

Fra redaksjonen

Early childhood education in the Nordic countries has gained considerable international attention in the last decades. It has been noted that preschool plays a central role in the social lives of families in the Nordic countries, and is an integral part of the welfare system. Preschool is universal and the first stage of life-long learning and thus intended for all children. Nordic preschool is characterized by a holistic approach to children, which emphasizes children's development and well-being, their participation in preschool life, and their interests and dispositions for learning. All the Nordic countries have national curriculum guidelines that dictate public policy about education and care. The curriculum guidelines outline values and views about priorities in preschool education.

Icelandic preschools have been under the auspices of the Ministry of Education since 1973. In 2011, a new national curriculum was ratified. The new curriculum is innovative in that there is a general section that applies to all school levels: preschool, compulsory school, and upper-secondary school. This general section discusses the objective of the educational system and six fundamental pillars. The fundamental pillars that are seen to form the essence of the educational policy are: literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, and creativity. The new national curriculum for preschools has moved from a developmental view of children to a more post-modern or constructivist view. Four integrated learning areas are presented: Literacy and communication, health and wellbeing, sustainability and science,

creativity and culture. Emphasis is placed on children's play outside and inside. Play and learning are regarded as connected concepts, and the role of the preschool teacher as a supporter of children's learning is emphasized. Preschool is seen as a democratic forum, where values and practices supporting democratic society are highlighted.

The articles in this issue of *Barn* are all based on research in Norwegian preschools. However, they address areas that are representative of preschools in all the Nordic countries: children's play, physical activities, outdoor activities, and children's perspectives and participation.

The article by Anne Stokke, *Hva gjøres for å fremme fysisk aktivitet i barnehager? En komparativ studie av førskolelæreres virksomhet i 1981 og 2009*, gives an account of a comparative study of the means by which preschool teachers promoted physical activities in Norwegian preschools in 1981 and 2009. The promotion of physical activity is regarded as characteristic of Nordic preschools; interestingly, preschool teachers in 2009 did more to promote physical activities than did those in 1981.

In his article *Hva har barn lyst til å gjøre ute?*, Per Egil Mjaavatt reports on a longitudinal study with children's preferences for outdoor activities. The findings of the study indicate that children's interests change with age and that gender differences were notable for many activities.

Margrethe Jernes' article, *Barns perspektiv på aktiviteter der digital teknologi inngår*, focuses on children's perspectives on their experience with PC-games and digital drawing. This article, as well as the article

by Kristin Rydjord Tholin, *Barns rett til medvirkning i lys av Klafkis dannelsingsperspektiver*, is inspired by a contemporary perspective that sees children as competent citizens with the right to express their own views and experiences.

This issue also reports on two new doctoral dissertations. One by Kolbrún Pálsdóttir on afterschool programs in Iceland and the other by Margrethe Jernes on digital technology in Norwegian kindergartens.

This issue of *Barn* introduces a new section called “Synspunkter, dialog, debatt, bokanmeldelser” which aims to publish non-refereed articles that shed light on specific areas or discuss and problematize issues inside Nordic child and youth research. These can be book reviews, essays, or short opinion papers. We encourage our readers to send us contributions of this nature. In this issue a new book: *Velferdsstatens familier: Nye sosiologiske perspektiver* edited by Anne Lise Ellingsæter and Karin Widerberg is reviewed.

Last, but not least, we are pleased to welcome a new member of the editorial team of *Barn*: Firouz Gaini, from the Faroe Islands. He currently holds a postdoctoral fellowship at Norwegian Centre for Child Research. He is an anthropologist with extensive publications on the cultural identities, leisure activities and educational values of young people. He is the former chair of the Academy of Sciences in the Faroe Islands.

The editors would like to thank all the authors for their contribution and the referees for their important role.

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Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, co-editor