

HVL - Overview of collaboration with Chinese universities and kindergartens

HVL has since 2003 been collaborating with the following universities and institutes in China within Early Childhood Education: Beijing Normal University, Beijing Institute of Education and East China Normal University. The collaboration has comprised educational collaboration, research collaboration and development of a China-Norway kindergarten network. Associate professor Åsta Birkeland has headed this collaboration since 2003.

The collaboration has been supported by SIU in 2012 and as an UTFORSK project in 2014-2015 and 2017-2020. ERASMUS+ student scholarship have been granted two times including grants for 7 professors and 10 students.

The collaboration is now part of the KINDknow - Kindergarten Knowledge Centre for Systemic Research on Diversity and Sustainable Futures at HVL headed by Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard. <https://www.hvl.no/en/about/kindergarten-knowledge-centre/>

Education for Sustainable Futures

An overall reason for collaboration is that the youngest citizens represent the future of our societies. It is important that we raise children anchored locally with global awareness and responsibility. This implies that *Education for Sustainable Future* (ESF) is an overarching topic for the collaboration, focusing on the environmental, social/cultural and economic aspects of ESF. This topic is of mutual interest where we can benefit from collaboration.

The students and kindergartens share ideas and concrete examples and “best practices” of working with ESF. The researchers involved are interested in developing understanding of the concept within Curriculum studies, case studies and doing comparative quantitative studies. ECE research in China and Norway have different traditions within quantitative and qualitative research. This fact contributes for the benefit of our collaboration and joining the same research group.

Up to 2018, our target for collaboration has been kindergartens and universities in Bergen, Beijing and Shanghai. In 2018, researchers from BNU and HVL decided to expand the collaboration to other provinces in China. This decision was based upon the challenges within ECE in the western part of China. In June 2018, a delegation of official representatives and key principals within ECE from Gansu, Yunnan and Guizhou participated in a 14 days program in Bergen, focusing on Education for Sustainable Futures. The intention of the program was to share ideas about ESF and share examples of best practices. The topic was illuminated in lectures, seminars, internships and reports. By the end of the program, the stakeholders decided to follow up this initial work.

The KINDknow research centre, was established August 1, 2018. Education for Sustainable Futures is the overarching topic for this centre and fits very well to the topic of the initial work with Gansu, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces. Topics such as cultural sustainability, social equity, environmental protection and food production, conditions for children’s exploration will be focus for further research and educational activities. North West Normal University will be a part of this work.

The following is a short resume of the overall collaboration within ECE

Educational collaboration in undergraduate programs

- HVL has since 2004 been given a 30 ECTS course in *Cultural understanding and comparative education* for undergraduate students. The focus in this course is Early Childhood Education with a comparative focus on Norwegian and Chinese society/culture and kindergarten. The course includes a one-month program in China in collaboration with Beijing Institute of Education for a group of 25 students each fall (this year from October 9 – November 7). Altogether 250 students have attended this program.
- Student mobility from BNU and ECNU attending 30ECTS courses at HVL: *Education for Sustainability through children's participation, and Aesthetics and Outdoor Education*. Approximately 12 students from BNU and ECNU have attended these courses since 2016.

Educational collaboration within postgraduate programs

- HVL has since 2016 delivered a 15ECTS programme in the postgraduate studies named: *Intercultural pedagogy and glocal practices*. The programme includes students from HVL, BNU and ECNU and is partly based upon e-pedagogy including one month field work for students to host institutions.
- HVL and BNU is through the UTFORSK project planning a dual master programme within Early Childhood Education from 2021

Educational collaboration and teacher mobility

- Since 2004 there has been an extensive mobility of professors from HVL, BNU, ECNU and BJIE giving guest lectures, workshops and seminars in addition to research.

Research collaboration

- The collaboration started as an educational collaboration and has been expanded to research supported by the NFR financed research project *Kindergarten as an Arena for Cultural Formation*, through several UTFORSK projects financed by SIU and from 2018 the research centre *KINDknow*. ERASMUS + funding has strengthened these opportunities. Each HEI has also supported this collaboration.
- At the moment the research collaboration is gathered within the main topic: **Education for sustainable futures** and with several subtopics, such as food production in kindergartens, cultural sustainability, drama education, ethical codex, glocal teacher, conditions for exploration.....

China – Norway kindergarten network

The collaboration is also including a China-Norway kindergarten network. The kindergartens are participating in different ways.

- Making internship possible for the undergraduate students
- Making fieldwork possible for postgraduate students
- Being hosts for delegations from China/Norway with the Early Childhood Education field
- Collaborating and sharing practices on Education for Sustainable Futures
- Development projects guided by university professors

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Åsta Birkeland