

Bedford-Copenhagen Learning Exchange

B2 Group Visit: 21st - 25th September 2014

Børneuniversitetet

At the Children's University, students are taught in formal and informal learning spaces where respect and dignity are considered important tools in learning. The methods used, frameworks and school structure teach children to interact and be confident with the world around them.

The school's main philosophy is for students to develop the ability to enter into various collaborations (with each other, adults and other people in the wider community) so they feel that they individually and together can develop and learn something valuable. Tuition encourages activity independence and action, so new ideas are tested, disseminated and stored as experience.

They also believe that each child needs to be nurtured as an individual and expectations are realistic and depend on the child's abilities. They challenge and stretch children to achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves "so they are on their toes to learn new things - without losing their footing" as their website states.

The school use a variety of teaching methods. They challenge divergent thinking and encourage students to think in new ways and give them the basis for making informed and courageous choices in their lives.

Whilst at the school it quickly became apparent that things were done completely differently from the English school system. There was a very real lack of emphasis on the academic side of things for the younger children. It became apparent that the children are not taught these things until they are ready to learn. The first years of schooling provide children with a basis in learning to learn. They are confident, outspoken and mature compared to children the same age in England. It is hard as first to get past the children learning only a little academically but once you connect this to the rapid progress they seem to make in later years then it sits more comfortably.

Being a more liberal society also means that the children are treated like extended family by the adults in school and real bonds and relationships are formed from an early age. Teachers have no qualms about physical interaction with children and often cuddle them or, in some cases, perform massage therapy to calm the children down. One male teacher even had an eight year old girl sit on his lap for an entire presentation. This was a little unnerving for myself as a male teacher but by the time we left I had a better understanding of the culture in Denmark and I believe that parents would be upset if the teachers didn't show empathy and caring through physical contact.

As a result of the visit we have already discussed setting up family groups across the school. We enjoyed the experience and hope to utilise more of the philosophies we saw in the coming months.

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