

Institutionen för didaktik och pedagogisk profession

What is going on out there?

- What does it mean for children's experiences when the kindergarten is moving their everyday activities into the nature - landscapes and its places?

av

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Abstract

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How we understand the practice of learning in nature-landscapes and places is relevant to contemporary environmental arenas, both in the context of international agendas and as an agenda for Nordic kindergartens where spending most of their day outdoors is a common practice. In this study, I question the deterministic models for environmental learning and examine what it means for children to be in nature. To do so I made an empirical study focusing on the children's own experiences by asking the questions: What is going on out there? What does it mean for the children's experiences when the kindergarten is moving their everyday activities into the nature-landscapes and places? In exploring these questions a critical approach on the educational ideas of this practice is implicated.

The empirical material is drawn from a field-study conducted over a period of ten months in two Norwegian kindergarten groups that spent most of their everyday life outdoors in nature dominated landscapes and places. The data are constructed by using narrative inquiry. The theoretical resources are rooted in existential phenomenology and critical hermeneutics. Within the study the notion of 'experience' is perceived to be a key concept that relates to different aspects; learning, nature, places and landscapes; play, and the 'sense of wonder'.

Each of the four studies offers different discourses presented through the narrative inquiry. Such discourses reveal perspectives that are relevant for further development of the practice of learning in nature. The first topic concerns the multi-sensory aspects of how children dwell and move in landscapes related to their imaginary play. This constitutes the children's creation of meaning of landscapes and places. The second topic considers the didactics of outdoor learning and the discourse of play and learning, the third topic relates to environmental learning and environmental consciousness. The final topic considers how children playing in nature organise clans and develop democratic practices. I view all these discourses as important constituents for developing practices for learning in nature, and thus this study makes an important contribution to current environmental discussions in both international and Nordic arenas.