have put out for him. He tries to argue that the soccer jersey is good outside too. I tell him it's raining, we are going out on a trip, and he needs to put rain clothes on top of the soccer jersey. Tom starts to cry, doesn't want to wear rain clothes and just stops everything. This is a situation that is often repeated with Tom, and I feel that I'm getting quite provoked. I tell him that he has to get dressed, just like the others. I take Tom's hand and walk to the outer cloakroom. I sit down to help him, but he just resists. It ends with me putting him on my lap and pressing his clothes on him. He gets even angrier and sweat is pouring. He pulls up his rain pants like shorts and wants to go out like that. "Just fine!" I tell him. He is clearly angry with me. When I come out he's playing. His rain pants are down outside his wellies, and he looks very pleased. Some adults would have probably managed to deal with him better than I did. I didn't get to talk to Tom after this and felt like a failure. I have chosen to tell this story because it makes me face my own inadequacy. Irritation and my own feelings got the best of me instead of me trying to understand him. This is a very unprofessional way of handling a conflict situation.

Malin finds the situation stressful; other children and staff are waiting to go out for a walk. What she perceives as the boy's resistance frustrates her and she is disappointed with her own frustration. Challenging feelings gain the upper hand and prevent her from adopting the boy's perspective. She considers her own way of acting to be unprofessional.

Several of the informants are also particularly provoked when children are violent against other children and they have to physically intervene in the conflict. Oda tells that she became so angry after repeatedly telling a boy to stop pestering another younger child that she grabbed his hoodie and swung him around just like he did with the other child. She points out that this was an intelligent boy who knew what was expected of him. She claims that this was not a good way for her to act.

Nora writes in her narrative about how provoked she became when Peter did not respond as expected to reprimands:

Peter and John, who are two years old and good friends, are playing with a large branch. Suddenly Peter hits John on the head. I notice it and tell Peter to stop doing that. (There is no reaction from John). Peter looks at me impassively, while pulling on John's toque. He keeps pulling harder until it falls off. He keeps looking me in the eyes. John starts to cry. I take Peter and move him to the side, away from the other children. I tell him that he has to be good and nice to John. Peter sits there for two minutes before it's lunchtime. All the time expressionless. I don't like to use a time-out, but find that I may become so provoked that I do it anyway.

Later, in the focus-group interview, Nora states:

At times I get too angry to do things by the book. For example, when I see how drastic the consequences can be, such as the child who has been hit on the head is bleeding ... Perhaps a strong feeling of frustration has been building up (in the child). I feel that I'm often unable to do things quite the way I have learned.

She also reflects on how the situations and tired adults impact the behaviour of children:

I've been thinking that there has been a somewhat unstable period in our group lately, that there may be something about our system that is not quite right, and not something wrong with the child. In some cases there are too many temps. We're understaffed. People are tired, often tolerate much less, and then things become unstable, so that children, or some kids, oppose us ... It becomes unstable for the children. The consequence may be that they act out ...



Nora admits she acted in frustration, where she did not consider what could be the reason for the child's behaviour. She also reflects on how having too many temporary staff and being understaffed may lead to burnout so that the staff tolerate less activity and distractions from the children. This seems to affect the children who are then resistant. Hence, the staff reflect on the fact that the children may not necessarily be the problem; the children's actions seem to be influenced by structural circumstances.

### **Professional Judgment**

Both in the written narratives and group interviews the staff tell about events where they become angry and act in ways they are not satisfied with. Nevertheless, they also find it important to acknowledge their frustrations and show their own feelings to the children, as Carol does:

At times I tell the children that now I'm angry and explain why. Or that I'm sorry that I shouted at them. It pains me a lot when I get mad and shout. I'm very honest and tell the children when they cross the line. (...) I simply say that now I'm angry. Now I'm sad. Now I have such a bad pain in the neck, it really hurts.

Carol finds it important to describe her emotions to the children in the actual situations when she is angry or sad, and she is explicit about her own borders. She also addresses the children openly, saying she is sorry when she has shouted at them.

Other staff members make the same statement, it is important to visualise different emotions for the children. Children can learn that it is okay to express challenging feelings in other ways than by being physical. Asta says:

It's actually okay to be angry! It's permissible to show that one is sad and tired and to show emotions. Gina: (responding to Asta) Yes, I can say: "Now I'm angry. Look at my face". They can try to read my face too. Because children are supposed to be allowed to express their feelings and be angry. We're supposed to teach them to articulate their emotions and not get physical like hitting or pushing or biting when they get annoyed.

