

The key characteristics of Danish/Nordic child care culture ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full article available upon request ^[2]

ABSTRACT

As globalization has escalated over the years, interest in studying the differences and similarities between child care in a range of countries and cultures has also increased. This chapter focuses on the characteristics of the Danish/Nordic child care tradition. The OECD report "Starting Strong" (Starting strong II: early childhood education and care. OECD Publishing, Paris, 2006) describes two general trends within child care policy - an English/French tradition emphasizing the child care centers as preschool and the Nordic tradition, which has a socio-educational approach. The present chapter highlights what characterizes the special Danish/Nordic tradition in everyday child care practices. This has been studied partly through observations conducted by foreign researchers, and partly through our "own eyes," i.e., a Danish study on the differences between Danish and American child care cultures. With these starting points, the article sums up the special qualities that are found to characterize the Danish/Nordic child care culture - the homely atmosphere, the informality and personal relationships between pedagogues and children, and the children's freedom to play and influence everyday life. The article explores how these special characteristics are closely linked to historical developments in the Nordic region, from industrialization to today, when growing democratization has also given children a voice in society. Topics discussed include, e.g., German philosopher F. Fröbel's thoughts on the importance of children's free play in natural surroundings, the Danish reform pedagogy, and developmental psychology and their influence on the values and conventions that are part of the Danish/Nordic tradition. Finally, the various aspects of the Danish/Nordic tradition are discussed in relation to English/American child care.

Region: Europe ^[3]

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