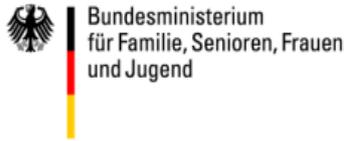


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Quality, assessment, and documentation in Swedish preschools Regulations, practices, and concepts

Expert report for the German Youth Institute

Ann-Christine Vallberg-Roth



Wissenschaftliche Texte

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Texte

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**Quality, assessment, and documentation in
Swedish preschools - regulations, practices, and
concepts**

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The German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V., DJI) is one of Germany's largest social science institutes focusing on research and development around the topics of children, youth and families, as well as the political and practical areas related to them.

The German Youth Institute is based in Munich with a branch office in Halle/Saale. Founded in 1963, its supporting organisation is a non-profit association whose members stem from the political and academic spheres, as well as from other associations and institutions dedicated to the support of children, youth and families. Its institutional budget is primarily funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), and, to a lesser degree, by the German federal states (Länder). Additional financial contributions are made by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the Ministry's project funding, and by various foundations, the European Commission and institutions for the promotion of research.

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ISBN: 978-3-86379-158-2

Preface

As a key to children's positive developmental process, the preschool years are getting more and more attention by international policy, science, and practice. Empirical longitudinal studies show that Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings can contribute to a positive child development through high quality services.

To meet the quality requirements, policy is interested in the establishment of quality development and management systems. While science and policy in Germany are currently discussing the implementation of national quality standards in ECEC, other countries already have legally founded and implemented quality management systems on a national level. Against this background, these countries' experiences can offer an orientation and a source of information and provide important input to the German debate.

To derive benefit from existing experiences of other countries, the International Center Early Childhood Education and Care (ICEC) at the German Youth Institute has assigned expert reports about the quality management systems to Australia and Sweden. The authors are scientists in the field of ECEC and have relevant experiences in quality development and monitoring. The expert reports give insight into Sweden's and Australia's ECEC systems and describe how the two countries deal with the issue of quality development and management. The methods of quality measurement are reported extensively and evaluated in the context of the current political discourse.

Following expert report introduces the Swedish system.

Munich, February 2015

International Centre Early Childhood, Education and Care (ICEC)

Vorwort

Die Jahre vor der Einschulung rücken als Schlüssel für einen positiven Entwicklungsverlauf von Kindern zunehmend in den Fokus der internationalen Politik, Fachwissenschaft und Praxis. Empirische Längsschnittstudien zeigen, dass Einrichtungen frühkindlicher Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung (FBBE) durch eine qualitativ hochwertige Betreuung zu einer günstigen Entwicklung von Kindern beitragen können.

Um diesem Anspruch gerecht zu werden, ist die Politik daran interessiert, Systeme zur Qualitätsentwicklung und –sicherung einzusetzen. Während in Deutschland momentan die Einführung nationaler Qualitätsstandards in der FBBE von Fachwissenschaft und Politik diskutiert wird, haben andere Länder bereits Systeme der Qualitätssicherung auf nationaler Ebene gesetzlich verankert und implementiert. Vor diesem Hintergrund können die Erfahrungen dieser Länder als Orientierung und Informationsquelle dienen und wichtigen Input für die in Deutschland geführte Debatte liefern.

Um auf bestehende Erfahrungen aus anderen Ländern zurückgreifen zu können, wurden vom Internationalen Zentrum Frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung (ICEC) am Deutschen Jugendinstitut Expertisen zu den Systemen der Qualitätssicherung in Australien und Schweden in Auftrag gegeben. Die Autorinnen sind Wissenschaftlerinnen aus dem FBBE-Bereich mit einschlägigen Erfahrungen in Qualitätsentwicklung und –monitoring. Die von ihnen verfassten Expertisen geben einen Einblick in die frühkindlichen Bildungs- und Betreuungssysteme beider Länder und beschreiben den unterschiedlichen Umgang mit der Frage nach Qualitätsentwicklung und –sicherung. Die Verfahren der Qualitätsmessungen werden umfassend beschrieben und im Kontext des aktuellen politischen Diskurses bewertet.

In folgender Expertise wird das schwedische Modell vorgestellt.

München, im Februar 2015

Internationales Zentrum Frühkindliche
Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung (ICEC)

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Zusammenfassung der Expertise in deutscher Sprache

Qualität, Überprüfung und Dokumentation in schwedischen Kindertageseinrichtungen - Regulationen, Praktiken und Konzepte¹

In Schweden wurde im Jahr 2011 ein überarbeitetes Bildungsgesetz (Education Act) und ein Kindergartenlehrplan (Preschool Curriculum) eingeführt, die festlegen, dass die Qualität schwedischer Kindertageseinrichtungen regelmäßig dokumentiert, beobachtet, bewertet und weiterentwickelt werden muss. Ziel ist es, durch qualitativ hochwertige Einrichtungen bestmögliche Bedingungen für das Lernen und die Entwicklung der Kinder zu schaffen sowie eine Vergleichbarkeit zwischen den unterschiedlichen Einrichtungen zu gewährleisten. Die Expertise beschäftigt sich mit folgenden Fragen:

- Wer führt die Qualitätsmessung durch?
- Welche Verfahren zu Qualitätssicherung, -entwicklung und -monitoring werden in Kindertageseinrichtungen auf nationaler, kommunaler und Einrichtungsebene angewandt?
- Wie erfolgt das Zusammenspiel zwischen den verschiedenen Ebenen?
- Was sind bisherige Erfahrungswerte und wie werden die Dokumentationsprozesse zur Qualitätssicherung von den Fachkräften bewertet?

Wer führt die Qualitätsmessung durch?

Schwedens Bildungs- und Betreuungssystem ist dezentral² organisiert; die Qualitätsüberprüfung und Dokumentation findet auf nationaler, kommunaler und der Einrichtungsebene statt.

Das schwedische Parlament und die Regierung legen auf **nationaler Ebene** Regulationen zu Qualitätsentwicklung und Qualitätszielen fest, welche im Bildungsgesetz und im Kindergartenlehrplan verankert sind. Die nationale Bildungsbehörde³ ist für die Erarbeitung der Qualitätsziele verantwortlich. Sogenannte Schulinspektor/inn/en haben die Aufgabe, externe Qualitätskontrollen in den Einrichtungen durchzuführen. Darüber hinaus sind die Schulinspektor/inn/en dafür zuständig zu überprüfen, ob die Kommunen ihre Verantwortung, Einrichtungen freier Träger (independent preschools) zu kontrollieren, wahrnehmen.

1 Originaltitel: „Quality, assessment, and documentation in Swedish preschools – Regulations, practices and concepts“ von Ann-Christine Vallberg-Roth – zusammengefasst vom Internationalen Zentrum Frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung (ICEC).

2 Ein dezentrales Bildungs- und Betreuungssystem beinhaltet, dass sich die Zuständigkeit auf der nationalen, kommunalen und der Einrichtungsebene verteilt.

3 Die nationale Bildungsbehörde (National Agency of Education) ist die zentrale Verwaltungsbehörde für das öffentliche Schulsystem, die öffentlich organisierte Vorschule, die Kinderbetreuung von Kindern im Schulalter und die Erwachsenenbildung.

Auf **kommunaler Ebene** werden die öffentlichen Kindertageseinrichtungen durch die Kommunen und die Einrichtungen freier Träger durch den Träger verwaltet. Bezüglich Qualitätsentwicklung nehmen die Kommunen bzw. die Einrichtungen freier Träger eine wichtige Funktion ein. Sie haben die oberste Verantwortung für die Qualitätsentwicklung im Bildungsbereich und müssen ein System entwickeln, um die Qualität in den Einrichtungen zu überprüfen und zu sichern sowie vergleichbare Qualität in den verschiedenen Einrichtungen zu gewährleisten. Außerdem haben die Kommunen die Aufgabe zu überprüfen, ob die freien Träger qualifiziert sind, eine Einrichtung zu eröffnen, und ob ihre Qualitätsentwicklung den nationalen Qualitätszielen entspricht.

Auf der **Einrichtungsebene** sind die Leitungskräfte und die Erzieher/innen für die konkrete Umsetzung der Qualitätsziele verantwortlich. Hierzu gehören beispielsweise die konzeptionelle Planung und Umsetzung, Prozesskontrolle sowie die Bewertung und Entwicklung von Lerninhalten und Aktivitäten. Die Erzieher/innen sind außerdem dafür verantwortlich die Entwicklung und das Lernen der Kinder zu überwachen, zu dokumentieren und zu analysieren.

Welche Verfahren zu Qualitätssicherung, -entwicklung und -monitoring werden in Kindertageseinrichtungen auf nationaler, kommunaler und Einrichtungsebene angewandt?

Eine Qualitätsmessung von frühkindlichen Bildungseinrichtungen auf **nationaler Ebene** erfolgt in einem zweitägigen Besuch der Schulinspektor/inn/en, die der Regierung unterstellt sind. Vor deren Besuch muss die Einrichtungsleitung eine Selbstbewertung ausfüllen. Hierbei werden 22 Bereiche abgefragt, welche zum einen verfahrensorientierte Bereiche (z.B. Entwicklung und Lernen oder Grundwerte und Beteiligung der Kinder) und zum anderen strukturelle Aspekte (z.B. Kompetenz der Mitarbeiter/innen oder Materialausstattung) beinhalten. Bei dem Besuch führen die Schulinspektor/inn/en ein Interview mit der Einrichtungsleitung und einem/einer Stellvertreter/in der Erzieher/innen durch. Darüber hinaus werden Beobachtungen des täglichen Betriebs durchgeführt, wobei zwei Bewertungsbögen ausgefüllt werden, die sich an dem Kindergartenlehrplan und dem Bildungsgesetz orientieren. Diese Bewertungsbögen beinhalten ebenfalls Aspekte zu verfahrensorientierten und strukturellen Bereichen. Die Einrichtungen erhalten dann in einem Bericht Rückmeldung über positive und negative Aspekte und Empfehlungen, wie die Einrichtung verbessert werden kann. Gibt es Bereiche, die Verbesserungsbedarf aufweisen, kann je nach Schweregrad des Mangels eine Sanktion verhängt werden, die bis zur vorübergehenden Schließung der Einrichtung führen kann.

Auf **kommunaler Ebene** sind die Kommunen für die Erarbeitung von Verfahren zur Qualitätssicherung zuständig. Wie gewährleistet wird, dass die nationalen Richtlinien eingehalten werden, ist den Kommunen bzw. freien Trägern überlassen. So wurde zum Beispiel in einer Kommune im Süden von Schweden ein Bewertungsbogen für die Einrichtungen entwi-

ckelt, der unter anderem Fragen zu Sprache und Kommunikation, Mathematik und Naturwissenschaften und Technologie enthält. Es ist festzustellen, dass auf kommunaler Ebene eher verfahrensorientierte als strukturelle Aspekte abgefragt werden. Auf dieser Ebene werden auch die Eltern der Kinder befragt. Die Einstellung der Eltern bezüglich des Kindergartenlehrplans und des Bildungsgesetzes, ihre Erfahrungen mit den Kindertageseinrichtungen sowie die Zufriedenheit mit der Arbeit in den Einrichtungen spielen hier eine wichtige Rolle.

Auf der **Einrichtungsebene** werden neben einrichtungsfokussierten Evaluationsinstrumenten eine Vielzahl an Dokumentationsmethoden auf der Kind-, Gruppen- und Aktivitätsebene angewandt. Hierzu zählen entwicklungspsychologische Bewertungen, Wissensüberprüfungen, Beschreibungen der kindlichen Persönlichkeit, Selbstbewertungen der Kinder bezüglich ihrer Fähigkeiten oder Beschreibungen von Lernprozessen in Erzählform. Ziel ist es, die Erfahrungen und das Wissen der Kinder durch Dokumentation zu erfassen, um auf Grundlage dessen optimale Bedingungen zu schaffen und die Entwicklung und das Lernen der Kinder bestmöglich unterstützen zu können. Die Erhebung der kindlichen Fähigkeiten dient also als Indikator für Qualität in den Einrichtungen. Welche Instrumente eingesetzt werden, kann von den Einrichtungen entschieden werden. Als eine den Zielen des schwedischen Kinderbetreuungssystems besonders gut entsprechende Form kann der Ansatz einer transformativen Beobachtung angesehen werden. Dieser Ansatz geht davon aus, dass Kinder nicht an vorgegebenen Standards gemessen und mit niemandem außer sich selbst verglichen werden sollten. Zudem bezieht er die Wechselwirkung zwischen dem Kind und seiner Lernumgebung mit ein und fragt, wie sich diese verändern muss, um Kinder in ihrer individuellen Entwicklung zu fördern. Auf Einrichtungsebene werden auch die Eltern der Kinder befragt.

Wie erfolgt das Zusammenspiel zwischen den verschiedenen Ebenen?

Austausch zwischen den verschiedenen Ebenen findet an mehreren Stellen statt. Die Schulinspektor/inn/en stehen bei ihrem Besuch in direktem Kontakt mit den Einrichtungen. Die Einrichtungen erhalten Rückmeldung bezüglich ihrer Arbeit und können sich von den Schulinspektor/inn/en beraten lassen. Die Kommunen, die für die Qualitätsentwicklung verantwortlich sind, stehen ebenfalls in engem Kontakt mit den Einrichtungen, da dort das von den Kommunen erarbeitete System zur Sicherung der Qualität umgesetzt wird. Die Berichte, die aus dieser Zusammenarbeit hervorgehen, dienen wiederum als wichtige Grundlage für die Arbeit der Schulinspektor/inn/en.