To control their feelings, several informants mention that they will let another staff member take over the child when they feel they are getting too emotional. They relieve each other and inform their colleagues when their feelings are getting the better of them. Several of the informants still point out, however, that it is important to control their feelings, complete the task at hand and deal with the conflict in a professional manner. Milly, for example, believes that it is important to create a professional distance to one's feelings and reflect together with others on which processes activate them. "It's so easy for things to get stuck – and then that's how we do it," Milly says.

### **Discussion**

Bearing in mind Scherer's (2005) description of emotions as a multi-modal component process, we consider the processes the staff describe in the extracts in terms of his theory on subjective feelings. The staff describe how upset they are when the structural conditions they are working under are experienced as too narrow, with limited time and too small a staff.

What the staff say here corresponds with what Juul (2010, 2013) has pointed out, that when there is a lack of time and too few staff, institutional judgment constitutes a structural limitation which impedes their attempts to interact with the children in a positive way. When this happens, challenging feelings arise and they end up feeling that they have failed as professionals. The structural conditions impact the abilities of the staff to carry out their educational practice. They must work within a structure with institutional judgment that is characterised by the rules and regulations governing the kindergarten institution, the Framework plan (TNDET, 2017), the Kindergarten Act (MER, 2005) and discursive practices. According to Juul (2010, p. 354, 2013, p. 110, p. 207), social judgment is practised in the field of tension between institutional judgment and the professional's knowledge and insight in the concrete interaction with the child.

We also find that the frustration, acknowledgement of stress and lack of energy are primarily directed at external structural factors and the politicians who control the purse strings. We can describe these reactions as bodily symptoms (Scherer, 2005) with respect to recognising feelings. On the other hand, some informants describe such reactions as a personal and professional failure because they interpret their own actions in terms of being powerless and not able to behave with the children in the way they intended and usually are motivated for. This corresponds to what both Hargreaves (1998) and Sutton (2007) have claimed: Teachers experience a high level of frustration and despair when they are prevented from exercising an educational practice consistent with what they are motivated for and believe is important and necessary. They are aware of the importance of good relationships with the children and want to treat them with support and understanding (Brown et al., 2018; Chang & Davis, 2009; Oplatka, 2007), but feel impeded in the performance of this practice.

Stressful situations and irritation seem to prevent the staff from adopting the children's perspectives and from considering democratic values. When challenging emotions arise, some of the informants, for example Malin, explain how they say that the children are responsible and are to be blamed for the unfavourable situations. Acting in another way than planned and motivated for (Scherer, 2005, p. 702), and being driven more by frustration or anger than by the awareness of one's responsibility to build good relationships and negotiate with the children, is thus understood as professional failure (Biesta, 2015; Brown et al., 2018; Chang & Davis, 2009; Nias, 1996).

The feeling of professional failure also arises in situations where the structural factors do not contribute to their frustration and choice of actions. Rather the children's behaviour and resistance are primarily seen as the provoking factors (Sutton, 2007, p. 264). Both Oda and Nora are dealing with children who have been told to stop being violent with other children, but who have not complied. It may appear that they are reacting to their feeling of frustration over the boys' behaviour, over the lack of expected response and the perception of the children's resistance. Eide et al. (2009, p. 110) point out that one should never act in anger but reflect before acting. The informants acknowledge that they did not reflect in a professional manner, but rather in ways that are not in accordance with what they assume is good practice. The understanding of their own feelings thus becomes a moral and personal matter, but also a basis for further reflection (Banks, 2016).

The staff may be locked into feelings of powerlessness and therefore lack reflection on their feelings. This is what Juul describes as "a twilight zone where legal authority enforcement, support, negotiations, persuasion, disciplining and control are mixed" (Juul, 2010, p. 352). Several of our informants feel that they are confined within an institutional judgment frame telling them how they are supposed to act in demanding situations (Høilund & Juul, 2005; Juul, 2010). Reflection on these situations may lead to changes as the staff will then both recognise their own feelings and be critical of their own actions (Fossetøl, 2012; Zembylas, 2003).

