

Meeting document for the  
3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Nordic Forum  
Copenhagen, 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2016

*Common challenges, findings and ideas for proposals for initiatives*

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After a practitioner workshop with 50 teachers representing all Nordic countries<sup>1</sup>, two meetings in the Nordic Forum and a research mapping of cross-Nordic educational research and remediating actors<sup>2</sup>, the Nordic Lighthouse Project has found a range of common challenges and findings across the Nordic region in terms of the use of research knowledge among practitioners working in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. Now the Nordic Lighthouse project is halfway, and it is time to take the next step and discuss possible solutions for these challenges.

Due to our common history and cultural heritage and the social similarities between our societies, there is a unique potential for collaboration and sharing of knowledge across the Nordic countries. Our similarities mean that research and practical experience can more easily be transferred from one Nordic country to another rather than between countries than are more different.

Firstly this brief will summarize our common challenges and findings with regard to use of research based knowledge among practitioners working in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education.

Secondly, ideas for proposals to be discussed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Nordic Forum will be presented. The ideas for proposals for initiatives are all based on the inputs from the Nordic Forum. However, it is important to highlight that the presented ideas should not be seen as set in stone, but rather as a starting point for discussions.

We would be grateful for the Nordic Forum's thoughts and comments on the ideas for proposals presented. However, as these ideas are only on the drawing board

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Themes/Nordic-Lighthouse-Project/Practitioner-Workshop>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Themes/Nordic-Lighthouse-Project>

and might be dropped or completely altered, we would appreciate that they are not presented outside the Nordic Forum.

## Common challenges and findings

It should be noted that some of the challenges listed below might not exist in every Nordic country. Also, the list does not necessarily represent the view of every member of the Nordic Forum.

- There is a lack of practice relevant and didactic research across the Nordic countries.
- The degree to which Nordic scholars and researchers in the field of Educational and Pedagogical Science communicate their findings to practitioners is limited.
- Lack of research communication that explicitly shows how a given research based tool/idea can be implemented and used in practice. Very few resources are used for communicating research results to practitioners, and little effort is made to remediate / translate new research knowledge into practice. If we wish that teachers and pedagogues to a greater extent use and implement new research informed knowledge in their professional practice, it is vital that this knowledge is remediated in a way that makes it actionable and relevant to practitioners. The need for incentives for universities and research institutions to remediate research knowledge has been highlighted by members of Nordic Forum across all the Nordic countries. Yet, many researchers and scholars might not attain the skills to communicate and remediate their research in a way that makes this knowledge accessible and applicable to practitioners. This task might require the assistance of professional communication specialists.
- Members of Nordic Forum have highlighted the need for greater sharing of educational and pedagogic research across the Nordic countries, as research and experiences gained in one Nordic country might often be very relevant and applicable to other Nordic countries due to our similar societies, cultures and norms. In order to improve such research sharing across the Nordic region, members of the Forum argue that a Nordic educational science database is needed. There are a few

national databases, but the search functions are poor, and there is no practice-oriented communication of research connected to these databases.

- Teachers and pedagogues often lack time, resources and in some cases the academic qualifications to read academic journals (often written in English) in order to be updated on the newest ideas and thoughts in their field.
- The recent decade of 'evidence agenda' and calls for a more evidence based practice have caused some concern among some Nordic teachers who feel that their professional autonomy is constrained. When reaching out to practitioners, it is important to establish an inclusive discourse and respect for teachers' practice knowledge. As one Nordic Forum member puts it: *Just as practice should be research informed, research must be practice informed.*
- There is a thin knowledge seeking culture in some of the pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary schools in the Nordic region. Creating a strong culture for seeking and implementing new research based and best practice knowledge, and providing the structural conditions and resources for cultivating such a knowledge seeking culture is essential.
- By promoting university-school partnerships and hereby connecting universities/research institutions and local schools, more practice relevant research might be produced. Moreover, such partnership is a way of communicating research to practice and engaging practitioners in some specific research as well as research based knowledge more generally. In other words, such partnerships might also have the positive effect that they can support a knowledge culture among the schools taking part. Working with the Lighthouse project, we have noticed a big commitment and ownership among teachers who have actively taken part in such partnerships.
- Among Nordic practitioners a particular interest in Nordic research has been noticed.
- Lack of economic or career incentives for researchers to communicate their research to practice and to focus on practice-relevant research.