Was sind bisherige Erfahrungswerte und wie werden die Dokumentationsprozesse zur Qualitätssicherung von den Fachkräften bewertet?

Im Jahr 2012 untersuchten die Schulinspektor/inn/en Einrichtungen in 46 Kommunen. Nahezu alle Kommunen hatten Bereiche, die Verbesserungen

verlangten. Die Bereiche, welche am stärksten kritisiert wurden, waren: Sicherheit und Lernumgebung im Allgemeinen (76%), Entwicklung und Lernen (67%) sowie kommunale Verwaltung und Management (47%). So wurde beispielsweise im Bereich Entwicklung und Lernen eine fehlende Variation bezüglich der Lernstimulation der Kinder festgestellt.

Die durchgeführten Dokumentationsprozesse, welche zur Qualitätssicherung beitragen sollen, weisen laut Autorin der Expertise sowohl positive als auch negative Aspekte auf. Zum einen bietet die Dokumentation ein Werkzeug, um Qualität zu dokumentieren und basierend darauf, Verbesserungen anzustreben. Zum anderen kann die Dokumentation auch als Gefahr gesehen werden, da Kinder mit ihrer Altersgruppe ohne Berücksichtigung ihres Kontexts verglichen und bewertet werden. Darüber hinaus wird kritisiert, dass die Dokumentationen sehr viel Zeit in Anspruch nehmen, welche für Analysen und Reflektionen sowie für direkte Interaktionen mit den Kindern fehlt. Da dieses System der Dokumentation noch sehr neu ist, wird sich wahrscheinlich erst in einigen Jahren zeigen, ob die Dokumentation und die Bewertung externer Schulinspektor/inn/en zu einer Qualitätsverbesserung in den Kindertageseinrichtungen führen.

Zu der Autorin

Die Expertise „Qualität, Überprüfung und Dokumentation in schwedischen Kindertageseinrichtungen - Regulationen, Praktiken und Konzepte“ wurde 2014 von Ann-Christine Vallberg-Roth im Auftrag des Internationalen Zentrums Frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung (ICEC) geschrieben. Ann-Christine Vallberg-Roth ist Professorin für Frühkindliche Bildung an der Universität Malmö. Ihre Forschungsinteressen liegen im Bereich Bildung und Sozialwissenschaften, wo sie einschlägige Fachbeiträge vorweisen kann.

1 Introduction

As shown in *Starting Strong III*, different countries use a range of methods to monitor staff performance and children's learning and development, including inspections, checklists, surveys, self-assessments, and observations (OECD, 2012). These methods are administered by a range of actors including national, regional, and local authorities; external inspectors; early childhood education and care (ECEC) staff and/or management; and parents (OECD, 2012; OECD, 2013; Taguma, Litjens & Makowiecki, 2013). Hence, there are great differences in the design and implementation of monitoring approaches across and even within countries. According to the *Starting Strong* report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 'Nordic countries tend to avoid using the term "child outcomes", while Anglo-Saxon countries favour the approach' (OECD, 2012, p. 1). Both of these traditions seem to co-exist to a certain extent in current Nordic early childhood education guidelines along with a growing interest in documenting and assessing the development of individual children (see Vallberg-Roth, 2013). However, the draft of the new Swedish Education Act (Ds 2009:25) states that preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards, nor should they be compared to anyone but themselves.

Nordic ECE curricula are embedded in decentralized governance systems. In a decentralized goal system, responsibility is shared between the national, municipal, and local preschool levels. As a result, a preschool may in addition to the curriculum have its own policy documents or working plans that expand, define, or concretize the preschool's orientation or methods without contravening the curriculum. These documents may be seen as a complement, and may work in parallel with the national curriculum at the individual preschool.

Ensuring national equivalence in a decentralized system like that of Sweden requires the government to set national goals and then to systematically follow up and check that these goals are achieved and that systematic quality work is developed at the local level. The Swedish approach combines locally appropriate quality assessments with national quality audits to ensure comparability across preschools. Hence, the transformation of national goals into quality work, including assessment and documentation practices between different levels, is of high interest and is the focal point in this report.

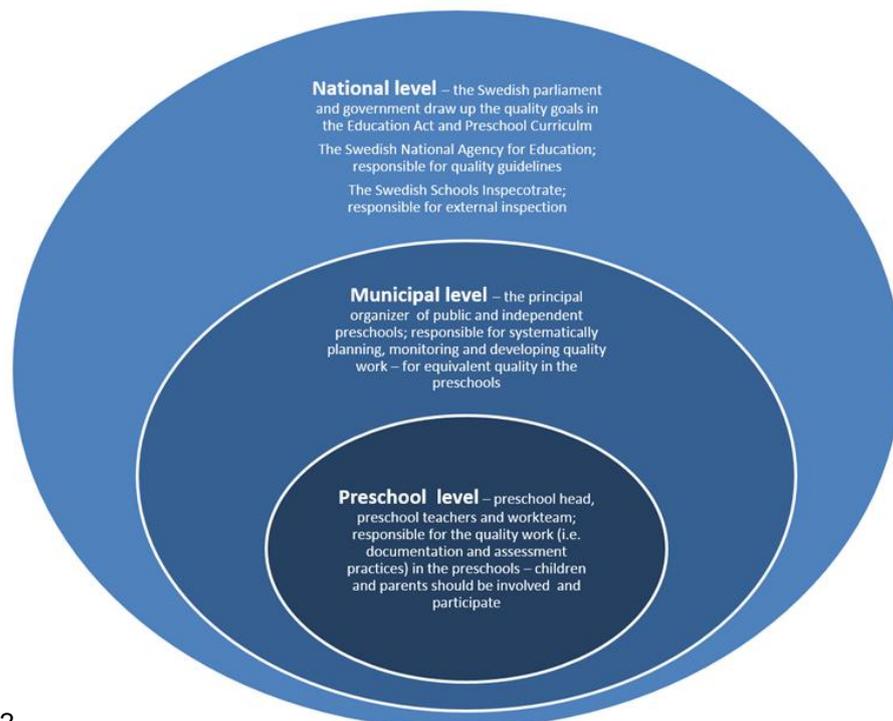
Preschool in Sweden is intended for children from the age of one until they start in preschool class (age six) or compulsory school (age seven). The main responsibility for preschool lies with the 290 Swedish municipalities (public preschools) and the providers of independent preschools⁴. The

4 Limited companies, parent cooperatives, staff cooperatives, private firms, foundations, and compounds can operate as independent preschools. Children attending independent preschools constitute 20% of all children in preschool (Statistics Sweden, Autumn 2013; see note 3).

overall national goals were drawn up by the Swedish parliament (Riksdag) and government (Regeringen) in the Education Act (2010:800) and Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98 [Läroplan för förskolan 1998], revised 2010). According to this legislation, the quality of all preschools must be regularly and systematically documented, followed up, evaluated, and developed. The Swedish National Agency for Education (Statens Skolverk, established in 1991) is the central administrative authority for the public school system. The mission of the Agency is to actively work for the attainment of the national goals, including drawing up clear goals and knowledge requirements and providing support for the development of preschools and schools. Based on this, each preschool chooses the most appropriate approach for assessing quality in their setting. The principal organizer of a preschool is responsible for systematic assessment of quality and for acting on the results.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (Statens Skolinspektion, established in 2008) is a national authority that monitors and scrutinizes the quality work in preschools and schools. In connection with quality auditing activities (see section 4.1), the Schools Inspectorate provides advice and guidance as to what a preschool/school, a municipality, or an operator of an independent preschool/school needs to improve on the basis of legal requirements. Hence, at the national level, the National Agency of Education has a specific responsibility to support the development and publish guidelines, while the Schools Inspectorate has the responsibility to exercise external inspection. Figure 1 shows the relationships between the quality assurance responsibilities at different levels in the decentralized Swedish system.

Figure 1: Relationships between quality assurance responsibilities at the preschool, municipal, and national level in the decentralized Swedish system.



1.1 Objective and questions

The objective of this expert report is to provide deeper insights into the development and implementation of systematic quality work – specifically, assessment and documentation practices – in Swedish preschools. The report critically reflects on the experiences and challenges surrounding the implementation of the Education Act (SFS [Svensk författningssamling] 2010:800) and the revised Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98: revised 2010), as well as the assessment and documentation practices involved, pointing out strengths, dilemmas, and possible weaknesses of the Swedish systematic work on quality. The following key questions are addressed:

- Which practices for ensuring, developing, and monitoring quality in preschool are enacted at the national, municipal, and preschool unit level? How are responsibilities shared between the national and local levels?
- How are quality assurance and documentation practices related to the revised Preschool Curriculum? What important changes to quality assurance practices have taken place in relation to the revised Preschool Curriculum?
- At which level do quality assurance and documentation practices take place – including systematic, regular, and methodologically-controlled observations, assessments, and evaluations as well as less frequent assessment of individual goals? Is there a monitoring system (i.e. a systematic, regular, and methodologically-controlled observation of preschools) in place at the national level?
- What forms of assessment and documentation tools are enacted at the national, municipal, and preschool level?
- From the perspective of preschool professionals, how have documentation practices affected the preschool setting?

In this report, the quality concept will be discussed in relation to the balance between human responsibility and accountability, where ‘accountability’ refers to account-giving (i.e. information-sharing) actions including follow-up, observation, and documentation. The report also refers to some recent research studies on documentation and assessment practices in Sweden.

1.2 Material and analysis

In order to answer the key questions and conduct the analyses proposed above, the following material on external and internal assessment at the national, municipal and preschool level will be considered:

- the draft/preliminary version of the Education Act (Proposition 2009/10:165), the proposed clarification of the Preschool Curriculum (Report from the Government, 2009-09-30), and the Education Act (SFS

2010:800, came into force in August 2010) and the Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98: Revised 2010, came into force in July 2011)

- Nordic ECE curricula with a focus on Swedish guidelines for quality in preschool, including both binding guidelines and non-binding guidance for quality, valid as of 2013 (Vallberg Roth, 2013)
- reports and surveys on quality work in preschools between 2011 and 2013 from the commission of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (external assessment at the national level)
- reports on quality work in preschools between 2011 and 2013 (assessments at the municipal and preschool level)
- internal assessment and documentation practices in three Swedish preschools (material from 2011) at the preschool unit level, with a focus on documentation tools and assessment forms (see descriptions in chapter 2).

2 Conceptual resources of quality work in Swedish preschools

The main concepts in this report are *quality*, *documentation*, and *assessment*. Quality is an ambiguous and contextual concept that is difficult to pin down in one clear and singular definition. It may refer to the value of the characteristics of an object, subject, or actions/activities. In this report, the analysis will be oriented towards how quality is operationalized in policy documents, reports on quality work, and practices at different levels based on a division according to *structure*, *process*, and *outcome* (Vallberg-Roth, 2013). There are no unequivocal correlations between these concepts in the preschool context, but structural aspects may be interpreted as creating conditions and scope for both processes and outcomes. Structure usually concerns aspects such as staff-child ratios (group compositional suitability), indoor and outdoor space, a safe and suitable environment, staff competence, management structure, organization, and development of education (see section 5.1). The structural aspect also includes the policy documents themselves: laws, curricula, and non-binding guidance and support materials. The procedural aspect includes relations and interactions between staff and children and between staff and parents, collaboration between colleagues, and the quality of teaching (instruction) and caring (see section 5.1). According to the OECD (2013), the aspect of process is receiving increasing international attention due to the growing interest in evaluating process quality. Outcomes may be seen as a combination of processes and structure. Quality linked to outcomes may be something that emerges from an activity or intervention. Within the education system, this is primarily related to actions carried out by the staff and the effects of these actions in terms of children's learning and development. An outcome may thus be performance *or* effects, or performance *and* effects. In respect to outcomes, it is interesting that according to the Swedish National Agency for Education's advice on quality improvement (see Appendix 1), the process should reflect the institution's outcomes and not individual outcomes; it is con-

cerned with how well the educational activities and work are developing in the direction of the goal. At the same time, the degree of goal attainment should be assessed both on the basis of the measures taken by the pre-school and on how well children's abilities are developed. Individual outcomes in the form of assessment of goals to achieve and knowledge requirements at the individual level may be interpreted as incompatible with the goals towards which the institution is meant to work.

The European Commission (2009:1) has stated that the factors central to ensuring ECEC quality are as follows:

The good training, good pay and good working conditions of staff and the support they are given are key factors for ensuring quality in ECEC provision. Other key elements for ECEC quality include: the content/curriculum, including issues of inclusiveness, respect for diversity and personalisation; the child/staff ratio, group size and premises; the involvement of parents and of the wider community; the governance structures necessary for regular programme monitoring and assessment, system accountability and quality assurance. (pp. 1-2).

