

# Nordic ECEC Policies: Principles and Practices

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➤ Why preschool in Sweden rocks and what we can learn from them

➤ Iceland is a children's paradise: Children rule Iceland

➤ Kids Gone Wild: Denmark's Forest Kindergartens

➤ Norway shows the way in childcare

➤ The joyful, illiterate kindergartners of Finland



# The Nordic Model

- The idea of universal ECEC services is embedded in the Nordic educational policies.
- Children have the right to attend full day ECEC programmes.
- Early childhood education is considered national responsibility.
- Institutionalized childhood has become part of the cultural belief system.
- Virtually all children attend ECEC from their early years.
- Nordic ECEC policies are not homogeneous.







Assist parents, who for various reasons could not take sufficient care of their children.

Rapid urbanization taking place, which demanded a more protected environment for children.

Increasing parental employment in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The children: their education, development, and social upbringing



# Curriculum Guidelines

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- In the beginning ECEC were mainly social-welfare institutions emphasizing children's happiness, play, and social development through caregiving
- Today, all the Nordic countries have National curriculum guidelines for early childhood education.
- The guidelines illustrate both philosophy and practice and reflect the values of the society.
- Nordic study on ece policy (Einarsdottir, Purola, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015).





# Democracy

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- Teaching democracy
- Lived democracy

Preschool should give children co-determination, joint responsibility and understanding and experience of democracy (Denmark, 2018)

By participating in the kindergarten community, the children shall be able to develop an understanding of society and the world in which they live (Norway, 2017)



# Democracy: Collective/Individual

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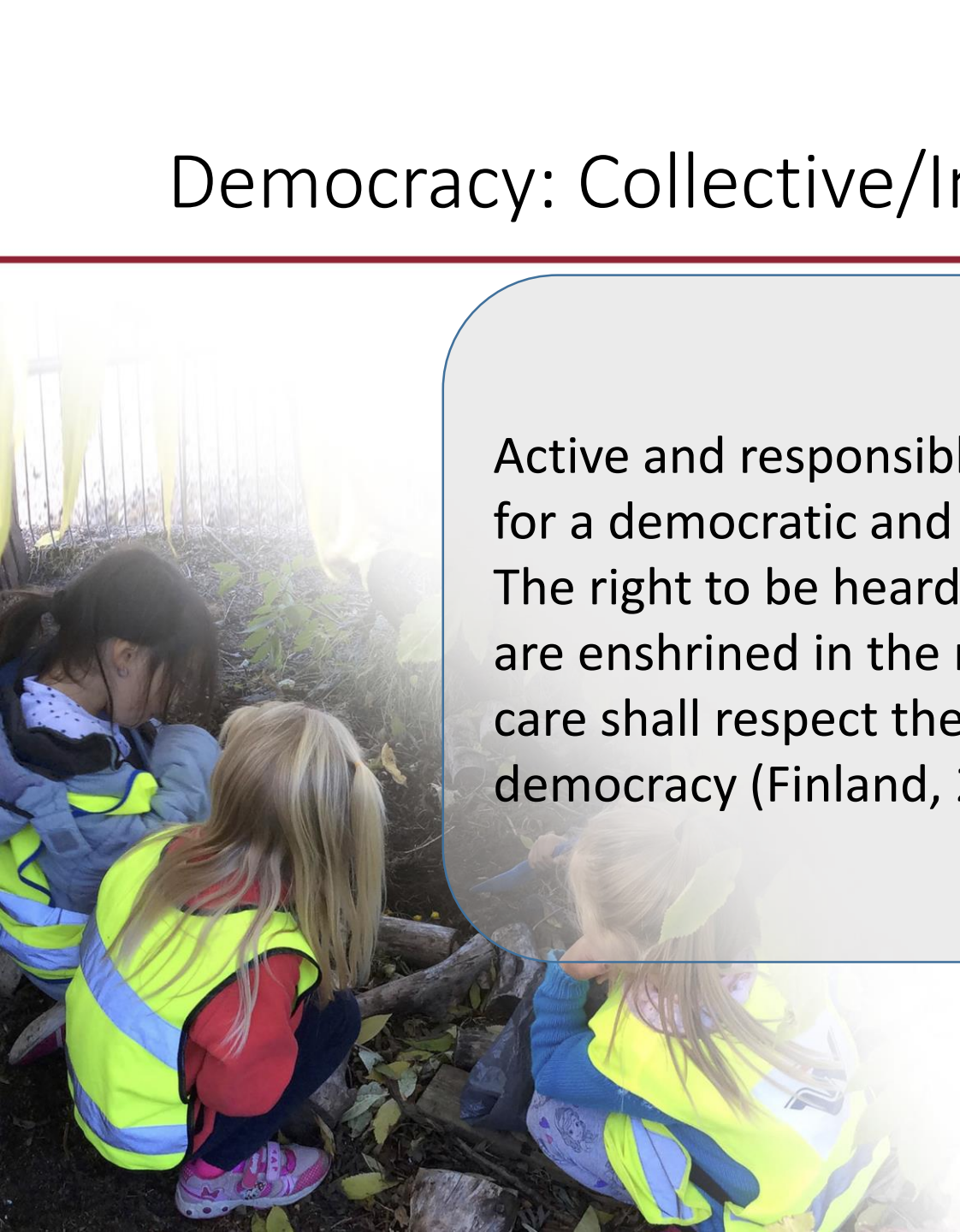