- Lack of dialogue and feedback between research and practice. For several reasons this might be problematic. Firstly, it is problematic in terms of research addressing the issues and questions that practitioners consider relevant and useful. Secondly, without dialogue practitioners are unable to provide feedback to researchers.
- Across the Nordic countries there is a huge untapped potential in using new social media like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate research as well as to cultivate a more active knowledge culture among practitioners. In Iceland and in Sweden for example, teachers are using Twitter to discuss various research topics. Such Twitter discussion forums can be a great way to support a strong knowledge culture. These are all bottom-up initiatives.
- Most teachers prefer oral rather than written communication of knowledge.
- Teachers across the Nordic countries have showed great interest in using video as a medium for communicating research knowledge. In the United States<sup>3</sup> and in Ontario<sup>4</sup> they have worked with video as a medium for communicating research knowledge to educators for about a decade and with great success. The Nordic Lighthouse Project's own very humble experience of the use of video for communication of research has also indicated great potential.

## Ideas and proposals for Nordic initiatives to be discussed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Nordic Forum

On the basis of the discussions at the first and the second Nordic Forum meetings some ideas for future initiatives have been outlined below. These ideas merely serve as points of reference for the discussions of proposals for initiatives. In other word, we present these ideas to facilitate a more focused discussion on possible initiatives. Thus, the ideas presented are not set in stone and only represent a starting point for discussions.

We would very much appreciate the Nordic Forum's view and comments on these loose ideas during the working group sessions at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in Nordic Forum.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos?default=1>

<sup>4</sup> <http://learnteachlead.ca/resources/#english>

As noted above we would appreciate that this document and is not presented outside the Nordic Forum at present stage.

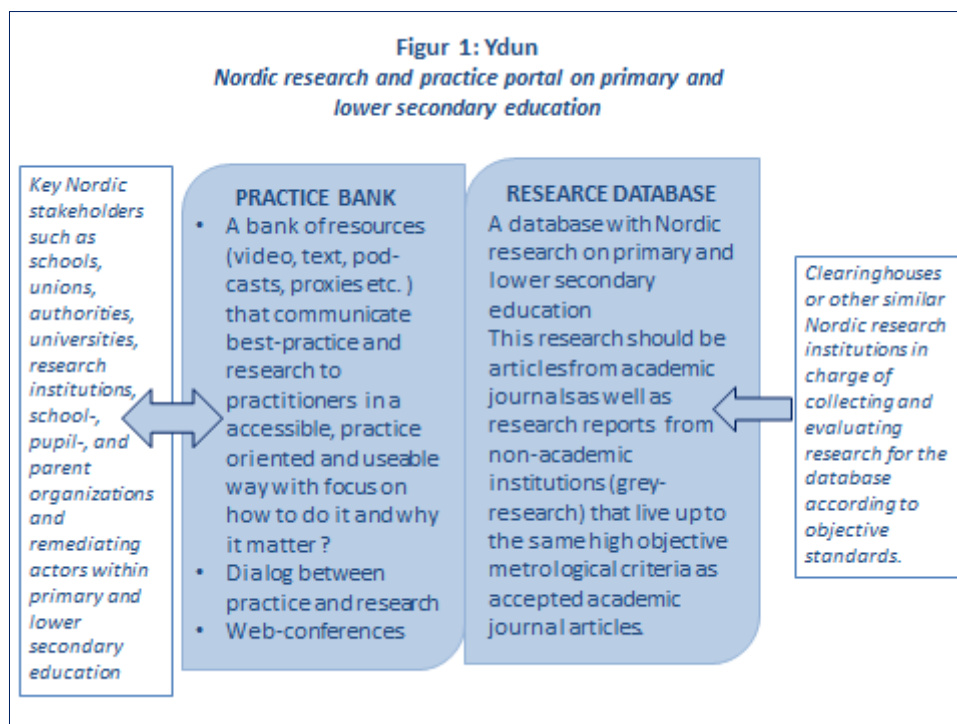
**YDUN.EDU – A Nordic research and practice portal for practitioners as well as researchers working with primary and lower secondary education.**

Since the first meeting in Nordic Forum, the idea of a Nordic research database has been addressed by the members<sup>5</sup>. But the idea presented here is not merely a database, but also a ‘practice bank’, in which practitioners and others can find inspiration and remediated research and best-practice knowledge “translated” into a practice context. This could be video as well as other ways of presenting research and best-practice knowledge in a way that makes it relevant, concrete and assessable to users.

