

1. Scientific quality and novelty of the project

The proposed series of workshops aim to support the development of a new joint Nordic research area with a focus on children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing within the Nordic education system: preschool, compulsory school and leisure-time pedagogy for children and youth aged 0-18 years. The project includes leading researchers from the Nordic countries within the field of education in relation to social and emotional wellbeing.

The social and emotional wellbeing of children and youth is a comprehensive field of research especially in international context (Ottova-Jordan et al., 2015; Alemán-Díaz et al., 2018; De Looze et al., 2020), where comparisons are also made across countries (Holstein et al., 2009; Martorano et al., 2013a, 2013b; Potrebny et al., 2017). A number of researchers in the various Nordic countries have also contributed with significant knowledge (e.g. Skogen et al., 2018; Torsheim et al., 2018, Honkasilta et al., 2019).

In both international and Nordic research it is still discussed how to define the concept of wellbeing, but also that the concept holds a duality between the positive and negative manifestations of wellbeing. Social and emotional wellbeing of children and youth has been found to be associated with positive self-esteem, joy of life, positive social relations, participation in communities, as well as the ability to learn and complete school and education (Huppert, 2009; Jeppesen et al., 2020). On the other hand, decline in wellbeing are associated with sadness, loneliness, somatic disorders, learning difficulties, as well as diagnoses covered by the diagnostic categories of mental disorders, such as ADHD, Asperger's, anxiety and depression (Torsheim et al., 2018). These diagnoses are often referred to as general and fundamental developmental disorders, behavioral disorders and personality disorders according to the current diagnostic classification manuals.¹

However, there seems to be a need for a more unified Nordic focus, which incorporates the welfare states of the Nordic countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 2000a, 2000b; Esping-Andersen et al., 2012) and the so-called social democratic model. This model is characterized by the fact that virtually all children attend play-based preschool before school starts, all children and young people have the right to access high-quality schooling free of charge, and leisure-time pedagogy being an offer for every child regardless of social background (Berntsson & Ringsberg, 2014; Petersen, 2020, 2021). In recent years, preschools in the Nordic countries have increasingly been focusing on early intervention and information on children with various forms of mental health problems conceptualized as early preventive measures (Vik, 2015; Koch, 2016; Lipponen et al., 2018; Villumsen & Petersen, 2020). At the same time, the identification of children with mental health problems for the vast majority of children are not identified until school entry where studies show that boys in particular experience dissatisfaction (in the form of behavioral difficulties, or suspicions of developmental diagnoses). On the other hand, girls' discontent is often not identified until later in the form of loneliness, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders (Lindgren & Lindblad, 2010; Karvonen et al., 2018; Damsgaard & Madsen, 2020).

¹ ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases) under WHO (The World Health Organization). This diagnostic classification manual is also included in the disease classification of the Danish Health Authority in Denmark. DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) is the American disease classification and serves as tool in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Studies in the Nordic countries have identified an increase in the number of children and young people who receive diagnoses such as anxiety, depression, ADHD and Asperger and the increase of medication has increased year by year (Jeppesen et al., 2020). Children diagnosed with these disorders have increased school absenteeism, and express unhappiness about school attendance, feelings of loneliness, experiences of teasing and bullying, feelings of being left out or excluded from communities, both in school and after school context (Skogen et al., 2018; Hämäläinen et al., 2020; Petersen 2020, 2021). They also have an increased risk of mental and somatic diseases later in adulthood, difficulties in completing youth education and maintaining connection to the labor market (Lempinen et al., 2018).

At the same time, studies show that the inequality in regard to social and emotional wellbeing among children and young people is extensive (Arnesen, 2017; Loft & Waldfogel, 2021). Several studies within the Nordic countries have revealed that the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in school is associated with parents' socio-economic background. Children from low-income families and children and young people of ethnic minority background, experience higher degrees of decline in wellbeing throughout their schooling (Sernhede, 2018; Arnesen, 2017; Petersen, 2021) and they are faring worse in the school system than their peers (Ragnarsdóttir & Lefever, 2018). Similarly, research on children's belonging in preschools in the Nordic countries have illustrated unbelonging, exclusion, and marginalization, particularly for children with individual needs and minority backgrounds (Purola et al. 2021; Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2021; Juutinen, 2018; Sadownic, 2018), while research within leisure-time pedagogy shows that children and young people from low-income families in particular participate in leisure and youth clubs. This is the lowest cost offer for families, which often means that leisure and youth clubs engage in children and young people with various forms of mental health problems and thus the expansion of the pedagogical work to include intervention that prevent exclusion processes and require an increased collaboration with parents and school (Fredriksson et al., 2018; Petersen & Sørensen, 2021).