The term 'quality' has been widely used in education policy (cf. OECD, 2012). It is often used in combination with concepts such as assurance, assessment, evaluation, accountability, and control, but it is also presented as an idea and means of creating better conditions for children's lifelong learning. Some scholars refer to this focus on quality in education as the 'Quality Turn' (Segerholm, 2012). This draws attention to the need to critically examine language and policy oriented towards educational quality, and not least towards methods of measuring the quality of education and their consequences. It is difficult to object to political intentions to improve education worldwide; what we need to scrutinize is the Quality Turn and its underlying assumptions of the importance of education as a goal-rational process whose chief purpose is to promote economic growth. Thomas Schwandt (2012) discusses the balance between the importance of standards, obligatory reporting, and quality and the parallel risks of standardization, over-regulation, and control, stressing the need to discuss the Quality Turn and the opportunity to balance accountability with human responsibility (cf. Schwandt 2012; Segerholm, 2012). In this report, the quality concept will also be discussed in relation to this balancing.

Quality is operationalized through documentation and registration

In the broad sense, one of the meanings of the word 'document' is to collect and compile information. Quality is operationalized through documentation and registration. One might say that documentation is about how action in practice is transformed to symbols. Documentation may be both digital and analogue, and encompasses videos, photographs, notes, observations, interviews, audio recordings, and so on. In other words, a document is some form of recorded object (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). The Italian philosopher Ferraris (2013) gives documentation a central position in an ontology of social reality that he calls 'documentality.' He argues that documentation is fundamental in a sphere of social objects (such as graduations,

marriages, and other ceremonies). Ferraris argues that ‘...we are in a society of registration’ (Ferraris, 2013, p. 179). Social objects concern at least two persons, and collective intentionality is placed in the document. In this sense, documents are also of high institutional and professional value. Hence, policies, education, and professions cannot, as social objects, exist without documents. Documentation may further be seen as a co-agent in what may be called socio-material (or material-discursive) life conditions (cf. Latour, 2005; Lenz-Taguchi, 2012; Prior, 2011); in this view, the present report emphasizes the ‘socio’ side of the socio-material relationship. Material and things are not passive instruments, but rather are seen as active participants and co-agents in educational processes. They take part in and shape our focus, our assessments, and our meaning making (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). This approach, with a material-discursive focus, is the theoretical basis of several items of guidance material including a Swedish non-binding set of guidelines for pedagogical documentation (National Agency for Education, 2012) that are analysed in this report. Quality can be linked to documentality in the sense that registration and documentation are seen as the basis of all quality improvement work. The Quality Turn pushes documented activities and actions to the fore.

In this report, a documentation tool is understood as a tool which transforms actions in practice to symbols; documents are recorded objects which fall in between standardized (predefined) and non-standardized (not predefined) tools; one example of a non-standardized tool would be a blank sheet of paper. This ‘in between’ category is understood to include educational documentation from more standardized documentation tools and tests like TRAS (Early Registration of Language Development, further described in section 5.3) as well as less standardized documentation tools such as portfolios. Documentation tools and assessment forms overlap in the sense that assessment is intertwined in documentation. Assessments in quality work that have not been documented, for example possible observations (daily observations), interviews (self-assessments), and tests (e.g. motoric tests) are not included in this report.

Quality is operationalized through assessment

Quality is also operationalized through assessment. Bennett (2010) argues that the Nordic tradition favours multiple assessment procedures; this is consistent with the material collected from preschools in Sweden (generated in 2011) which will be described and analysed in the present report. The term ‘assessment’ is ambiguous. It may mean an evaluation or analysis, a judgement (an opinion or conclusion), an estimate (a rough calculation), a review, or a valuation or rating of someone or something. This report describes a variety of assessment forms in preschool practices. Assessment forms are understood to include assessments, evaluations, and judgements with different theoretical basis, conducted as external or internal assessments and classifiable as either linear or non-linear (see chapter 6). Even if the term ‘assessment’ captures both judgements and evaluations, it still focuses more on the individual, group, and activity level, while the term ‘evaluation’ focuses more on the institutional, national, and system level, as

for example external evaluation and quality reports from preschools (see section 4.3). External evaluation includes inspection, observation, and survey (see section 4.1). Internal evaluation and assessment includes self-evaluation, narrative assessment, summative assessment, and formative assessment (see section 5.3).

Research focusing on professional assessment of knowledge and education uses the concepts of *formative* and *summative* assessment (e.g. Bennett, 2011; Black & Wiliam, 2009; Taras, 2009). **Summative assessment** can be described as backward looking: a valuation of what children have ultimately learned at the end of the activity, instruction, or theme/project. Grades are an example of summative assessment. **Formative assessment** can be described as a valuation of what happens during the learning process that is forward-looking and that will support the student's continued learning and development. Summative and formative assessments are concepts developed in accordance with goals, knowledge requirements, and learning outcomes with the focus on both the individual and the classroom level. According to the OECD (2013), formative assessments are more commonly used in ECEC than summative assessments. Summative assessments are more frequently applied at higher levels of education.

Summative and formative assessment are not consistent with the goal of the Swedish preschool system, which focuses on preschool activity and does not specify objects of achievement and learning outcomes on the individual level. Further, summative and formative assessment mainly operate at a local level and between human actors, not in practices at different levels (micro – macro), between home, preschool, and other institutions, or between human actors and material agents (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). This report focuses on assessments intertwined in documentation from preschools that use a curriculum with goals that focus on preschool activity rather than on individual children. The draft of the new Education Act (Ds 2009:25) states that preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards, nor should they be compared to anyone but themselves. There are several reasons for this: children aged between 1 and 5 years develop at different rates, preschool is a voluntary activity, children begin preschool at different ages, and children stay in preschool for different lengths of time during the day. Hence, the concepts of summative and formative assessment, which were developed in relation to management systems which include goals and knowledge requirements for the individual student to achieve, are not fully viable in the Swedish preschool setting. This report will instead present and examine an alternative concept; the concept of **transformative assessment** (see chapter 6). Apart from answering the key questions about the Swedish quality assurance system (formulated in section 1.1), the examination of the alternative concept of transformative assessment can be seen as one of the key aims of the analysis presented in chapter 6. How is transformative assessment enacted in the Swedish preschool?

3 Recent reforms of the Swedish preschool

The transfer of early education from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education

In 1996, the Swedish Ministry of Education took over responsibility for preschools from the Ministry of Social Affairs, thus clarifying the educational nature of the task performed by these schools (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2006). Preschools have had their own curriculum since 1998, and today they are seen as the first step in the education system, with a strengthened relationship between the preschool and the school (e.g. Johansson & Moss 2012). The Preschool Curriculum is structured similarly to the school curriculum. In addition, preschool provision has been greatly expanded in recent decades. Several reforms were implemented during the 2000s to increase accessibility. For example, 2002 saw the introduction of a so-called ceiling – a maximum fee that parents should pay for their children's care – which was said to be the first step towards a totally free preschool. In connection with this (2001-2002), municipalities were also required to offer 15 hours a week (525 hours a year) of free-of-charge preschool for children whose parents were unemployed or on parental leave. In 2003, all four- and five-year-olds became entitled to 15 hours free-of-charge preschool a week, and in 2010 this was extended to all three-year-olds. Taken together, these reforms have contributed to the expansion of the preschool system. The aim has been to see preschool as part of the general welfare provision that should be open to all children regardless of the family's social or economic situation.

Today, for children aged between 1 and 5–6, the preschool is a voluntary form of schooling⁵ in the Swedish education system. A majority (84%) of all children aged 1-5 years attend preschool in Sweden, and the proportion rises to almost 95% among children aged 3-5 years (Statistics Sweden, autumn 2013⁶). Most six-year-olds (96%) attend preschool classes; this again is currently a voluntary form of schooling. A government proposal from January 2014 (not yet in force⁷) states that compulsory schooling should last at least ten years, beginning at the age of six; this would mean that the preschool class would become compulsory. The context for this proposal (see note 4) is the Swedish results in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the desire to score higher, to increase chil-

5 The purpose of the preschool as a form of schooling is to emphasize the pedagogical mission as the first step in the education system.

6 The statistical data is described on the National Agency for Education's website (<http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/> and <http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/statistik-i-tabeller/forskola/barn-och-grupper/barn-och-grupper-i-forskolan-15-oktober-2013-1.215853>) and is also based on information from Statistics Sweden (<http://www.scb.se/>).

7 See http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Utskottens%20dokument/Betankanden/Grundskolan_H101Ubu10/

dren's knowledge from an early age, and to increase the overall goal attainment in school.

The preschool has a long tradition of state-formulated goals and content. Its present curriculum replaced the previous educational program (1987), which in turn replaced the preschool work plans developed by the National Board of Social Affairs during 1975-1979. The six preschool work plans were designed to serve as educational guidance for staff, and dealt with various aspects of preschool activity based on principles formulated by a Preschool Commission (see governmental public reports SOU 1972:26 and SOU 1972:27). In later years, there has gradually been an even stronger regulation of the preschool's goals and content of the pedagogical work (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2006). The Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98) was first introduced when the responsibility for preschools was transferred from the social sector to the education sector. Compared with the previous governing documents (educational programs and work plans), the curriculum has led to a greater regulation of preschool goals and content, and also stricter requirements concerning the municipality's liability for preschools (ibid.).

3.1 Clarifying the Preschool Curriculum in 2009 – enhanced educational mission

The National Agency for Education was tasked by the Government to propose clarifications and additions to the goals of the Preschool Curriculum in 2009-2010, with a focus on language/communication, mathematics, science, and technology. The Agency was also commissioned to suggest guidelines for follow-up and evaluation and to clarify the responsibilities of the preschool teacher and the head of preschool. The changes were aimed at strengthening the preschool's educational assignment and creating a higher level of ambition for preschool activities.

The Government stated that the reason for the need to clarify the curriculum was that the preschool's potential to stimulate children's natural desire to learn had not been fully exploited. Such enhanced educational work was also meant to prepare children for their future schooling. The National Agency for Education has carried out the mission (National Agency for Education, 2009-09-30) in collaboration with various stakeholders in the early childhood education and care field, including researchers, practitioners, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, and relevant agencies. This can be interpreted as meaning that even if there has been co-operation with different actors in the preschool field during the process, the main drivers behind the clarifications were the politicians rather than the preschool professionals, and the enhanced educational mission particularly came about to increase goal achievement at school (related to the PISA ranking) and strengthen lifelong learning (OECD policy).

In the following, the focus is on the clarifications of responsibility for the preschool teacher and the head of the preschool and the guidelines for follow-up, evaluation, and development.

Preschool teachers' responsibility

One of the most important quality factors in preschool is staff expertise. The Government believes that the enhanced educational mission, as proposed, requires preschool teachers to be given special responsibility for teaching/pedagogical activities. Therefore, the National Agency of Education has proposed that specific responsibilities will be clarified by introducing three separate staff categories, addressed individually in the guidelines: *everyone working in the preschool*, *preschool teachers*, and *the work team* (this refers to the people working pedagogically with children in contrast to the first category). As the Preschool Curriculum includes various target areas that are interlinked and mutually dependent, the preschool teachers' special responsibility covers the entire curriculum.

Guidelines for follow-up, evaluation, and development

According to the draft of the revised Preschool Curriculum (National Agency for Education, 2009-09-30), the guidelines for follow-up, evaluation, and development should form a separate section of the curriculum. The National Agency for Education defines a follow-up as involving an ongoing collection and description of information, while evaluation also includes a review and assessment in relation to the objectives and criteria stated in the curriculum. To emphasize the link between follow-up, evaluation, and development, the new guidelines proposed by the Agency also include the development perspective. Further, the National Agency for Education has proposed that preschool activities should be evaluated in relation to the whole curriculum. The goals specify the orientation of preschool work and express a desired level of quality for the educational work. Therefore, preschool activities need to undergo follow-up and evaluation. The overall aim is to capture the progress of education in relation to the curriculum goals. Evaluations should take into consideration the extent to which the activity is based on the child's experiences, abilities, and interests, and the contexts in which the child shows response and motivation. Evaluations should also address how the preschool works in relation to the curriculum goals and intentions with respect to the given constraints and conditions. The aims should be integrated into everyday life and practice in preschools, and form a whole that should be fun, safe, and educational for all children who attend preschool. Thus, individual goals or target areas should not be evaluated in isolation (see Appendix 1, Sweden, for the curriculum guidelines about follow-up, evaluation, and development).

Responsibility of the head of the preschool

Each preschool unit should have a head of preschool whose responsibilities are regulated in the curriculum, including carrying out systematic work on quality together with preschool teachers and other staff, as well as providing the child's guardian with opportunities to participate in work on quality (see Appendix 1, Sweden). In order to consolidate the preschool position as part of the education system and to enhance its quality and

equivalence, the liability imposed upon the management of the preschool is also regulated in the Education Act as described below.

3.2 The new Education Act – draft of 2009-2010

The 2010 draft version of the Education Act (2009/10:165) determines how the preschool is regulated. The Education Act (SFS 2010:800) includes regulations for the entire school system. New proposals in the Education Act deal with the preschool as a school form of its own. By explicitly referring to the preschool as a school form, the Education Act emphasizes that the preschool has an educational mission and thus is part of the school system.

According to the Education Act, educational processes in the school system should be aimed at enhancing children's and students' acquisition of knowledge and values. Education should promote all children's and students' development and learning, as well as a lifelong desire to learn. Education should teach and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based.

