Approaching Danish school children’s view on *udeskole* - a mixed methods study

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Lessons from Near and Far: Research and Policy
University of East London, 3rd July, 2015
Agenda

- Background
- Research design and methods
  - Phase 1: survey
  - Phase 2: focus groups
- Results from Phase 1
- Limitations
- Implications
Defining the gap

- Teachers’ use of the cultural or natural settings outside the classroom (Bentsen & Jensen, 2012)

- Positive impacts on
  - physical activity levels (E. Mygind, 2005, 2007)
  - social relations (E. Mygind, 2009, Hartmeyer and Mygind 2015)
  - use of language (Herholdt, 2003)

- Little attention to Danish school children’s experience of *udeskole*
Why are children’s views important?

- Children as group is particularly marginalised from decisions of importance to them

- Identification of
  - Unfulfilled potentials
  - Problem areas
  - What works for whom

- How do we know if something ‘works’, if we do not know how it is experienced?
Aim

- Explore Danish school children’s experience of *udeskole*
- Information for evaluating programmes within schools and communities
- Inform research, policy and practice
Research design

Pilot of survey

Quantitative data generation
- Breadth rather than depth
- Pre-determined topics and statements
- Gender and age based differences
- Topics for further, in-depth interviews

Qualitative data generation
- Depth rather than breadth
- Children’s own statements and words
- Room for new topics and perspectives
Survey

- 5 background questions
- 11 pairs of close-ended statements
- 7 close-ended statements about *udeskole*
- 1 open-ended question
What do we think *children* think of *udeskole*?

- Children like *udeskole*
- Younger children like *udeskole* more than older children
- Boys like *udeskole* more than girls
Results I: do younger children like *udeskole* more?

- I look forward to *udeskole*
- I like *udeskole* lessons
- School days with *udeskole* are the best days
Results II: do younger children like *udeskole* more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Sixth</th>
<th>(n=328)</th>
<th>(n=68)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like <em>udeskole</em> lessons</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand <em>udeskole</em> lessons</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have quarrels in <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.31**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel cold in <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for physical activity</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.04**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.34***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School days with <em>udeskole</em> best</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School days without <em>udeskole</em> best</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.99***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two sample Wilcoxon rank-sum (Mann-Whitney) test

* = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, *** = p<0.001
Results III: do boys like *udeskole* more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Girls (n=362)</th>
<th>Boys (n=327)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like <em>udeskole</em> lessons</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand <em>udeskole</em> lessons</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I look forward to <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have quarrels in <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel cold in <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for physical activity</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much <em>udeskole</em></td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School days with <em>udeskole</em> best</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School days without <em>udeskole</em> best</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, *** = p<0.001

Two sample Wilcoxon rank-sum (Mann-Whitney) test
Results IV: do boys like *udeskole* more?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>Udeskole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pay attention</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have hard time following</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.73**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons boring in</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.91***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can concentrate</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.83**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want group work</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.04***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My memory</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is noise</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>2.86***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am mostly on my own</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I decide play</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.4***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Wilcoxon signed-rank test*

* = p<0.05, ** = p<0.01, *** = p<0.001
What do *children* think of *udeskole*?

- Danish school children are positive towards *udeskole*
  - More positive about *udeskole* than classroom-based teaching
- No clear indication that the younger children like *udeskole* more than older children
- Boys are generally more positive towards *udeskole*
- Boys *gain* more from *udeskole* academically
"Udeskole is great and it would be great with more udeskole, but that leaves less time for maths, danish... "
Limitations

- Perceptions, not outcomes
- Children’s perspectives?
- Teacher feedback and observations
- Comparing apples and pears?
- Experienced *udeskole* schools – can results be expected to apply in other contexts?

Fine arts museums of San Francisco
Implications for practice

- *Udeskole* as useful tool for strengthening academic skills in especially boys?
  - Variation of indoor and outdoor based activities to accommodate all children
Implications for policy

- Involving children’s point of view to improve policy
  - Children are most affected by education policy
  - Identifying issues only visible to the children
  - Directing policy to accommodate all children
Acknowledgements

Peter Bentsen, Steno Health Promotion Research
Niels Ejbye-Ehrenst, VIA University College
Siri Jonina -Egede, University of Copenhagen
Camilla Roed Otte, University of Copenhagen

Thanks to the teachers, consultants and last but not least pupils for participating.
Questions or comments?

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Hartmeyer, R. & Mygind, E. (2015). The development of social relations in a Danish primary school class taught in ‘Udeskole’. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* [accepted]


Summary I

- Context: Danish school children in selected udeskole demonstration schools
- Method: Mixed methods (survey and subsequent focus group interviews)
- Results:
  - Self-reported data on perceptions of Danish udeskole
  - Children are overall positive towards udeskole
    - More positive about udeskole than classroom-based teaching
  - No clear indication that younger children like udeskole more than older children
  - Boys are generally more positive towards udeskole
  - Boys *gain* more from udeskole academically
Summary II

- Investigating Danish school children’s view on udeskole as a background for understanding potentials and pitfalls of udeskole from the point of view of the most affected

- Moving from positive outcomes for children to positive outcomes with children

- The bottom-up perspective provides a basis for evaluating and developing top-down policy and practise