This idea for a Nordic portal is inspired by the Ontario *Learn Teach Lead* database (as presented at the last meeting in Nordic Forum) and contains both research knowledge (based on meta-studies from clearinghouses and research institutes) as well as practice based knowledge (based on experience and best practice examples from teachers).

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<sup>5</sup> There is a Nordic/Scandinavian research database on Early Childhood Education and Care. See <http://nb-ecec.org/om-projektdatabasen-en>



As shown in Figure 1 above, the research and practice portal should consist of a ‘research database’ as well as a ‘practice bank’.

The idea is to integrate the ‘practice bank’ and the ‘research database’ in *one* portal. By combining the ‘practice bank’ and the ‘research database’, one could hope that this would facilitate greater dialogue between practice and research and that the two might inspire each other.

It should be underlined that this idea of a Nordic research and practice portal is only on the first stage on the drawing board and has not been presented outside the Nordic Forum. Thus, we would also prefer that the idea is not yet presented outside the Nordic Forum.

In order to decide whether we should work further on the idea, we would very much appreciate the Nordic Forum’s view and comments on the idea.

The working title of the Nordic research and practice portal is *Ydun*. The name refers to the goddess of youth in Nordic mythology.

### *The research database*

The research database should contain Nordic research on primary and lower secondary education and student well-being and have an effective search function. The database should consist of (peer-reviewed) academic publications as well as relevant 'gray research'.

A quality assessment and objective criteria with regard to the contents in the database are important. The task of running the database and assessing the contents would be labour-intensive, and the task requires institution/institutions with the right qualifications (such as e.g. clearinghouses).

The contents of the research database must be available in the original form or as links or references. The research database will primarily be of interest to researchers, students, governments and interest groups. Unlike the practice bank, the research knowledge is not remediated in the research database.

As an example of such a research database, see the US education research database: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reviewedstudies.aspx>

### *The practice bank*

The resources (which could be video, text or podcasts) in the practice bank should be based on research and best-practice examples, and the knowledge must be remediated and translated into a practice context. Moreover, this knowledge should be communicated in a non-academic language and focus on how such knowledge can be used in practice.

The idea is that resources in the practice bank can be *produced* and *shared* by various Nordic educational organizations, authorities and actors such as research institutions, universities, teaching colleges, schools, individual practitioners, governments, teacher colleges, NGOs, remediating agencies, unions, local school authorities or student-, pupil- or parent organizations etc.

If a research institution for example produces a video on how to do feedback in education, they would have the opportunity of uploading the video to the practice bank, and hereby other actors across the Nordic Region can watch the video and upload it to their own websites. Another example could be a team of teachers

recording and uploading their own best practice examples, a new teaching method or a team discussion about a topic of general interest to other teachers.

A third example could be a researcher who explains his/her research in a short video in order to reach a broader audience or recording and uploading a video of an interesting presentation given at an educational science conference.

The more the merrier. The more Nordic governments, clearing houses, research institutions, schools, practitioners, universities, teacher colleges, unions and organizations etc. that would choose to get involved in the project, the more communication and knowledge sharing could take place across the Nordic region and across the practice-research boundary.

The practice bank could maybe also be used for hosting web-conferences or facilitating dialogue between researchers and practitioners.

A key challenge with regard to the idea of a practice bank is the question of 'gate-keeping'. Who is to decide what contents qualify to be uploaded?

The aim of the discussion of this idea at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in the Nordic Forum is not to go into concrete questions of hosting and financing, but rather to discuss whether the general idea of a research and practice portal is worth developing further.

*This topic will be discussed in working group D: Sharing and coordinating research between the Nordic countries*

## **NORDSOL: A NORDIC SUMMER LAB FOR TEACHER OR PEDAGOGUE STUDENTS – CROSS NORDIC, CROSS FIELD**

A summer lab (summer school) for Nordic teacher and pedagogue students during which they are 1) introduced to new thoughts within Nordic and international educational and pedagogical science, 2) meet students from other Nordic countries and hear about their systems and way of thinking and 3) learn about each other's fields.

The summer lab could maybe extend over a one or two-week stay, during which students are introduced to a variety of didactic and pedagogical issues related to the



latest research and knowledge in the field. It would also be very nice if the students participating in the summer lab somehow were invited to contribute to specific ongoing research projects.

The summer lab could be structured around presentations from researchers and simulated practice situations with the implementation of new methods and group sessions where participants are selected across countries and sometimes across disciplines.