Education should take into account children's and students' different needs. By enabling participation in early education, effort is made to compensate for differences in children's and students' preconditions. Educational programs should be developed in partnership with the home to support and encourage children's and students' overall personal development, enabling them to be active, creative, competent, and responsible individuals and citizens.

According to the Education Act, educational programs should be designed in accordance with fundamental democratic values and human rights, the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, equal dignity, equality, and solidarity between people. Everyone working in education is to promote human rights and actively combat all forms of degrading treatment. Education should have a scientific basis and also be based on tried-and-tested experience.

Quality work and systematic documentation in the new Education Act – for knowledge, freedom of choice, and security (2009/10:165)

The government has proposed that systematic quality work and influence on education should be treated in a single chapter in the Education Act, which applies to all types of school. By addressing the issues of quality and influence in a joint chapter, the intention is to emphasize the importance of parents' and children's influence on education in a decentralized system. The Education Act also contains (in another chapter) statements concerning the external inspection of preschools by the Schools Inspectorate as part of a national educational monitoring system.

Each principal organizer of a preschool (i.e. the municipality or the operator of an independent preschool) should systematically and continuously plan, monitor, and develop pedagogical/educational work in the preschool.

The focus of systematic quality work in preschools should be ensuring that national goals for education are fulfilled. If deficiencies in the operations become apparent through follow-up, through a complaint, or through other means, the principal organizer should ensure that the necessary actions are taken.

The government's proposal is based on the aim that everyone who participates in education should be offered preschool and school activities that are equal and of good quality. Ensuring national equivalence in a decentralized system assumes, as mentioned, that the government will set national goals and systematically follow up and check that goals are achieved and that systematic quality work is developed at the local level. Systematic and continuous quality work must be carried out in every preschool/school and by each principal. Development and evaluation of the preschool/school unit's work on value issues forms an integral part of this.

The principal organizer must therefore install a quality system including structure, routines, processes, and resources. The purpose of all quality work is that it should lead to improvements. It is therefore extremely important that knowledge of any deficiencies concerning an activity is actually followed by actions for change and improvement.

Sharing information on quality work

According to the Education Act, systematic quality work must be documented. Students, parents, and the general public must be able to access important information about the preschool/school activities, allowing them to become more involved and have more opportunities to make choices and influence the development of the preschool/school. Many municipalities publish information about preschool/school results, activities, developments, and other interesting information on a website, or make information available to the wider public in other ways; this also enables principal organizers to share in each other's information, potentially contributing to the development of their quality work. For the principal organizer, the overall documentation of quality constitutes a basis for initiating improvements and helps to identify priorities and actions to fulfil the goals. It is therefore essential that there is easy access to a systematic record of quality work conducted by the principal organizer.

Documentation of the systematic quality work at a preschool/school unit level and at a principal organizer level is also an important basis for the work of the state authorities, particularly the national inspections conducted by the Schools Inspectorate. The Government does not explicitly regulate the content and structure of documentation practices, but simply states that information on results and achievements, areas for improvement, and decisions on improvements should be included in such statements.

To summarize, the Government considers that systematic quality work need not be done in a uniform manner, but to a large extent should be adapted to local needs and conditions. Quality work should be documented.

Quality work at the principal organizer level

Each principal organizer (the municipality or the operator of an independent preschool) within the school system should systematically and continuously plan, monitor, and develop education (see further descriptions in sections 4.2 and 5.2). The principal organizer is ultimately responsible for implementing pedagogical/educational activities, giving them a central role in conducting quality work that will ensure the quality and equivalence of the activities in which the children participate.

Quality work at the preschool/school unit level

According to the draft version of the Education Act (2009/10:165), teachers should play an active role in quality work, both individually and together with their colleagues. The head of the preschool is responsible for the quality work carried out in their provisions. Quality work at the preschool/school unit level is carried out in collaboration with teachers, preschool teachers, other staff, and students. Children in the preschool and their parents/guardians should also be able to participate.

Children, students, and parents should be able to benefit from high quality standards and transparency of education. Efforts to develop the quality of activities should be characterized by democracy, participation, and influence. To achieve effectively and lead to real improvements, quality work needs to be accepted by staff, children, students, and guardians. The teacher and preschool teacher have a special responsibility for the quality and continuous evolution of teaching.

Inspections, state quality reviews and monitoring at the national level

The Education Act also regulates quality auditing activities such as the inspection of preschools/schools by the Schools Inspectorate, as well as the state quality review and national monitoring and evaluation. The Act defines a quality audit (preschool/school inspection) as an independent review conducted to see whether the operations and activities that have been examined comply with the requirements imposed by laws and regulations. The inspections carried out by the Schools Inspectorate include the identification of actions that the principal organizer needs to undertake in order to correct deficiencies discovered during the audit.

The Government has also proposed that when schools face an inspection they must prepare and conduct a self-evaluation (see section 5.1 for materials outsourced by the Schools Inspectorate). This document may consist of a number of issues both of oversight and of quality. A planned and systematic self-evaluation, signed by the head as the responsible official, may serve as a tool for inspection in several ways, including as a basis for the visit by the Schools Inspectorate. In addition, the Government's proposals (2009/10:165) state that the National Education Agency's responsibility for national monitoring and evaluation of the education system must be regulated by the Education Act.

Dealing with complaints

According to the Education Act, the principal organizer should define in written form the procedures and responsibilities for receiving and investigating complaints against the school/preschool. This work is ongoing, and no concrete examples are yet available.

3.3 Swedish guidelines in a Nordic perspective in 2013

The Nordic guidelines (see Appendix 1) use various terms for institutional activities and professional work with children aged 1-5, which may reflect partially divergent orientations. *Dagtilbud* (roughly day care; *tilbud* means 'offer' or loosely 'provision') in Denmark can be interpreted as being oriented towards the offer of day care institutions. *Barndagvård* (children's day-care) in Finland may be interpreted as oriented towards care and early childhood education. The term '*Lekskola*' (playschool/preschool) is used in Iceland. The Norwegian term '*Barnehage*' (kindergarten) can be interpreted as among those more clearly rooted in the Fröbel Kindergarten legacy (cf. Haug, 2013). Preschool (*förskola*) as a voluntary form of schooling in Sweden may be interpreted as the most school-oriented system in the Nordic countries.

Sweden is also distinctive among the Nordic countries in that it does not have a separate law governing early childhood education⁸; instead, preschool legislation is integrated in a law for the entire education system. Further, teaching, learning, and knowledge are emphasized more than play, care, and security, whose presence is weak or non-existent in the Swedish Education Act. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child expresses that children have a right to play. Play is not mentioned in the Swedish Education Act, but does occur in the binding Preschool Curriculum. Education and teaching are also prominent and defined in the Education Act. Teaching refers to goal-directed processes under the leadership of preschool teachers, aimed at facilitating development and learning through the acquisition and development of knowledge and values (cf. Doverborg, Pramling & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2013). However, teaching is not mentioned in the Preschool Curriculum, and the Education Act does not include any particular mention of the very youngest children (cf. the Danish law that includes plans for children age 0-2). On the other hand, there is more emphasis on both responsibility for and influence in preschool activities compared to other Nordic laws. Democracy and influence are emphasized relatively strongly, and freedom and solidarity are also mentioned (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

8 See Appendix 1 for the binding and non-binding guidelines included in the Nordic comparative analysis (Vallberg Roth, 2013).

In a Nordic perspective, Sweden is alone in having preschool as a voluntary form of schooling while employing lecturers with postgraduate education in preschools. Other aspects that distinguish the Swedish Education Act in the Nordic comparison are the use of native languages (other than Swedish), non-confessional teaching, and the explicit policy of focusing on goals to work towards rather than goals for the child to achieve (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

The binding and non-binding guidance materials for preschools (see Appendix 1) emphasize systematic quality work and improvement. Systematic quality improvement concerns structure, processes and outcomes/goal achievement (see Systematic Quality Work - Education System, 2012, National Agency for Education). In the binding guidelines, quality is linked to a linear and goal-rational work. The non-binding material on pedagogical documentation (National Agency for Education, 2012) is distinguished in the Nordic comparison by its grounding in a post-constructionist/post-humanist theory of rhizomatic ideals, de-centred subjects, and materials with agency (see further discussion in chapter 6). Unlike other policy documents, quality in this material may be interpreted as being more closely linked to non-linear processes than to linear processes (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

Goal and content construction in a Nordic perspective

The Nordic curriculum model is characterized by being input-oriented and institution-focused, with goals to work towards and content constructed as objects and thematic orientations. According to the OECD (2012), Anglo-Saxon approaches are characterized more as outcome-oriented, with learning outcomes at the individual level and goals to be achieved; assessment of children's knowledge and skills is a prominent factor (cf. Bennett, 2010). The goal and content constructions that emerge in the comparative analysis may be interpreted as oriented towards both the content and the individual performance (skills). The clearest examples of orientation towards individuals and skills are found in the language skills goal calling for language testing of three-year-olds in Denmark, and the language skills mapping and continuous observation and assessment of children in Norway. Finland's individual plans, Iceland's child development assessments, and Sweden's systematic documentation of every child's development and learning are other examples of the individual orientation (see overview 1 below). The most concretized examples are found in the mandatory language screening for three-year-olds in Denmark (see Appendix 1). A uniform instrument is used for the language test, including a graded skills assessment in which the linguistic section is translated into a score that makes it possible to place children into one of three linguistic profiles leading to general, focused, or special interventions.

In the majority of the curricula, the content construction includes six or seven content-specific or thematic orientations (see overview 1 below). All of the Nordic curricula may be interpreted as including language, culture, and nature as content. Sweden differs in that it formulates goal areas (see overview 1 below). The corresponding content, as in the aforementioned

content-specific orientations, is found primarily in integrated bullet-point lists under the goal area ‘Development and learning’. Moreover, large parts of the Swedish Preschool Curriculum (section 2) are formulated as both goals and guidelines. The goals indicate the direction of the preschool institution’s work, while guidelines indicate the responsibility of preschool teachers for ensuring that this work is carried out in accordance with the curriculum goals and the responsibilities of staff on the preschool’s working teams. In respect of differences in content construction, mathematics is included in the Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish curricula. The Norwegian and Swedish curricula can also be interpreted as emphasizing technology. It is interesting that religion, philosophy, community, and society, which are included in the Norwegian curriculum and to a great extent in the Finnish curriculum (which also has a history orientation) do not emerge as clearly in the Danish and Swedish curricula. The Icelandic curricula are distinguished by a general orientation towards themes of common values for all forms of schooling in the education system. Nordic languages may be interpreted overall as the most strongly emphasized content in the Nordic guidelines (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

According to the OECD, ‘Nordic countries tend to avoid using the term “child outcomes”, while Anglo-Saxon countries favour the approach’ (OECD, 2012, p. 1). Both of these traditions seem to co-exist to a certain extent in current Nordic ECE guidelines, along with a growing interest in documenting and assessing the development, knowledge, and abilities of individual children, including in academic, cognitively-oriented goal areas (see overview 1 below).

The curricula point out specific content towards which children’s learning should be aimed. Based on the overview, quality can be interpreted as being linked to both a multifaceted and cognitive approach, but with an intensified cognitive (academic) orientation at the individual level. Earlier studies point out that the combination of the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon curriculum models may be beneficial in the short and long terms (cf. OECD, 2012; Sheridan, Pramling-Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009). According to the OECD (2012), the multifaceted and input-oriented model may be most likely to improve the child’s long-term learning, including creativity, independence, self-esteem, initiative, and motivation to learn. The academic model may instead be most likely to improve the child’s short-term learning outcomes including reading and writing ability and mathematical, scientific, and specific knowledge (ibid.).

Overview 1: Examples of content-specific orientations and documentation at the individual level in Nordic guidelines (Vallberg-Roth, 2013)

	Content specific orientations*	Documentation-individual assessment**
Denmark	General personal development Social skills Language development Physical development and movement Nature and natural phenomena Cultural forms of expression and values	Language screening of three-year-olds
Finland	Mathematics orientations Science orientation History and civics orientations Arts orientation Ethics orientation Religion and outlook orientation	Individual plans
Iceland	Literacy Sustainability Health and well-being Democracy and human rights Equality Creativity	Assessment of every child's development
Norway	Communication, language and text Physical development, movement and health Art, culture and creativity Nature, environment and technology Ethics, religion and philosophy Community and society Quantity, space and shape	Continuous observation and assessment of every child's development and happiness Language assessment ⁹
Sweden	Development and learning goal area: Whole child development (5 points) Language communication (5 points) Mathematics (4 points) Science (3 points) Technology and building (2 points) Motor skills, body perception, health and well-being (1 point) Creativity play, art, movement, singing and music, dance and drama (1 point) Cultural identity, communication in Swedish and native language (1 point)	Systematic documentation of every child's learning and development

*) This presents only part of the content constructions as themes, orientations, pillars, subject areas and the goal area of development and learning (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

**) Content, documentation, and individual assessment are based on both binding guidelines and non-binding guidance (Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

9 See the recommendation on obligatory language mapping on the Norwegian government website: <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/38272872/PDFS/STM201220130024000DDDPDFS.pdf>

3.4 Reflections on the Swedish preschool reforms

As mentioned, the Government has stated that the reason for the need to clarify the curriculum is that the preschool's potential to stimulate children's natural desire to learn has not been fully exploited. This can be interpreted as meaning that even if there has been co-operation with different actors in the preschool field during the process of clarifying the curriculum, the main drivers behind the clarifications were the politicians more than the professionals in preschool; the enhanced educational mission in particular came about to strengthen lifelong learning (OECD policy) and increase goal achievement at school (related to the PISA ranking).