Novelty of the project

Many researchers within the Nordic countries focus on social and emotional wellbeing, as well the rising decline in wellbeing of children and young people within the preschool, school and leisure-time pedagogy. However, often a research-based view of either preschool, or school, or leisure and youth clubs is maintained and the research-based knowledge therefore appears divided and separate, rather than collective and connected.

The novelty of this project is its aim of unifying Nordic researchers who conduct research within preschool, school, and leisure-time pedagogy, in order to explore the social and emotional wellbeing and content of children and young people in a holistic perspective through early childhood, child life and youth. This is based on the fact that in the Nordic welfare states children and young people's everyday life and development is embedded in and connected to their participation in preschool, school and leisure-time institutions (Hedegaard et al., 2018). The fact that children and young people's everyday life in the Nordic welfare states are embedded in institutional context also places considerable demands on the professionals, e.g. pedagogues and schoolteachers. In this context, their working conditions are constantly changing and both pedagogues in preschool and leisure activities as well as schoolteachers aim at a growing demand for help in dealing with the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people as well as the decline in wellbeing (van Geelen & Hagquist, 2016; Norðdahl & Jóhannesson, 2016; Kamali, 2018; Fredriksson et al, 2018; Berntsson et al., 2001).

The novelty of the proposed workshops is also its aim to unify researchers from the Nordic countries and create opportunities for exploring, collaborating, and comparing across the Nordic countries. At the same time, the novelty is the opportunity for interdisciplinary work, in which sociological, pedagogical, philosophical, psychological, and anthropological perspectives are compiled and contribute with different theoretical and methodological angles on the social and emotional wellbeing, but also the decline in wellbeing of children and young people within the Nordic education system.

2. Nordic added value

In relation to NordForsk's definition of Nordic added value, defined in two main categories; 1. Added value generated because the research collaboration is taking place in the Nordic region and 2. Added value generated because the research can only be carried out in the Nordic region, this Nordic network is within both categories.

The Nordic network will engage in an interdisciplinary research approach to discussion, analysis, and development of knowledge about children and youth wellbeing within the educational institutions in the Nordic welfare states. Both preschool, school, and leisure-time pedagogy within the social democratic model provide opportunities for pedagogical work to promote the wellbeing of children and youth and to develop knowledge of which initiatives are particularly relevant to the wellbeing of children and young people based in the Nordic welfare states.

The establishment of a Nordic network will expand the opportunities for new research across the Nordic countries and at the same time pave the way for the promotion of Nordic research internationally. The emphasis will be on exploring connections between preschool, school and leisure-time pedagogy and the work of the welfare state's professionals with children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing as a unique Nordic contribution to the international research. The outcomes of the network are also expected to create opportunities for an increased number of high-quality scientific articles and at the same time open up for research collaboration between the Nordic network and international colleagues on future research applications within the EU.

3. Explorative workshops setup and process

The participants in the workshops come from five Nordic countries (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden) and are located in various scientific disciplines, which forms the basis for working interdisciplinary in educational research. Out of the 17 participants, are seven early stage researcher² and eight are women.³ Early stage researchers are also included as speakers and discussants at conferences and as organizers and representatives of the planned workshops as well as in publication in joint issue and in research application. The participants engage in both preschool, compulsory school, leisure and youth clubs and are

² Early stage researchers include PhD students, postdoc and junior researchers who are at the early stage of their career, e.g. employed as assistant professors.

³ The Nordic network follows the Nordic universities' focus on promoting women's academic careers. See for example <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/legislative-policy-backgrounds/sweden>; <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/strategy/gender-balance-in-research/translate-to-english-au-gender-equality-plan>

engage in the Nordic welfare state, including the work, conditions and challenges of the welfare state's professionals in different institutional contexts.

No major ethical issues are expected. Participation in the local/national workshops will be voluntary and the participants can withdraw at any time. Should ethical issues arise the research group will consult with AU's local Committee for Responsible Conduct of Research and relevant local or national bodies. The project will be registered with the Danish Data Protection Agency following the standard procedure at AU, and all researchers in the group follow both national and international guidelines of responsible ethical research practice: <https://forskerportalen.dk/en/good-scientific-practice/>

For each workshop, we will invite prominent international and Nordic keynote speakers and present papers from all members of the network. The two workshops will elapse for three days. Day one is focused on presentations and discussions in the network group, while day 2 invites practioners from the fields to discussion and reflection on preschool, schools as well as the function and impact of leisure and youth clubs related to the work with promoting the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people as well as practice-related issues related to this. The last part of day 2 as well as the morning of day 3 is reserved for joint discussions of the work with the research application and the planning of articles of a special issue theme to be published in the Journal of Nordic Studies in Education. The preparatory meetings for the two planned workshops, as well as the subsequent work meetings, will take place via zoom to reduce the number of meetings held in person in consideration of CO2 and environmental pollution.