Challenging emotions appear to intensify when there are tighter structural conditions. Then it is a question of having enough time and resources, and dealing with the challenges that arise from, for example, sickness absence. Both Juul (2010, 2013) and Zembylas (2003) suggest that institutional power is being practised in a hermeneutic process when the staff deal reflectively with institutionalised practices and are able to change them. When the staff describe that structural conditions have an effect on how children trigger their feelings, we are witness to a process where reflectivity may help to make changes in both the staff's motivation and actions and in their perception that the resistant child is the problem.

The staff are, however, not complete captives of the institution or the dominating practices (Høilund & Juul, 2005; Juul, 2013). They have a professional and ethical readiness and ability to interpret children, their utterances and their own actions (Høilund & Juul, 2005; Zembylas, 2003), and they were eager to deal reflectively with the institutionalised practices. In the interviews, the staff confirm the necessity to let off steam due to their own frustration and anger and to set boundaries for children's behaviour when they do not act within the institution's expectations.

## Conclusion

Emotions are important in educational practice (Hargreaves, 1998). Challenging emotional reactions, such as anger, are real, often under-communicated and challenging to deal with. This creates emotional dissonance. We see a clear connection between how professional judgment is referred to as expectations of being emotionally controlled (Banks, 2016; Brown et al., 2018; Eide et al., 2009; Nias, 1996; Zembylas, 2003). When emotions lead to the use of physical force against children, the staff feel they have violated them. This is also about feeling inadequate and failing in one's professional work. These are challenging emotions which may impact the relationship to the children and also cause uncertainty and a sense of guilt in practising the profession (Chang & Davis, 2009; Vetlesen & Nortvedt, 2000). Juul writes that acting in a discretionary way, what we see as professional judgment in concrete situations, requires decorum, tact and understanding of situations (Juul, 2010, 2013). Based on the empirical findings, we see that the perception of the situation when anger comes into play is not always conducive to the staff being able to adopt the children's perspective, as they would like to, and exercise good social judgment.

The conclusion of the findings is that it is acceptable for adults and children to be angry, but it is expected that everyone is capable of disciplining themselves and expressing anger in a socially accepted manner, as Gilliam and Gulløv (2014) describe the civilisation process in kindergarten. At times the staff appear to accept their own anger and that of the children as long as it is expressed verbally and not physically. The frustration in terms of the children's behaviour – and their own behaviour – arises when the anger is expressed through yelling or the use of physical force. Then the staff's emotional response of feeling inadequate is activated.

The staff exercise institutional judgment in accordance with Høilund and Juul's terminology (2005). In the day-to-day life of kindergarten, practices are developed which have been established in patterns of thinking and acting (Høilund & Juul, 2005; Zembylas, 2003). The informants describe structural conditions, such as lack of time and shortage of staff, as causes of the challenging emotions. This generates a sense of not being adequate and of being unable to work in accordance with formal guidelines, personal motivations, values and goals. Damsgaard et al. (2015) point out that the challenges affecting professions in the caregiving vocations refer in general to the lack of time and resources. Working under what may be called insufficient structural conditions, many end up feeling inadequate. This inadequacy is related to the gap between responsibility and possibilities in the welfare state's professions.

The conclusion is that actions involving these emotions can contribute to developing the professional judgment of the kindergarten staff. Some of the staff describe how they articulate their emotions to the children in situations where they are angry or sad. In doing this, they underline the cognitive and bodily expression of emotions in the encounter with the children (Scherer, 2005). According to this approach, the staff's expression of anger and sadness is explained in the belief that expressed controlled emotions may raise awareness and educate and cultivate the children. This is part of what we may interpret as professional judgment. In this way it appears that the staff do not lose their aims and motivations, but see themselves as being role models if they manage to describe their anger to the children.

The fact that they discuss feelings that arise in given situations shows that they create their own options and do not let institutional judgment render them completely powerless. By reflecting on practice, they have opportunities to change understandings and potentially also actions (Juul, 2010, 2013; Zembylas, 2003). It is essential that the staff collectively reflect on institutionalised action patterns (Juul, 2010) to develop their professional judgment so they will not feel powerless when things happen. It must be remembered at all times that feeling powerless when working under the structural conditions may undermine professional judgment our informants want to practise in various situations. The cultural, political, social and institutional factors converge to create the conditions for how emotions are perceived and expressed and for how professional judgment is exercised (Banks, 2016; Høilund & Juul, 2005).

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