The question is whether the stressed concept of learning reflects the phenomenon of 'learnification' (Biesta, 2009); that is, a general trend towards the individual's increasing responsibility for lifelong learning. Biesta (2011) further emphasizes that learning is fundamentally an individualist term that refers to what people do as individuals, as opposed to the concept of 'education, which always indicates a relationship: someone educates someone else and the person who educates has a certain sense of the purpose of their activities' (p. 27). When it comes to the 'why' question and the function of education, Biesta discusses three terms: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. To qualify an individual involves equipping them with the knowledge required for citizenship, cultural life, and working life. Through its socializing function (a transfer of norms and values), education incorporates the individual into a social order; the individual is inserted into existing ways of doing and being. The subjectifying function is oriented towards the individual's freedom, own voice, and uniqueness (irreplaceability); this process may be understood as the opposite of socialization, and is related to a way of being that suggests independence of social orders. Socialization has to do with how we are part of a larger and overarching order, while uniqueness expresses how we differ from the norms of this order. Subjectification refers to how the individual begins an act – a 'becoming' – but also covers the consequences and how others receive and judge our becomings and acts. Biesta argues that education should facilitate subjectification processes that make it possible for the educated person to become more independent in thought and action. The three functions are joined together. When, for example, we devote ourselves to qualification, socialization and the subjectifying function are always affected. How is the quality concept expressed and operationalized – is the stress placed on qualification, socialization, and/or subjectification?

Function – Swedish guidelines

Qualifying, socializing, and subjectifying functions are all manifest in the Swedish Education Act, but with perhaps a stronger emphasis on qualification in the Nordic comparison. In respect of the subjectifying function, the

activities should be based upon and pay particular attention to the best interests of the child and the child's opportunity to freely express their opinions on matters that concern them.

Qualifying (e.g. language, mathematics, science, and technology), socializing (e.g. norms and values), and subjectifying functions all emerge in the Swedish curriculum. The subjectifying function may be interpreted as being reinforced in the guidelines on pedagogical documentation (National Agency for Education, 2012) through the openness to unpredictable breakthroughs and becomings that are oriented towards the potentially possible and the unexpected creation of meaning.

4 Description of quality assurance practices at the national, municipal, and preschool level

Quality assurance and documentation practices take place at the national, municipal, and preschool levels, and there is also a monitoring system in place at the national level. At all levels, the quality assurance and documentation practices are related to the revised Preschool Curriculum. In terms of regulations, the main tasks and responsibilities are shared among the national, municipal, and preschool levels as follows.

At the **national level**, the Swedish parliament and government set targets and determine frameworks including extensive documentation, follow-up, evaluation, and development of quality. The role of the Schools Inspectorate is to monitor and scrutinize the principal organizers and preschools/schools on the basis of legal requirements. According to the legislation, the Schools Inspectorate should also monitor whether the municipalities are fulfilling their responsibility to scrutinize the independent preschools which the state has no jurisdiction to inspect.

As mentioned, the National Agency of Education has a specific responsibility to support and publish guidelines and the Schools Inspectorate has the responsibility to exercise external inspections. The Swedish non-binding guidance is given in Appendix 1, and section 4.1 includes examples of reports and surveys on quality work in preschools (2011-2013) from the commission of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (external assessment at a national level).

At the **municipal level**, the principal organizer of the school system (the municipality or the operator of an independent preschool) is responsible for the organization, management, and operation of the activities. This organizer must allocate resources, monitor and evaluate the results, and correct any deficiencies. The principal organizer has the ultimate responsibility for the quality work in education, deciding on the goals, scope, and monitoring and taking responsibility for equal quality between preschools in the municipality. The municipality (principal organizer) also scrutinizes independent preschools, both to ensure that their principal organizers are eligible to start and run these schools, and to monitor their ongoing quality work. See section 4.2 for examples of reports on quality work and documents on organization for quality in preschools (2011-2013) at the municipal level.

At the **preschool/local unit level**, the teachers and head of the preschool are responsible for the educational and organizational planning and implementation, follow-up, evaluation, and development of teaching and activities. Children and parents should also be involved in the quality work. Section 4.3 presents examples of quality reports (2011-2013) from public and independent preschools.

4.1 National level – external inspections/quality audits conducted by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2011-2013)

In January 2014, the Swedish Government commissioned researchers with the establishment of an Educational Research Institute (ERI) in 2015¹⁰ that will be responsible for systematically aggregating and disseminating research that can contribute to increased knowledge of effective, evidence-based approaches and practices in the preschool/school system. The aim is to increase the achievement of goals, to enhance quality, and to improve learning outcomes. The ERI should also identify research gaps based on the aggregated research results.

At the national level, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate is mandated by the Government to conduct quality audits of preschools, schools, and after-school care. These audits involve detailed and systematic examination of the quality within defined areas of preschool activities (see assessment material at a national level in section 5.1). In connection with its quality auditing activities, the Schools Inspectorate provides advice and guidance as to what a preschool, a municipality, or an operator of an independent preschool needs to rectify on the basis of legal requirements. The premise is all children's and students' equal right to a good education in a safe environment. The main purpose of the quality audit is to contribute to development. The audit makes clear what needs to be improved in order to better achieve the goals of the activities in the relevant field. It also aims to describe well-functioning elements and to highlight success factors.

Across the country, the Schools Inspectorate examined 16 municipal preschools in 2011 and 46 municipal preschools in 2012/2013. In general, it carries out an audit every five years in a certain number of municipal preschools, focusing on deviations from the requirements and expectations expressed in the Education Act, curricula, and other provisions. The statistics are not based on a random sample, and so cannot be generalized to apply to all preschools in the country, but they are sufficiently numerous and sufficiently similar to a representative sample of preschools in the country. In that sense, some overarching patterns of existing deficiencies can be observed. It is difficult to compare the performance of the audit from year to year, as the model of auditing is continuously evolving and adapting to new conditions such as legislative changes.

The audit includes evaluation of activities for which there are already indications of developmental needs as well as activities that are of supposedly good quality. The Schools Inspectorate's observations, analyses, and as-

10 As part of the preparatory work for the Educational Research Institute, Prof Ingegerd Tallberg-Broman, Prof Sven Persson, Prof Ann-Christine Vallberg-Roth and Dr Linda Palla, Malmö University, have been commissioned to compile research on the preschool.

assessments are reported to the principals and summarized in a report. Through their description of key aspects of quality within the audit area, these reports aim to also provide development assistance to preschools that have not been reviewed.

The Schools Inspectorate visits every preschool for two days. During the visits, the inspectors interview the head of the preschool and representatives of the preschool teachers, and conduct observations of everyday activities. Before the visits, the administrative managers and heads of preschools are asked to fill in separate activity descriptions.

Injunctions and fines

If an activity has flaws, the Schools Inspectorate can decide on an injunction which may involve closing the preschool for a period of time. An injunction may also be combined with fines; the principal organizer responsible for the school may be required to pay a sum of money unless the deficiencies are corrected in time. If an activity only has minor flaws, the Schools Inspectorate may decide on a complaint, and then the operator of the school is required to rectify the situation.

Results from a quality review at a national level – report 2011:10¹¹

The audit of the Schools Inspectorate showed that the Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98) may not have been used as the conscious basis of planning of preschool activities. This is further exemplified below.

The educational task of the preschool

Daily activities in the preschools tended to be targeted at the goals of developing language and mathematical skills. Other aims formulated in the curriculum were not as clearly evident. For example, activities aimed at the ability to have respect for other cultures, native language support, and understanding simple scientific phenomena were less common in the everyday activities of preschools. Preschools need to visualize, discuss, and analyse all the goals of the Preschool Curriculum, and make sure that children are given the opportunity to develop all the abilities described in the section on development and learning.

Preschool as a learning environment

Almost half of the surveyed preschools had insufficiently inspiring environments. Many of them were housed in facilities that were not originally intended for preschools (for example, buildings with multiple floors), which may have caused difficulties in implementing the curriculum. In several preschools the playing materials available on the shelves gave a poor impression, consisting only of a few simple games, puzzles and books. At some preschools, the outdoor environment needed substantial improvement, especially in order to challenge the older children, as the playground equipment was not stimulating and the school yards were open areas with a

11 See <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Kvalitetsgranskning/forskolaped/kvalgr-forsk-slutrapport.pdf>

large proportion of asphalt. Preschools need to look at how the educational environment can be developed to become more efficient, comprehensive, stimulating, and inviting.

Focus of the Schools Inspectorate's quality audit

In the audit, the Schools Inspectorate examined the preschools' quality work; that is, how the preschools were working to systematically evaluate their own work in order to develop their activities. The preschool has begun to play an increasingly important role as the first step in lifelong learning, and many children attend preschool for a long time. It is therefore important that the quality is high and that the children are given the opportunity to develop all the abilities expressed in the development and learning section of the Preschool Curriculum (see overview 1).

If preschools are to start evaluating and developing their activities in line with the curriculum, they need to be better at documenting children's development and increased knowledge. In most of the surveyed preschools, there was great uncertainty about how to follow-up and document individual children's development and knowledge, which in turn made it difficult for teachers to evaluate the activities and know what the children have learned. Quality work was often about values, and evaluation with children often dealt with having fun during the activities. Preschools need to improve their work of following-up and documenting each child's development and learning, to give a basis for evaluation of the preschool activities.

Results from the national quality audits (2012/2013)¹²

This section covers the decisions from the Schools Inspectorate made within the regular audit in 2012/2013 (see note 8), with a focus on observations where room for improvement is noted.

The Schools Inspectorate audited preschools in 46 municipalities in 2012. Almost all municipalities had some areas that needed improvement, with the three most common being working with security and good environment in general (76%), development and learning (67%), and municipal governance and management (47%). The most common areas that needed improvement concerned information provision to caretakers, prevention of abusive behaviour, and systematic quality work. On a closer examination of the area concerning security and good environment, 75% of the preschools were criticized for their targeted work on abusive treatment of children. The shortcomings in the area of development and learning were mainly deficiencies in the principal's responsibility to ensure variation that stimulates children's development and learning and to offer safe care (45%). Local government leadership and management mainly included criticism re-

12 See reports http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Regelbunden-tillsyn/statistik/statsitik_2012/statistikrapport-regelbunden-tillsyn-2012.pdf and <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Om-oss/regeringsuppdrag/regeringsrapport-2013-skolans%20kvalitetsarbete.pdf/>

garding monitoring and development of the activities (49%). These areas of deficiencies in preschools are further discussed below.

Preschools are not sufficiently basing their work on the enhanced educational mission

Many of the preschools surveyed had not succeeded in establishing the new curriculum by means of clarified goals in their daily work. The staff's attitudes, knowledge, and awareness of the new mission all still needed to be evolved. Although many preschools had begun an implementation process, many preschool teachers and childcare workers felt unsure of the meaning of the changes, and expressed that everything was very much 'business as usual'. The audit showed that the principals and preschool directors had failed to ensure that all their employees received relevant and continuous training in order to perform their professional duties and be able to provide informed educational support of children's development and learning.

Preschool staff lack knowledge about science and technology

Staff in many of the preschools needed to expand their knowledge of working with natural science and technology in ways that stimulate and challenge children's curiosity and learning. Although specific activities took place including experiments in the forest, with water, or with construction, the staff did not always consider how the children could participate in designing these tasks. If a task is not based on children's experiences, needs, and interests, the children's perspectives are not considered.

Preschools lack support for native languages other than Swedish

The audit showed that many municipalities had difficulty supporting children with native languages other than Swedish, and many preschools lacked an intercultural approach. For example, some preschools believed that speaking a native language at home would be enough for the children, and so they would only need to practice the Swedish language in preschool. The preschool staff had flaws in their knowledge and expertise of providing language support for preschool children with native languages other than Swedish.

Preschools should become more aware of gender issues

The Schools Inspectorate encountered a great lack of awareness of gender as a knowledge area in the audited preschools. Play was often clearly gender specific. Preschool management need to ensure that the meaning of the Preschool Curriculum's position on gender issues is clear to all staff, so that the preschool can contribute to learning and development among all boys and girls in all areas. Every fifth municipality in the audit was criticized for how they worked with these values in their preschools.

Preschools must become better at preventing children from being violated

Three quarters of the municipalities were criticized by the Schools Inspectorate for failure to engage in preventing children from being violated in preschool. The main shortcomings were related to a lack of adequate

plans for dealing with abusive treatment, meaning that the preschools were not able to take concrete action. In some cases, the measures envisaged were of a more general nature, and were insufficiently precise in terms of what the staff should do when children are violated in preschool and how the actions are to be monitored. For children in preschool to be as safe as possible, it is important that the preschools work to prevent such violations.

