Special issue: Superdiversity and the Nordic Model in ECEC

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The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) are known for continually scoring high in quality of life and children’s outcomes, with a specific focus on democracy and equality. The region, with a combined population of over 26 million people, is considered innovative in implementing forward thinking policy development to support a spread out population. The success of the Nordic region has much to do with specific culture and policies around well-established political intentions for families, children and preschool to allow stable funding, curriculum, guidelines and laws to be implemented (UNESCO, 2008). The success is often discussed in terms of the ‘Nordic model’, with a focus on promoting equality and independence for all, with equal opportunities for men and women. This has also meant reforms to support parents, such as child allowances, parental leave and provision for preschool for all children. How Nordic countries do this differs across region. However, Nordic early childhood education and care have some commonality with shared values and pedagogy around children being democratic, active, reflective, independent and large amounts of the day dedicated to play (inside and outside).

Due to the increasingly intensified migration of the recent years, the Nordic countries are undergoing notable demographic changes where its ‘old’ diversities are being complemented with ‘new’ ones (Vertovec 2015; Dervin 2013 for diversities as plural). Thereby also a growing number of their ECEC settings have increasingly become microcosms for the complex patterns of migration. The intersecting dynamic of diversities within both the society at large and the cultural and religious minority groups—or superdiversity (Vertovec 2007)—is increasingly manifest in the ECEC educational settings, influencing all its operational levels from the educational contents and methods to educational partnership with families. After all, ECEC is often the first societal arena for migrant background families and children to enter and negotiate their values and identities, cultural and national memberships. Migration host countries have employed different policies and structures for dealing with diversity; for example children’s language skills are commonly well supported especially in terms of the majority language of the host country. However, much less is known about the encountering of their cultural and religious or worldview identities in ECEC. This is particularly relevant when it comes to religious worldviews, which may be in stark contrast with the Swedish societal landscape of religions and worldviews: although Lutheranism is closely entwined with nation-construction in the Nordic countries (Thomasson 2015; Poulter et al 2016; Lappalainen 2006; Berglund 2013), for example the Swedish society is, according to the Inglehart—
Welzel Cultural Map and the World Values Survey, one of the most secularised countries in the world (situation of 2015). This may create notable tensions of exclusion and otherness also in the ECEC context (Poulter et al 2016; Lappalainen 2009).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the ECEC and the Nordic Model, it is essential to further explore the complexities of superdiversity in relation to these. According to Vertovec (2019), superdiversity points to the new migration patterns and that not only included different combinations of traits such as gender and age, but that their various combinations and the dynamic interaction between these has created new hierarchical social positions, thereby generating new patterns of segregation, prejudice and inequality, and emerging forms of racism. Furthermore, he sees that these societal changes have also brought along new experiences of space and “contact” as well as new forms of cosmopolitanism, and creolization which Vertovec connects to the recent discussions of conviviality and multiculture. (Vertovec 2019.) By this means, we are interested in how these societal movements and alterations influence the Nordic ECEC—for example its policies, practices, pedagogies, and daily encounters. How the changes are rooted in the sociohistorical developments in the Nordic settings, and how the diversities within both the minorities and what is perceived as the majority in any given context are visible in the ECEC. What is ECEC like as a space for the “contact” and encounters, and how are new forms of citizenship and belonging—or marginalization or exclusion—concretized in the Nordic ECEC settings.

The proposed SI will explore these and related issues. The aim is to create a space to consider the concept of superdiversity within the Nordic region within the field of early childhood education and care. The SI will explore tensions and exclusion of otherness in Nordic ECEC contexts. The SI welcomes submissions that attend the significance of how children, families and teachers encounter different cultural, religious and worldview perspectives and identities and what structures are in place for dealing with diversity.

Papers of 4000 – 6000 words are invited according to the following timeline:

- Abstract submissions 300 words, 5 keywords, and a short 200 word author biography: 25th September 2019
- Authors notified of abstract acceptance: 25th November 2019
- Draft papers due: 31st April 2020
- Revised papers due: 31st July 2020
Published in December 2020

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References


