

# Danish Udeskole: a school-based approach to foster children's connection to nature.

(Study 1 of a PhD Thesis "Exploration of pathways to Nature Connectedness within Udeskole practices in Denmark and their adaptation to schools in England).

Anastasia Bengry, Christopher Barnes,  
Jenny Hallam, Mads Bølling

<sup>1</sup>University of Derby, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Clinical Research and Prevention in  
Copenhagen, Denmark

Most educational settings worldwide offer children some form of interaction with nature, such as field trips, residential programs, outdoor or environmental education. Yet, not all of these settings actively foster a deeper connection to nature. This prompts the question:

**Which educational practices most effectively cultivate children's connection to nature, while simultaneously improving their well-being and how are these connections facilitated?**



This study focused on Danish Udeskole, a form of outdoor education embedded in the **curriculum** and **regularly** practiced with an emphasis on the local environment or school grounds.

This study represents **the first investigation to explore nature connection within Udeskole practices**. It aimed to incorporate a diversity of perspectives, including theoretical insights from previous research on nature connectedness and Udeskole, as well as cultural, social, and policy-related factors that may influence children's relationship with nature.

To achieve this, a qualitative design guided by a short-term ethnographic approach was employed. Data collection was structured to accommodate the time constraints of teacher participants, enabling the capture of rich insights into their perspectives on nature education through online *interviews* and intensive *observations* of live interactions between children and teachers during Udeskole and classroom lessons in Denmark.

## The findings.

- **four out of five pathways** to nature connectedness (contact, emotion, compassion, and meaning) were identified, whereas the pathway of beauty was not confirmed;
- **scientific enquiry** was identified as a potential new pathway through which children can develop nature connectedness within school settings.;
- **strong collective element** was found to further enhance children's connection to nature.

Overall, these results underscore the important role schools can play in fostering, modelling, and reinforcing children's relationships with the natural world.



## Further research: Study 2.

We are looking for Teachers, TAs, Outdoor Practitioners working with schools in England and Academics with an interest or experience in outdoor learning, child development or educational studies to take part in online Focus Groups.

**Danish teachers representing the Udeskole approach will share their experiences to inspire discussions about Nature Education in England.**

Get in touch with A. Bengry to find out more or to register your interest ([a.bengry1@unimail.derby.ac.uk](mailto:a.bengry1@unimail.derby.ac.uk))