Lack of a good learning environment

Almost one in ten municipalities had shortcomings regarding the children's welfare and security in the preschool environment. Large groups sometimes led to staff finding it hard to have a full view of all children, and the natural outdoor environment sometimes had flaws. Many of the preschools surveyed did not have facilities that left room for the different needs and learning assignments that the preschool required, and many provided limited opportunities for children to play in privacy without being disturbed. There was also great variation in how the preschools provided material intended for the children in an appealing and inviting way. The preschools showed deficiencies in working consciously to design and develop the natural outdoor environment to make it more accessible, creative, and stimulating to the children in their development and learning. Many preschool playgrounds were surprisingly dull and uninspiring from the learning point of view, though they all had the basic range of sandpit, swings and usually a playhouse and a few bikes. Some preschools did not work to adapt the outdoor environment as the group of children and the needs of this group changed over time.

Many principal organizers and preschool heads have shortcomings in the leadership and management of the activities

The Schools Inspectorate found flaws in governance and management in nearly half of the surveyed municipal preschools. Several of the preschools were criticized for not following up their activities, meaning that there was no basis for making an assessment of whether these activities needed any development. They often lacked monitoring and analytical work on values and the development of children's knowledge; there was a lack of observation and documentation used to define the intended object of learning and give the teachers the information they needed to design a learning situation based on the children's previous knowledge. They did not follow up and evaluate group sizes and composition. The consequence of this lack of quality work was that the municipality lacked a comprehensive picture of the progress of knowledge in its preschools. The shortcomings noted were most closely related to the preschool managers' role in ensuring that a systematic quality work includes operations in which activities are planned, monitored and developed. Today, preschool employees do not see quality work as part of their ongoing educational work, but rather as something that occurs a few times a year as part of the development activity or as something that the preschool head does.

4.2 Municipal level – quality work in a major city municipality in the south of Sweden (2011-2013)

At the municipal level, this report focuses on a major city municipality in the south of Sweden that began reorganizing its activities after the introduction of the new Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the revised Preschool Curriculum (Lpfö 98: Revised, 2010), and the audit and criticism by the Schools Inspectorate¹³. This reorganizing activities are not representative for all city municipalities in Sweden.

In broad terms, the criticism from the Schools Inspectorate covered a lack of equivalence, governance, and management, and the fact that the city municipality had no real follow-up and systematic quality work. There were major flaws relating to the city's mission to guide and lead education activities in terms of agreed targets. The quality of governance and management was highly variable in different neighbourhoods, and there was no clear division of responsibilities between boards, administration, and preschool activities. There was a remarkably low level of the knowledge and insight that policy makers need to make the right decisions regarding the activities they are responsible for. Hence, the municipality did not have a systematic and standardized monitoring system that could be aggregated upwards. Instead, there were many different ways to follow the activities in different parts of the municipality. The criticism about the equivalence of preschools was partly based on the different education and skills of the staff, but also on different ways of organizing work with children in need of special support, including support with native languages other than Swedish. In addition, in some preschools the work with core values did not pervade the preschool activities – for example, there was no targeted effort to combat abusive behaviour in every particular activity. Furthermore, although there were facilities that allowed for good educational activity, there were other facilities that were substandard (see note 10). In connection with the criticism from the Schools Inspectorate, the municipal executive chairman started an investigation focusing on organization that would enable the provision of equivalent education in the municipality with high quality and increased goal achievement¹⁴.

This investigation resulted in an entirely new organization that was launched in July 2013. Previously, there were ten relatively segregated and homogeneous districts with district councillors who had overall responsibility for compulsory schools, after-schools, and preschools. Today, there are

13 See the 2011 Schools Inspectorate report:

<http://siris.skolverket.se/siris/ris.openfile?docID=178814>

14 See Fokus Förskola [Preschool in focus], a journal of the preschool in Malmö city, March 2014

five relatively integrated and heterogeneous urban areas¹⁵ where educational matters are organized in three boards and areas of administration: the preschool board and administration, the compulsory school board and administration, and the upper secondary school and adult education board and administration (see Figure 2).

The municipal council has the highest decision-making power as it consists of elected politicians. This council appoints an executive (the municipal government) which leads and coordinates the work of the municipality. The appointed boards that are responsible for dealing with these matters should be addressed in the municipal council, and the boards must also implement the council's decisions. Each board has an administration that implements the decisions of the municipal council and the board. To improve the work towards equivalent preschools with high quality, the municipal council chose to consolidate the responsibility for all preschools in one preschool board and administration led by a highly responsible preschool director working with a whole-town perspective. The three school boards are supposed to work closely with each other in a lifelong learning perspective¹⁶ according to the organizational structure illustrated in Figure 2.

15 See description of the five city areas (North, East, South, West, and inner city):

<http://www.malmo.se/Kommun--politik/Ny-organisation-2013/Politisk-styrning-av-den-nya-organisationen.html>

16 See description of the organization as of 2013:

<http://www.malmo.se/download/18.24a63bbe13e8ea7a3c6934b/1383647169928/Inrattande%20av%20nya%20namnder%20samt%20forandrat%20namndsansvar%20for%20LSS-verksamheten%20m.pdf>

http://www.malmo.se/download/18.228b8e2313f81626274624a/1383647169270/NyOrganisation_tryck.pdf

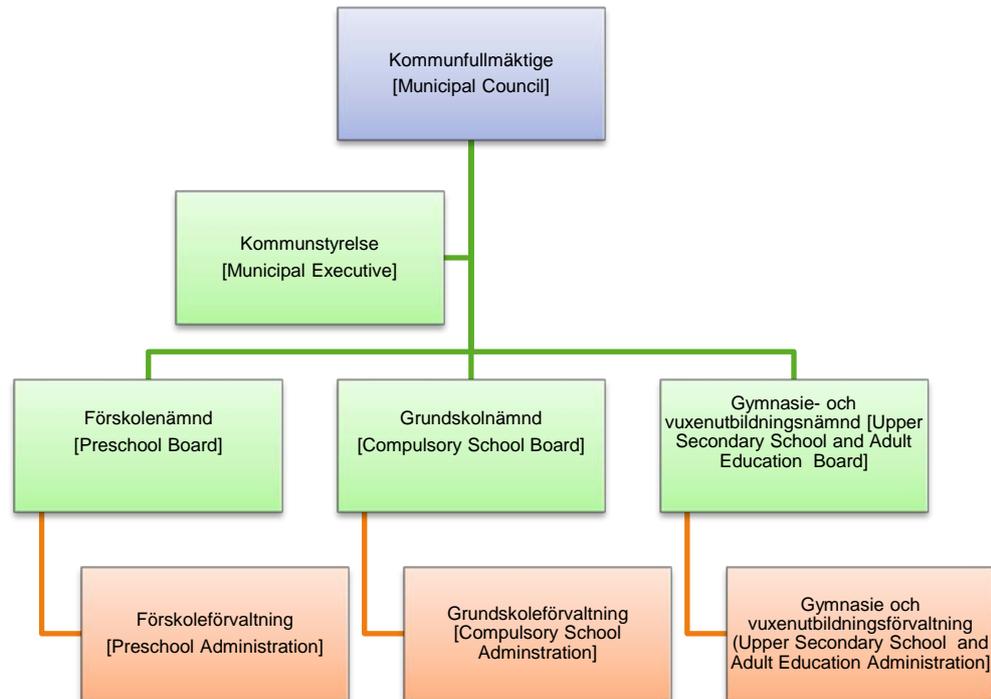


Figure 2: Reorganization for increased equality and quality in a major city municipality after the introduction of the Education Act and the revised Preschool Curriculum, and criticism from the Schools Inspectorate.

Many boards and administrations in various municipalities administer preschools, compulsory schools, and high schools together, but it is also quite common to administer preschools and compulsory schools together and administer high schools in another part of the organization (see example in section 4.3). There is a danger that the preschool will be overshadowed by issues focused on the compulsory school, and so in relation to the new Education Act and the revised Preschool Curriculum specifying a strengthened educational mission in preschool, the chosen solution in the present municipality was to organize and focus on the preschool activities in one specific preschool board and preschool administration. This administration includes 4,600 employees targeting 17,000 children, more than 2,000 of whom (about 12–14%) are in independent preschools. Altogether, about 240 preschools have the municipality as their principal organizer and about 70 preschools are independent (see note 12). The preschools in this municipality are currently undergoing tremendous expansion, and so the number administered by the preschool administration is far higher than the 70 or so compulsory schools administered by the compulsory school administration. We next turn to the question of how the systematic quality work has been organized in this new preschool administration.

Quality work in the preschool administration of the city municipality

The preschool administration now includes a *Department of Quality and Authority* with responsibility for quality assurance, development, and exer-

cise of authority. The goal of the department is to ensure a uniform quality among all preschool units, to increase the effectiveness of the units, and to improve the learning processes in a whole-town perspective. Even management of complaints is an important tool in the department. The function of this authority will include responsibility for independent preschool activities as well as support and counselling in preschool legal issues. To organize and operationalize quality work, and ensure that the organization would not be outgrown too quickly, eight *Education areas* were established with an education manager in each area, as shown in Figure 5. The next section addresses the question of how quality work is operationalized. A quality dialogue appears as an important tool in the municipality and the education areas.

Quality dialogue as a key tool in the municipality

In the Department of Quality and Authority, the manager's responsibility is to conduct a systematic quality assurance and to assure the quality of each preschool unit. As part of the systematic quality work, the question is how the manager, the board, the administration, and the education area manager can have a dialogue, and how the 240 preschool units can be both supported and controlled. The answer and key tool in this municipality is the so-called *quality dialogue*. The descriptions in the following sections are based on the reference mentioned in note 11.

Together with their co-workers, the preschool head conducts quality dialogues based on quality guidelines, reports, and plans. This kind of more formalized quality dialogue is conducted twice a year. In these self-evaluative quality dialogues, the quality report and quality plan serve as assessments to be aggregated upwards to administrative levels of the organization. The preschools' quality work and results are described in the quality reports, while in the quality plans the head and co-workers describe the development areas they intend to work with in the future. Hence, these reports and plans are based on quality dialogues that are communicated at different levels.

The quality dialogues for the preschools will also be conducted by external *quality supporters* (preschool teachers with additional education) at the municipal level (see Figure 3). During Autumn 2013, the preschool administration recruited five permanent full-time quality supporters who will visit the city's 240 preschools along with an additional 24 part-time quality supporters. These part-time supporters are preschool teachers who spend 10–20% of their working time auditing other preschool units; they do not perform any reviews in the areas they are employed as preschool teachers, but rather review preschools in other areas. Two full-time quality supporters will attend each visit together with a number of part-time quality supporters. Each visit is expected to take two days; the first day for conversation and observation and the second day for feedback. Overall, it will take two and a half years to visit every preschool in the municipality (including the independent preschools). The quality supporters are included in the De-

partment of Quality and Authority. All are preschool teachers with additional qualifications¹⁷, some of them also have training as special education teachers, and one of them is a preschool lecturer. The quality supporters will continue in their roles for three to five years. This is partly because the work can quickly lead to loss of a close preschool perspective, meaning that they may adopt a more bureaucratic and administrative attitude; partly because it takes some years to become comfortable in the role; and partly because the quality supporters must be trusted by the staff and preschool heads. An external reviewer who performs a peer review must not be seen by any of the involved parties as a person from upper administration, but rather as a person who works in preschools and has a close preschool perspective. The dialogue is very important to capture what quality actually is; the quality supporters are described as ‘extra eyes’ contributing to a high quality and an equivalent preschool experience for all children. Furthermore, the quality supporters can build up a bank of good practices that can be shared in different ways¹⁸. All the actors put together a schedule of self-assessments, visits, and dialogues. Next, a dialogue takes place between the quality supporter and the education manager about what emerged during the visit. The point is that the process will ultimately increase the awareness and skills of all staff at the preschool and also of all administrators and politicians, which according to the description will result in higher quality and give the children the best preschool experience (see note 11 and Figure 3).

17 Some of the teachers have additional qualifications as a ‘pedagogista’. In Reggio Emilia, Italy, the role of a pedagogista is to support and collaborate with teachers in their daily work with children, their families, and the community. The pedagogista does this by working closely with teachers to observe, document, analyse, and interpret the rights and needs of each child and family and then using this knowledge to plan and project responsive learning experiences with children. Pedagogistas are trained at the Reggio Emilia Institute in Stockholm via 20 training days on eight occasions (see note 11.)

18 See note 11.

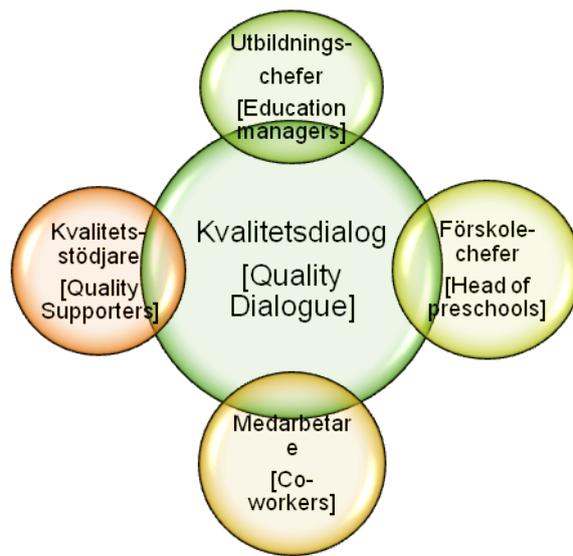


Figure 3: Quality dialogue as a key tool in the municipality between education managers, heads of preschools, co-workers, and quality supporters.

