

ON NATURE AND MOVEMENT.

AN INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE IN A DANISH FOREST KINDERGARTEN: BØGELY SKOVBØRNEHAVE

My name is Francesca. I come from Sardinia, one of the biggest Italian islands.

On April 2019 I graduated in Primary Education. With this degree I could work as a pedagogue in the kindergarten and as a teacher in the primary school.

My big dream is to work as a pedagogue. Kindergarten remember me my childhood as a magical and happy place full of adventures, discovers and beautiful friendships.

I believe that children have a lot to teach to adults. In fact, often adults in their growth forget their childhood and they daily run at work and in their life.

Children teach adults to take time to oneself and to others, to listen to friends, to play, to discover every day, to get excited, to dream and that list could be infinity.

During my internship experience in different kindergartens in Cagliari, I've seen that children spend the majority of their time inside the school room.

Gardens of kindergarten are often little and artificial. So children had to respect lots of prohibitions and they aren't free to play, to express themselves and to moves.

Lots of scientific studies maintain the importance of natural space for children where they can learn through their direct experience exploring, discovering and moving.

For these reasons I decided to start a research about forest kindergarten in Europe to know new way to do school connected to the importance of a pedagogy close to the nature.

The focus of my research was the forest kindergarten in Denmark because in this country born this kind of kindergarten. In fact today it represents an important institution.

In the Internet I read a beautiful report from the educators of an Italian association called "Fuori dalla scuola" , it means "Out of school building". In this report is described a visit in Bøgely Skovbørnehave. When I read it I becoming to dream the kindergarten. I love all about that report so I decided to write to the manager Anette.

Anette was very welcoming with me.

It was December 2017...

My Erasmus experience started at the end of July 2018.

When I arrived in Denmark I was very happy and curious to discover this beautiful country.

The first thing that I understood was that Danish really loves and respects nature and the binomial “nature – children” is essential. This first feeling was reinforced every single day that I live there.

I always remember the first day in the kindergarten. It was a sunny and warm day.

The way to come there is amazing, quiet, with infinite shades of colour, sounds and smells.

I was very excited and when I saw the kindergarten my heart beat very strong. I felt like in a familiar place and I felt welcomed from all.

I remember that day like a colourful day into the green forest in a warm big hug.

Children spoke Danish, I could speak English with pedagogies, parents and grandparents.

So this experience was very particular because me and children could communicate only with the body languages. It was wonderful. Children teach me lots of things and we learn from each others. Body languages are very important also when you can speak the same language of others.

Through this experience I reflected about myself, about others and how it is important our body especially when we work with children. They understand and detect all about ourselves, for this reason it is very important how adults instill emotions to children.

In Bøgely Skovbørnegrund all turn between children and nature, in particular with the big forest that surrounded the kindergarten.

All learnings in the kindergarten are connected with direct experiences made to children that use their body and their senses every day to discover and express themselves.

This is very important for children: for the development of their identity, autonomy, competences, and to start to understand the importance of the involved citizenship.

I strongly believe that this tight union between environment and children is essential.

Unfortunately in Sardinia, and in Italy in general, this aspect is underestimated.

Frequently children in the kindergarten never spend time outside. For example they learn seasons inside the school buildings by didactic forms: without see the change of the trees during the year, without smell spring or winter scents, without listen nature's sounds, without manipulate natural materials.

My questions are: How can children learn without experiment by their bodies and senses? How they can learn the infinity shade of nature's colours if they spend the majority of their time inside? How they can learn to write if they rarely manipulate and use their hands to do something that they like to do? How they can fall in love of knowledge if they spend the majority of their time doing artificial things not connected with their real world? ...

In Italy, like in Denmark, there is an important document called " The National Indications ". It is a guide that pedagogues and teachers should follow in their work. This document is very beautiful and well written in the theory. There you can read, for instance, the importance for children to learn at school in a natural environment through the discover, the direct experience, the body and movement. This entails an environment of learning with specific characteristics: it shouldn't be only an artificial environment.

It needs a natural environment where children really can learn by doing every day in a natural way.

So, Why in the Italian kindergarten children spend the majority of their time inside with lots of prohibitions? Where is contemplated the learning by discover? How they can develop their body and their personality if they can't free move?

I believe that all pedagogies, teachers and adults had to confront each others about this serious point because childhood is the most important period of the life and adults have a big responsibility.

I hope in my work, in my little, to change something and to sensitise educators and parents about the importance of nature in children development.

The internship experience in Bøgely represents one of the best experience in my life and in my work that I safeguard in my heart forever.

Thanks to the big Bøgely's family.

List of good advice to live a wonderful experience in Bøgely skovbørnehave:

- Forget the indoor education in a kindergarten.
- Open your mind to learn big wonders.
- Become again a children.
- Slow down: don't run!
- Take time to observe children: routines, needs, emotions, plays, and way to communicate with pairs and adults.
- Observe with big attention and respect the forest.
- Try to understand the big connection between children learnings and nature.
- Observe the relationship between children and adults.
- Welcoming changes into yourself during this strong experiences: you will change in your life and in your work!
- If you are a pedagogue or a teacher try to practice, step by step, the outdoor education in your kindergarten or in your school.