The summer lab could give the students some insight and perspectives on other national practices. Moreover, by mixing pedagogues and teacher students, the summer lab might contribute to more dialogue between coming teachers and pedagogues. In most Nordic countries, collaboration between teachers and pedagogues is growing, and there is a rising focus on successful transition between pre-school to school which requires cooperation between the different fields.

The greater ambition with the summer lab would be to strengthen the knowledge culture among tomorrow's educators.

Each year the summer lab could focus on a particular theme and topics of great academic, general or political focus such as Refugees, Motivation, Social Competences or Social Mobility. Here, the Nordic countries could learn from each other's experiences, as different solutions have been applied to the similar challenges and problems across the Nordic region.

*This topic will be discussed in working group C: A research based knowledge culture and teacher education/continual professional development*

## **HEIMDAL: PRICE FOR RESEARCH COMMUNICATION**

In order to strengthen the communication of research to practitioners, an annual Nordic communication prize could be established. The prize should go to a Nordic researcher or practitioner that communicated some pedagogical or educational research based knowledge in a new, innovative and effective way to practitioners.

Presumably the research communication prize could generate more attention on research communication and efforts to remediate research knowledge within the fields of education and pedagogical sciences.

Heimdal was the guardian angel who watched Bifrost, the bridge between the Aesir and the people in Norse mythology.

*This topic will be discussed in Working group B: Remediating educational research and using video*

## **SUPPORTING SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS**

The idea of school-university partnerships seems to hold great potential with regard to some of the key challenges that the Nordic Lighthouse Project aims at addressing<sup>6</sup>. This is the case with regard to nourishing the knowledge culture in schools as well as the dialogue between research and practice. Moreover, such partnerships might foster more practice relevant and didactic research, the need of which has been stressed by members of the Nordic Forum.

Should the Nordic Forum work at supporting such partnerships, and if so how to support such partnerships?

*This topic will be discussed in working group A: Arenas for communication, school-university partnerships and New Social Media*

## **ONGOING EXPERIMENTS WITH VIDEO BASED RESEARCH COMMUNICATION AND VIA FACEBOOK**

Since the latest meeting in Nordic Forum, the Nordic Lighthouse Project has experimented with video as a medium for communicating research based knowledge. We have produced a small number of videos, showing how a practitioner uses a specific research based method in practice. Some of these videos

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<sup>6</sup> See the video presentation about school-university partnerships presented at the spring 2016 meeting in Nordic Forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycuxo6iTiHA>

have been watched by more than 10,000 people in a matter of a few days. The videos have been published on the EMU.dk (the Danish education portal hosted by the *Danish Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality*) and EMU-Facebook. See for example <https://www.facebook.com/emu.dk/videos/1326023870752939/>

It might be interesting to test whether these Danish videos ‘work’ in some of the other Nordic countries. Members of Nordic Forum are invited to share the videos on their own websites and their Facebook-pages in order to assess their ‘cross-Nordic’ impact.

We have also produced a 'video cookbook' for the members of the Nordic Forum, which step by step takes you through the process of producing a research communication video. Members are invited to share the ‘cookbook’ within their organizations in order to inspire colleagues and others to initiate such project (see <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Themes/Nordic-Lighthouse-Project>).

We have also invited the members of the Nordic Forum to submit ideas for research communication videos to be produced by the Nordic Lighthouse Project.

Ontario’s educational portal <http://learnteachlead.ca/> which hosts more than 6,000 short videos based on research and best-practice knowledge has been a great success communicating research to practitioners<sup>7</sup>. Some of these videos might be of interest in a Nordic context, and the Nordic Lighthouse Project has made an agreement with Ontario Ministry of Education allowing us to use and edit the Canadian videos as well as text or dub the videos. Many of these videos will not be relevant in a Nordic context, but some will. Yet, another question is whether the Canadian videos (which are relevant in a Nordic context) will actually ‘work’ in the sense that they will inspire *Nordic* practitioners to try out new research based ideas? This has yet to be seen, but it might be worth trying?

We invite the Nordic Forum to comment on the video experiment so far and ask the Nordic Forum whether we should continue along this video path?

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce Shaw – the director of *Learn.Teach.Lead* and the Student Achievement Division in Ontario’s Ministry of Education presented *Learn.Teach.Lead* at the Nordic Forums spring 2016 meeting in Oslo – see the video of his presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li35iQG78TA>

*This topic will be discussed in Working group B: Remediating educational research and using video*