New documentation tool

The quality supporters have developed an assessment form and documentation tool including 16 different assessment areas to provide a holistic picture of each specific preschool’s quality and potential development areas (see section 5.2). However, the quality supporters stress that it is not enough to point out shortcomings and then leave the staff to solve the problems alone. If it turns out that the basic preschool activities do not work properly – for example, the preschool does not have an educational environment that the children can influence, or there is insufficient native language support – then it is not good enough for the quality supporters to simply point out that something is not working. Instead, according to research on co-learning, an *educational development team* is built up under the ownership of the head of the preschools and the education manager in each education area (see note 11). The educational development team is another step in the municipality's quality work, as described in the next section.

Educational development teams with team leaders

Educational development teams constitute one of the pieces of the work to assure the quality of educational development at the municipal level. Each education area will have its own educational development team (see Figure 5), giving a total of eight teams. The background to this initiative is the suggestion from the Schools Inspectorate that the major city municipality must invest in equivalent preschools of high quality to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. One important point is that the people included in these teams are not the same as the quality supporters who are doing the reviews. Each team will have five people with different skills. Two speciali-

zations are already clear; one person should have a focus on pedagogical documentation, and one on ICT education. The other members of the teams will vary depending on the area's needs; for example, one area may need to include teachers with special needs qualifications, but it is up to each education area to decide on this (see note 11).

The basic idea is that the educational development teams will be part of the learning organization. They can work on behalf of preschool heads, for example with mentoring and professional development of the employees, and as a professional role model. The teams can enter and work in specific preschools for a number of weeks. They can help create good environments and good opportunities for educational work. The education manager in each area will organize the relevant team. The teams will be staffed during 2014. The preschool administration will begin this process by advertising for team leaders, who will become permanent employees. The developers in the team will have time-limited assignments of 2–5 years, but they will have a permanent position in the preschool administration; the reason for this is that the need for different skills may change over time. It may also be the case that a developer will transfer to the position of a quality supporter (see previous section), or that a quality supporter will transfer into a development team. The point of this is to increase learning and for the organization to gain more and more skills. The educational development teams, the quality supporters and a *creative learning centre* are three fundamentals in the same development that the major city municipality is now focusing on (see note 11). The next section describes the creative learning centre in relation to quality supporters and development teams as important components in a learning organization.

The creative learning centre

The creative learning centre is described as a natural meeting point for education and experience on creative learning and pedagogical documentation (see note 11); it is a place with practical examples, theory, and materials. There is much good work being carried out in preschools that is worthy of being highlighted in order to inspire others. A creative learning centre can provide this function, but it can also be a natural physical meeting place for children, parents, educators, students, and others in the preschool world from different parts of the city. A learning centre should also provide access to materials, particularly recycled materials. It could host workshops on different themes, challenging current for educational thoughts. The preschool administration is huge, and therefore needs a place that is inclusive, where everyone can feel welcome and where everyone can work towards the goal of equivalency in preschools. A reference group of 24 educators has been gathered from the eight educational areas (see Figure 5), and a working group has been established consisting of preschool teachers, heads of preschools and officials from the Department of Quality and Authority. The vision is to open the creative learning centre in Autumn 2014 (see note 11). The relationship between the creative learning centre, the quality supporters, and the educational development teams in a learning organization is illustrated in Figure 4.

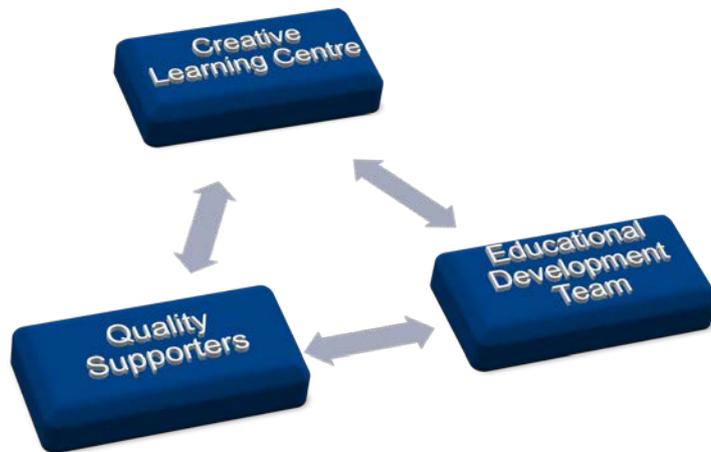


Figure 4: The relationship between the creative learning centre, the quality supporters, and the educational development team (with reference to note 11).

Different interventions for higher quality – components of quality work at the municipal level

The new organization will also save time for preschool heads, allowing them to devote more time to educational activities as they will need to spend less time on questions of facilities, food, staffing, and administration. All development efforts should be seen as a support structure that allows all actors to work together to ensure high quality and comparable activity ‘that will allow more students to complete school with passing grades’ (see p. 4, note 11). The components of the new organization for quality and equality in the major city municipality are illustrated in Figure 5.

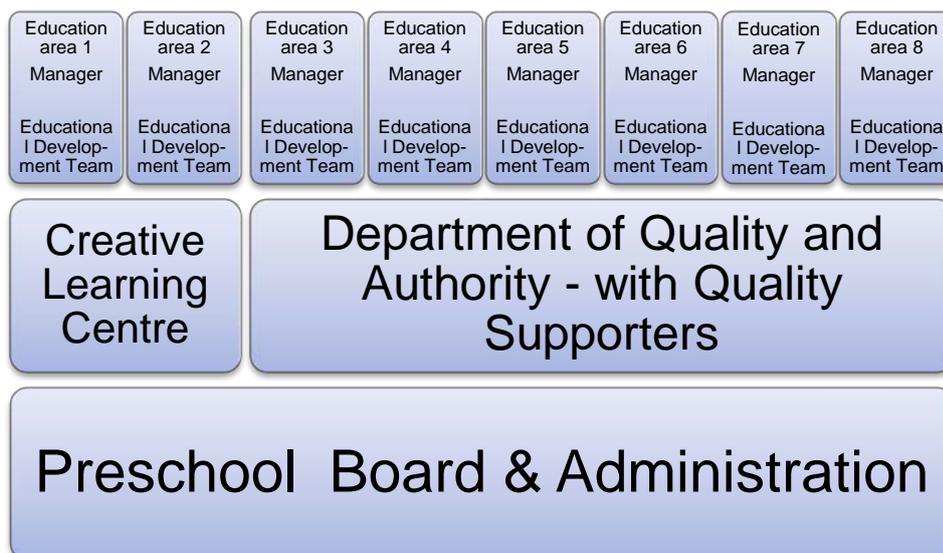


Figure 5: Components of the major city municipal organization for quality and equality.

In addition to the standard municipal estimation tool (see 5.2), it is up to each preschool to use other documentation tools and assessment forms. The preschools can work with as many tools as they want, as long as the municipality delivers comparable assessments, including the estimation tool, which can be aggregated and communicated at higher levels. Section 5.3 presents various forms of documentation tools and assessment forms used in preschools at the local unit level, while the next section describes some quality reports at the preschool level.

4.3 Preschool level – quality reports from two preschools (2011-2013)

This section describes the contents of two quality reports at the preschool level in a suburban municipality in southern Sweden¹⁹. The reports include descriptions of the quality work at the end of the year in a municipal (public) preschool and an independent preschool. The section starts with the report for the municipal preschool. The reports were downloaded from the Internet (see note 16), and there is no detailed information available on how the information in the reports was compiled and analysed.

Results of a quality report from a municipal preschool

The introduction to the report describes the quality work as having given priority to the new national policy documents in a project called ‘School 2011’. This project was aimed at providing increased familiarity with the new national policy documents (the Education Act and revised Preschool Curriculum) in order that they could be used as the basis for planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of activities. In a decision from the Child and Education Board (2011), a board that includes both preschools and schools, a particular reference is made to four priority target areas for school and preschool units as follows:

- Increased goal achievement in compulsory school concerning the knowledge mission
- Ensuring that students in compulsory school, preschool, preschool class, and after-school feel safe in their activities
- Ensuring a good working atmosphere in all activities
- Increased focus on learning in preschool

19 See <http://www.hoor.se/Global/BUN/Kvalitet%20och%20Utveckling/Internkontroll%20Forsko-leomrade%205.pdf/>

and

[http://www.hoor.se/Global/BUN/Kvalitet%20och%20Utveckling/Redovisning%20av%20Edens%20kvalitet%202012-2013%20\(2\).pdf/](http://www.hoor.se/Global/BUN/Kvalitet%20och%20Utveckling/Redovisning%20av%20Edens%20kvalitet%202012-2013%20(2).pdf/)

The information in the report was compiled and analysed by a team including an official and a preschool head from another preschool area in the municipality. A politician should also have been included in the team, but the person who was intended to fill that role was occupied with a board meeting and could not participate on the day the team visited and compiled the information from the preschool. Based on interviews with two preschool teachers, a childcare worker²⁰, a special education teacher, and two guardians, the preschool's strengths and areas for development were identified as described below.

Summary of strengths

- Safe environment
- Pedagogical/educational activities are based on a weekly schedule of activities
- Interpretation of the governing documents has begun to be translated into practice
- Good parental influence
- Good staff skills
- Good composition and reasonable size of children's groups

Summary of areas for improvement

- More advertising is needed for the preschool
- Quality and routines for pedagogical documentation need to be strengthened
- Time is needed for reflection in the weekly schedule
- The division of tasks in the work team should be clarified

The priority target areas of the preschool, as predetermined by the municipality, were language, building and construction, and other curriculum goals based on themes such as water. Improvement of the indoor environment, with specific spaces for different activities in the rooms, was ongoing with the aim of creating suitable conditions to work according to the intentions of the curriculum. These rooms or environments should also be changed to continue to stimulate the children's learning. The staff wanted to plant shrubs outside in order to make the outdoor environment more sheltered and inviting to play in. Some of the children's creativity and learning was documented on the walls, and some was documented in a binder. The documentation described the activities that the children did and the materials they used, but this was not always accompanied by evidence of learning as a result of the activities. Much of the documentation was done through photography and filming. The staff said that they wanted to develop their pedagogical documentation. The National Agency for Education has published support material under the title 'Follow-Up, Evaluation and Development in Preschool' (2012), but the staff did not have access to this.

20 A childcare worker has a nurse certificate gained after two years of upper secondary/senior high school education, while a preschool teacher has three and a half years of education at the university level.

Five hours a week were available in the schedule for reflection and documentation for preschool teachers, and two of these were allocated to child-care workers to compensate for the duties that had been delegated to these workers. One of the preschool teachers felt that there was insufficient time for documentation, analysis, and development. One reason for this was the lack of a working schedule and the lack of paid time for reflection and pedagogical documentation. Instead, the staff tried to find occasions for documentation when the children were sleeping, or when there was low occupancy at the preschool units.

The staff felt they had more time for each child and the noise level had decreased due to the preschool's expanded facilities, personnel resources, and transition to two departments instead of one. The conditions that stimulated children's curiosity and encouraged them to explore their environment had improved. The staff provided a few examples of how they could now more easily pay attention to children's learning.

The staff could now obtain advice from specially educated teachers to work with children in need of special support. Specific educational tools were designed to help the staff analyse and provide proper support for children with special needs. The staff were satisfied with these tools and the support of a special teacher. Children with special needs could be identified early. For very specific special needs, the staff could also apply for central resource enhancements.

The five year olds in the preschool had weekly collaboration with the preschool class; according to the staff, this collaboration worked well and would continue to evolve with a focus on language development. The preschool also wanted to promote parent participation through surveys, drop-in sessions, developmental talks, parent meetings, and forums for consultation, dealing with matters important to the activities, the children, and the guardians/parents.

Parents and guardians felt that their children were safe in the preschool activities, and one mentioned that her child was calmer since the transition from one to two departments. They pointed out the importance of a responsive staff that took the parents' comments seriously. They were happy with the current activities; one said that her child was provided with safety, comfort, and learning, and that the child's needs were met. The guardians were also satisfied with the information they received about their child's development in development talks. Some said they thought they had not received the parental questionnaires that was sent out the previous autumn, but noted that they could simply have overlooked them. Application through the website worked fine, but there was a severe lack of information about the preschool on the municipal website. They added that there needed to be more advertising for the preschool generally in this topic.

The preschool safety plan was not complete at this time and needed to be added later. Staff were aware of this, and wanted to increase parental influence and knowledge of this project. Parents and guardians mentioned that they found it difficult to take an hour off at midday to participate in the quality work, which reduced the number of guardians present. They suggested a telephone conference as an alternative for the next time.

Results of quality report from an independent preschool

Even the quality report from the independent preschool (2012-2013) referred in its introduction to the national policy documents; that is, the Education Act and the Preschool Curriculum. Systematic quality work should be documented in order to support the process of quality development and to help visualize the goal achievement of the activities. In order to develop quality, according to the report, it is necessary to carry out dialogues on opportunities and preschool work between parents (via a questionnaire), children, staff, board members, and politicians. During the year the following took place:

- Competence development
- Detailed planning
- Observation and reflections
- Pedagogical documentation
- Parental talks
- Group discussions with the children.