WS1: Children and youths social and emotional wellbeing within the Nordic educational system

26-28 April 2023, 09.00-16.00, Workshop held at Reykjavik University, Iceland

Host: professor Johanna Einarsdottir, (Iceland)

Day 1 Morning

Invited keynote speaker:

Emeritus Professor Peter Moss "Early childhood education and child well-being: some international reflections". (confirmed)

Professor Brenda Taggart "How daycare and school promote social and emotional wellbeing" (confirmed)

Approx. 25 participants: Network members, keynote speakers, local research community.

Day 1 Afternoon

The researcher's presentations based on his or her own work. Here, the researchers of the network will present papers based on their specific scientific disciplines in relation to children and young people's social and mental wellbeing within the Nordic welfare states institutions.

Day 2 The contribution of knowledge from the field of practice

Participation of the field of practice/nonacademic field– working groups with a focus on identifying the experiences of the field of practice when working with children and young people's wellbeing and decline in wellbeing. Practitioners from both preschool, compulsory

school and leisure-time pedagogy, as well as policymakers are invited (confirmed) with a focus on exploring the following questions with the researchers.

How to develop practice in order to promote the wellbeing of children and young people? What are the professional challenges related to this? What are the opportunities for preschool, compulsory school and leisure-time pedagogy in order to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people? How may the collaboration between the different institutional contexts help children and young people who have been diagnosed with, for instance, anxiety, depression, ADHD and Asperger or the development of children and youth with whom the teachers and pedagogues are concerned?

The day is organized with presentations from the network members during the morning and with a series of workshops during the afternoon where the practice field contributes based on the above questions. In preparation for the program of the day, the practice field will receive these questions in advance.

Approx. 50 participants: Network members, practitioners, local research community.

Day 3 Work with research application and articles to be published in the journal

Summarizing presentations and discussions from day 1 and 2, as well as work with joint research application and discussion of article contributions to common theme issue

Approx. 17 participants: Network members

WS2: Inequality in social and emotional wellbeing

- Preschools, schools, and leisure and youth clubs for children and youth with mental health problems

Host: Associate professor Kirsten Elisa Petersen (Denmark) together with associate professor Juho Honkasilta (Finland).

28-30 September 2023, 09.00-16.00, at Aarhus University, campus Emdrup, Copenhagen, Denmark

Day 1 Morning

Invited keynote speakers:

Professor Ove Sernhede, Sweden (confirmed) Between resignation and faith in the future

Professor Tomi Kiilakoski, Finland (confirmed) TBA

Day 1 Afternoon

Presentations and discussions from researchers in the group with a focus on first draft of articles to the journal.

Approx. 20 participants: Network members, keynote speakers,

Day 2 The contribution of knowledge from the field of practice

Pedagogues from both preschools, leisure and youth clubs, and teachers from compulsory school are invited as well as policymakers (confirmed) with a focus on discussing processes of inequality, exclusion and stigmatization of children and young people with diagnosis based on the following questions to be explored with the researchers.

How does the field of practice experience inequality in their everyday work with children and young people diagnosed with mental health problems – what pedagogical interventions can be initiated to prevent inequality, social exclusion and stigmatization? How do the various institutions work together to promote the wellbeing of children and young people?

Approx. 50 participants: Network members, practitioners, local research community.

Day 3

Work on a joint research application and continue the work on a special issue theme to be published in the Journal of Nordic Studies in Education.

Approx. 17 participants: Network members

4. Outcomes of the workshop series

1) Scientific output

-Symposium at the Nordic conference NERA, 2023

-Different Conference presentations, such as AERA, EECERA, EERA (paid through the researchers' own university)

-A special issue to be published in the Journal of Nordic Studies in Education in 2024 focusing on social and emotional wellbeing and decline in wellbeing of children and youth within the education system in the Nordic countries.

-A joint research application (NordForsk, DFF)

2) Dissemination of results to general public/non-academic stakeholders

A very important part of the network's work is to involve the professionals of the welfare state from both preschools, school and leisure and youth clubs and policymakers in the development of knowledge related to in what ways the pedagogical work can promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

A website will be created to present the work of the network as well as experience gathering with the field of practice.

Publication in teachers and pedagogues' academic journals with a view to disseminating practice-relevant knowledge as well as dissemination in the media and on social platforms.

Preparation of applications

Knowledge gathered through the two workshops and the zoom meeting produces a basis for applying for funding in a Nordic perspective (NordForsk, DFF). The three applicants have experience in leading both national as well as international research projects. At both workshops, time will be allocated to discuss and begin research applications working on developing knowledge across the Nordic countries, but also an opening for research applications involving the other EU countries (DFF; Cost, Horizon Europe).