



QueenMaudUniversityCollege  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Olav B. Lysklett  
Associate Professor  
Queen Maud's University College  
Trondheim  
Norway

# Out All Week Long Norwegian Nature Preschools



# Long outdoor traditions in Norway

- Tomm Murstad – a pionere after the 2nd world war
  - Skiing instructor that wanted children to meet nature
  - Used the tram to transport children up to small huts in Holmenkollen
  - Turned Rouseaus «Back to nature» to «The nature needs to come back to the children»
  - Famous visitors

At the same periode in Trondheim



# Lyseth-committee 1961

- Childrens play are both indoor and outdoor and if the weather allow, the children can be outside many hours!
- **The time indoors should not exceed two hours!**

# Nature preschools history

Hjellebakkane preschool established in 1987



# Governmental goodwill I

- White paper about outdoor life (1987)
  - Preschools have an important role
- Frameworkplan for preschools (1996)
  - Focus on outdoor activities
  - Most lucky are preschools that have non-cultivated nature as a playground



# Governmental goodwill II

- White paper about preschools 1999
  - First definition of nature preschools
  - Buildings that are not designed as preschools might be used
  - Quite few – around 30
- White paper about outdoor life 2001
  - Preschools that focus on outdoor activities don't need to fill the building standards



# The number explodes after 2000!

- General increase in the sector
- Cheap and fast to establish
- Parents are positive
- Very engaged personell

# What characterizes the nature preschools in Norway?

Lysklett (2005) and Berger (2013)

- The majority of nature preschools are private
- They are small units
- They spend a lot of time outdoors
- They use regular reference areas
- They focus on developing motor skills, social skills and knowledge about nature

## Headmasters brief statement:

**“We spend a lot of time outdoors”**



## Headmasters brief statement:

**The day-care center is located in or near beautiful natural areas”**



## Headmasters brief statement:

**“We want the children to have good outdoor experiences and learn about nature”**



# How much time do the nature pre-school spend outdoors per day?

Outdoor time per day	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
2 - 4 hours	<b>10%</b>	<b>31%</b>		
4 - 6 hours	<b>59%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>13%</b>
More than 6 hours	<b>31%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>87%</b>

# When they spend so much time outdoors, what do they do?

- most nature pre-schools take trips or walks away from the day-care center
- visit "reference areas" (RAs) outside the preschool
- on average, the nature preschools have more than 5 different RAs
- these RAs are most often non-cultivated areas and are used every day by 56% of the 39 centers

# What characterizes the reference areas?

exciting and  
challenging



access to small hiding places



access to  
campfire  
and  
gathering  
place



not free  
of risks





# How do they organize it?

Invisible borders



# Waiting places

First waiting place



Second waiting place



# Mild sanctiones

- Stay close to the buildings
- Walk together with the adults
- Stay in sight

# A normal day-scedule

- 0730 – 0900 Breakfast and indoor play
- 0930 – 1000 Children dresses
- 1000 Start to walk to the reference area
- 1030 Time to play
- 1100 Lunch
- 1130 Pedagogical activity or play
- 1330 Fruit
- 1345 Return to buildings
- 1415 Food, free play or pedagogical activity inndoor or outdoor
- 1630 Preschool is closing



# Children have benefited from being in nature preschool

- The children have a freer life
  - “I feel that we have greater freedom, we are in the woods from that time to that time – and then we get a little out of reach of the world around” male respondent
  - “it is much freer, I feel, both for adults and for children. It is much easier” female respondent

# More benefites

- Rooms for spontaneous specialization
  - ” we make us a little out of reach of the world around. And then we can immerse ourselves in what we at all times interested in, whether it is ants or mushrooms”
- Make children close to nature
  - “For there to love nature, love to walk outdoors and learn what you can do in the nature”



# The children develop great motor skills

- ” To walk in the heather or on the roots is a surface that provides very different challenges to motor skills. The children develop stamina and ... and gross and fine motor coordination and balance”
- Supported by different studies (Fjørtoft, 2000, Fiskum, Estil & Gundersen, 2005 and Vigsø & Nielsen, 2006)

# The children become conscious and independent and respect invisible boundaries

- " And then we had very clear boundaries on where they could go. So we showed confidence. And they took responsibility ... So they are very independent the children in outdoor preschool"
- "I think the kids get a lot of freedom under the responsibility with us. Once in the woods we rely on the kids relate to the invisible fences we have chosen. "
- " when we are at a new place where we have not been before, so we agree on how - how the invisible fence can go. If they are outside they must be accompanied by us"

# Nature preschools connects to nature

- The trust
  - Freedom
  - Selfmanaging
  - Selfconfidence
  - Feel safe and home
- 
- **A strong connection to nature is then established!**

**Thank you  
for your  
attention!**