Democratic preschool practices are based on equality, diversity, shared responsibility, solidarity, and acceptance of different views. At preschool, children are to feel that they are part of a group and a community where justice and respect characterize relations (Iceland, 2011).



# Democracy: Collective/Individual

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A photograph of three young children sitting on the ground in a wooded area. They are wearing bright yellow safety vests over their clothing. The child on the left is a girl with dark hair, the middle one is a girl with blonde hair, and the one on the right is a girl with blonde hair. They appear to be engaged in an outdoor activity. The background is slightly blurred, showing trees and foliage.

Active and responsible participation and involvement create a foundation for a democratic and sustainable future...

The right to be heard and involvement in issues affecting one's own life are enshrined in the rights of the child. Early childhood education and care shall respect these principles central to the implementation of democracy (Finland, 2016)





# Care

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In cooperation with parents, preschools should give children care and support their well-being, learning, development and Bildung in order to contribute to children's good and safe childhood (Denmark, 2018).



# Dimensions of Care

- Fulfilment of basic needs
- Children's learning and development
- Ethical and emotional relationship
  - *It is the educator's responsibility to provide the children with care, and it is one of the rights of children to experience care.*
  - *Children should learn and develop compassion for other people*





# Dimensions of Care

In everyday preschool activities, the emphasis should be on caring, consideration and mutual assistance for everyone. When the occasion arises, solidarity and compassion for other people should be discussed. Respect for uniqueness and the opinions of every individual should be respected and children encouraged in their daily relations (Iceland, 2011).





# Competency

A background image showing three young children sitting on a light-colored floor, engaged in a large-scale art project. They are using green and brown paint to create a map-like design. One child in the foreground is wearing a black t-shirt with the word 'ACTION' printed on the back. A small paint tray is visible on the floor near the children.

- Social competence
  - Interaction, cooperation, solidarity, empathy, being able to take the perspective of others
- Socio-emotional
  - self-esteem, self-image, self-confidence

The preschool should give children support to develop a positive picture of themselves as learning and creative individuals, (Sweden, 2011).



# Competency

- Learning areas or content areas

- *Language, literacy and communication*
- *Health, physical and emotional well-being*
- *Nature, environment and science*
- *Mathematical concepts: numbers, signs, patterns, etc.*
- *Culture*
- *Creativity and the arts*



# Competency

A background image showing three young children sitting on a light-colored floor, engaged in a project. They are using green and brown paint to create a map-like representation on the floor. One child in the foreground is focused on painting a green area, while two others are visible behind them, also working on the project. A small paint tray is on the floor near the child in the foreground.

- Learning areas or content areas
  - Integration, individual interests

...the previous experiences of children, their interests, and their competences are the starting point for learning. It is important that new knowledge and skills learned by children are connected to their developing competences as well as the world they experience and their cultural backgrounds.  
(Finland, 2016)





# Play

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Play shall be a key focus in kindergarten, and the inherent value of play shall be acknowledged. Kindergartens shall make good provision for play, friendship and the children's own culture. Play shall be an arena for the children's development and learning and for social and linguistic interaction. Kindergartens shall inspire and make room for different kinds of play both outdoors and indoors. (Norway, 2017)



# Learning from Peers

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Through interaction with each other they [children] form the foundation for learning and social competence (Norway, 2017).





- Transitions between preschool and primary school
- Participation of parents.
- All the curricula are open and leave much space to the preschool professionals to decide on the methods.





# Challenges

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1) Increasing globalization and immigration



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- 2) Push-down of formalized pedagogical approaches



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- 1) Increasing globalization and immigration
- 2) Push-down of formalized pedagogical approaches
- 3) Accountability and standardised assessment





# Challenges

- Local vs. global;
- Nordic childhood vs. international trends;
- Cultural heritage vs. multiculturalism;
- Universal practices vs. diversity;
- Individualism vs. commonalities;
- Experiences vs. learning outcomes
- Play vs. formal education;



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# THANK YOU



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