The ongoing process of systematic quality work included designated 'quality pilots'. The group that conducted the quality report comprised one person from the preschool, one person from the after-school centre, and one principal/preschool head. According to the report, quality work should be characterized by a systematic approach starting with the following questions:

- WHERE ARE WE? Knowledge of the mission and the present situation
- WHERE ARE WE GOING? Interpreting goals and creating criteria
- HOW DO WE FOLLOW-UP? Planning and implementation
- EVALUATION Monitoring, analysing, reflecting and learning
- ACTIONS / INTERVENTIONS Planning for improvement.

The report also stated that the preschool quality work was directed inward (internal activities), outward (parents and the public), and upward (the municipality, and the National Agency of Education). The prioritized objectives for the preschool during the school year 2012-2013 were as follows:

- The preschool will achieve the goals that it has been set.
- The preschool development talks should work well.
- The preschool learning should be pleasurable.
- The outdoor environment should be stimulating for the children.
- The diet should be nutritious and varied.
- The children should feel that there is peace and quiet around meals.

The preschool staff conducted a self-evaluation of their activities, and parents provided feedback in a quality survey. The group who conducted the quality report also interviewed two families whose children attended the preschool.

Self-evaluation carried out by staff in the report from the independent preschool

During the autumn semester, the preschool worked with development-based groups (i.e. homogeneous age groups). They focused their work on the theme of animals; specifically, lions, whales, and dogs. Here, the work on subjects such as mathematics, language, science, and technique was integrated and processed. Each group was led by two teachers, one responsible for the activity and the other for documenting the activity with camera, pen, and paper.

Parental and staff survey in the report from the independent preschool

A separate survey showed that 80% of the preschool's staff and parents agreed that the preschool had achieved their prioritized goals (an improvement of 20% on the year before). In addition, 80% of staff and parents agreed that the development talks between teacher and parent worked well (an improvement of 3%). Almost all parents (97%) believed that their children enjoyed learning at preschool. Very few were positive about the outdoor environment; but according to the report, the preschool intended to improve this. In terms of food, 77% percent of the staff and parents agreed that the children's diet was nutritionally balanced and varied, and 90% agreed that the food situation was perceived as pleasant and valuable (an improvement of 35%).

4.4 Reflections on results at the national, municipal and preschool level

The existing practices for ensuring, developing, and monitoring quality in preschool are summarized below.

At the *national level*, preschools are audited by the Schools Inspectorate. Overall, learning is more in focus than other aspects such as play and care. At this level, practices for ensuring, developing, and monitoring quality in preschool include aspects of structure, process, and outcome. The structural aspects include environment, organization, leadership, and staff competence. The procedural aspects include development and learning processes on the basis of the enhanced educational mission, the co-actions with parents, and the work to prevent children being violated. Quality linked to outcomes may be something that emerges from an activity or intervention; this is primarily related to the actions of the staff and the effects of these actions in terms of children's learning and development. An outcome may thus be performance *or* effects, or performance *and* effects.

At the *municipal level*, quality work is documented and quality dialogues are conducted between actors including politicians, administrators, education managers, heads of preschools, co-workers, quality supporters, and development teams. According to the preschool director (the manager of the municipal administration; see section 4.2), funding is allocated to the municipality to get more people through school with passing grades. The

preschool is in focus as an early intervention for success in school. In the name of effectiveness and equivalence, the organization is centralized (from several preschool boards to one) and quality is operationalized through increased assessment and documentation as well as quality dialogues and standardized tools. The documentation and assessment practices may be seen as a boundary object and a practice that will enable comparison and transformation (aggregation) of outcomes between different levels in the municipality (see chapter 6). Practices that exist at the municipal level for ensuring, developing, and monitoring quality in preschool also include aspects of structure and process. The structural aspects include leadership, learning organization, and staff competence. The procedural aspects include development and learning processes on the basis of the enhanced educational mission, and the co-actions with and influence of parents and children. Overall, similarly to the national level, learning is more in focus than other aspects such as play and care.

At the *preschool level*, quality work is multi-documented but there is a lack of time for reflection and analysis. As at the national and municipal levels, learning is in focus with goals such as ‘increased focus on learning in preschool’. Content areas such as mathematics, science, technology, language, and communication are emphasized. However, the preschool level still differs somewhat, with more focus on preschool in its own right rather than preschool as an early intervention for success in school. Practices that exist at the preschool level for ensuring, developing, and monitoring quality include aspects of structure and process. The structural aspects include safety, calmness, good learning environment, nutritious diet, child group size and composition, division of tasks, and staff competence. Quality and routines for pedagogical documentation are emphasized. Economic aspects such as doing more advertising for the preschool are also addressed. The procedural aspects include development and learning processes on the basis of the enhanced educational mission and the co-actions with (and influence of) parents and children. Aspects of outcome include the results from the parental and staff survey.

Overall, it can be concluded that quality work at the different levels is goal-rational and linear rather than nonlinear. Goal achievement in school, enhancing knowledge, and equivalence seem to be the strongest drivers of quality work, especially with regard to the national and municipal levels (see further discussion in chapter 6).

5 Examples of assessment forms and documentation tools

According to the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) all education should be evidence-based. This statement can also include evidence-based assessments (see section 5.3, *Different forms of assessment*). Assessment forms and documentation tools were described theoretically in chapter 2; in this chapter, they will be exemplified at different levels.

5.1 National level

At the national level, this section describes an example of an external assessment form and standardized documentation tool used by the Schools Inspectorate, and a tool for self-evaluation used by the preschools and principal organizers prior to the inspection.

Assessment form and documentation tool used by Schools Inspectorate

The external assessment form and documentation tool used at the national level is connected to the Education Act and the Preschool Curriculum²¹ and includes both procedural aspects (part 1) and structural aspects (parts 2 and 3). Part 1 covers the preschool work and process in relation to goals such as development and learning, basic values and influence, specific support and co-actions between preschool and home. Part 2 covers management, organization, and development of education, and part 3 covers material resources and conditions (see Appendix 2).

Self-evaluation tool used prior to inspections by Schools Inspectorates

Appendix 3 presents an abbreviated version of the national standard (2014) for principal organizers and preschools regarding self-evaluation before a visit from the Schools Inspectorate²². In the self-evaluation the staff make graded assessments of 22 areas of preschool activities, rated on a three-point scale: 'true', 'true in part', or 'not true'. The documentation tool also has space to make notes. As with the above-described external tool, the self-evaluation tool also includes both procedural aspects (paragraphs 1-9) and structural aspects (paragraphs 10-22). Paragraphs 1-9 covers assessment areas including learning and development, basic values and influence, security, and good environment, and paragraphs 10-22 focus on leadership, structure, organization and development of education, skills, offer of place, group composition, material resources, and administrative procedures (see Appendix 3).

5.2 Municipal level

This section describes an example of an assessment form and documentation tool including 16 areas (see section 4.2). The tool was developed in cooperation with researchers from different universities, and is standardized for all preschools in a major city municipality in the south of Sweden. It

21 See <http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Regelbudentillsyn/bedomningspunkter/-bedomningspunkter-forsk.pdf>

22 See <http://www.kolladinforskola.se>

includes the following areas²³ (see note 11):

- Caring, relationships, and interactions
- Equal work
- Children who need more support than others
- Language and communication
- Native language and multilingualism
- Aesthetic forms of expression
- Mathematics
- Science and technology
- Motor skills
- Children's influence
- Play
- Environment and materials
- Thematic approach
- Time rhythm and organization
- Collaboration with guardians
- Follow-up, evaluation, and development

Both structural and procedural aspects are included in the assessment form, but in comparison to the national tools the focus is more on process and less on structure.

Survey of parents with children in public and independent preschools

Another example of a documentation tool used at the municipal level is a 2013 survey of parents with children in both public and independent preschools²⁴. The survey captures parents' attitudes towards the Education Act and revised Preschool Curriculum, their experiences of preschool and preschool activities, their judgement of how their child is developing in preschool, and their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the educational work. The questionnaire is divided into ten subject areas related to security, development and learning, enjoyment, child's self-concept, relationships with other children, participation and empowerment, staff's relationship with children, information for parents, and development talks (see Appendix 4). The aim of the survey is to provide a community-wide view of how guardians perceive their children's preschool, including how they perceive the interaction between the child and the preschool staff, the interaction between themselves and the staff, and the work with the children's development and learning. The survey is also intended to give the preschool a better basis for evaluation and analysis, as part of the systematic quality work.

To summarize, the survey can provide support to the elected representatives when they assess the effectiveness of preschools and decide new ac-

23 This assessment form and documentation tool was trialed in Spring 2014; the author of the present report has not been given access to the tool in more detailed form.

24 See <http://www.malmo.se/download/18.228b8e2313f816262748e50/1383645586865/Attityd-+f%C3%B6rskola+2013.pdf>

tions and priorities. It also gives the responsible staff at different levels information on how guardians perceive the quality of their preschools. It is suggested that preschools should analyse and compare the results in their quality reports with the results set out in the consolidated report (the survey of parents) in order to find both areas that require development and factors for success.

5.3 Preschool level

This section begins by describing a number of different documentation tools, and ends by covering assessment forms. Descriptions are presented on the individual, group, and activity level. On the activity level, the focus turns to what the child needs to be offered in terms of content, materials, space, time, groups, relations, and actions in preschool (Vallberg-Roth, 2012).

The material was collected in a few municipalities in southern Sweden in 2011, and consists of both documents and interviews. A wide variety of documentation tools were in use in all preschools. Each preschool emphasized one documentation tool above others, but also used around 6–10 other tools. The examples include pedagogical documentation and portfolios, individual development plans (step sheets/checklists for different fields of knowledge), evidence-related and standardized documentation tools such as TRAS (Early Registration of Language Development; Espenakk et al., 2003), and tools for social and emotional development such as SET (Social and Emotional Training; Kimber & Petré, 2009), START (Life Skills for the Youngest; Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b), and Second Step (Life Skills for Children Aged 4-6 years; Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010a). Health care documents, interviews with children, electronic documentation, and questionnaires to parents were also found in the data collection.

Overall, the documentation in the preschools focused on the children, parents, and teachers, and the majority of the material was designed for teachers with an eye on the child. However, some preschool teachers stated that they were not interested in individual children; rather, they documented small groups of children. The concept of children documenting one another or themselves was less prevalent (Vallberg-Roth, 2012).

One example of a standardized documentation tool is the Norwegian TRAS. TRAS is based on theories taken from developmental psychology and linguistics, and assumes that children's skills are age-dependent. The categories and descriptions offered to assess children's level of language development are formulated as standardized statements about children's knowledge at different ages. Examples for children aged 4-5 years include:

- Can the child write their name?
- Can the child pronounce the 's' sound correctly?
- Does the child use 'because' sentences? (Espenakk et al., 2003, pp. 2-3)

The teacher assesses and records the degree to which the child has mastered each of these skills in one of three categories: 'not mastered', 'partially mastered', or 'mastered'. The material addresses three main areas; 1) interaction and attention, 2) language comprehension and language awareness, and 3) pronunciation, word production, and sentence structure. TRAS enables a systematic analysis of children's linguistic skills. It makes apparent any need for support, and provides teachers with an opportunity for reflection and a basis for conversations with parents (Espenakk, et al, 2003).

Another standardized documentation tool is Second Step (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010a), an American life skills programme for preschool and school that claims to be evidence-based. Second Step has three main areas: 1) empathy training, 2) impulse control and problem solving, and 3) self-control. The program is claimed to be important in raising children to become socially and emotionally skilled individuals in the developed world. It provides documentation tools and assessment forms such as logbooks and evaluation sheets, as well as information letters; these materials focus on children and educators, but are also written for the parents. The teaching program is based on developmental psychological age norming. The objectives are formulated as objectives children should know and goals to achieve, for example:

The objectives for learning in Second Step with respect to empathy are that children will have the ability to: Read emotions by perceiving signs (facial expression, body language) and situation-specific signals (context)... Understand that people may have different feelings for the same thing.... Anticipate feelings... Distinguish between intentional acts and accidents... (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010a, pp. 35-36).

Pedagogical documentation and portfolio

The new Education Act (Ds 2009:25) recommends pedagogical documentation and portfolios as evaluation methods and documentation tools. The *portfolio* is a well-known documentation tool in ECEC (OECD, 2012), as well as at other levels of education. Pedagogical documentation and portfolios are both associated with democratic practice. A portfolio provides children with an opportunity to influence and take responsibility for their own learning as regards goal setting, planning, documentation, reflection and assessment. Portfolios can consist of a compilation of student work and learning stories intended to show an individual student's efforts, progress, and results achieved in one or more areas (cf. Carr & Lee, 2012; Kimbell, 2013; Lindström, 2011). One argument for portfolios in preschool is that they can be metacognitively focused on getting the children to see and influence their own development: children should be viewed as individuals, strengthen their self-esteem, assume greater responsibility, and stimulate lifelong learning.

Another prominent form of documentation is pedagogical documentation. Pedagogical documentation is implemented in different ways with different techniques and focus. This can apply to the individual child or to a

group of children, and the documentation can be created via video, voice recorder, digital camera, or pen and paper. One focused function of *pedagogical documentation* is that it forms a basis for reflection among teachers. Documentation can only be considered to be pedagogical if someone reflects upon it (cf. Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). Pedagogical documentation can be a tool for showcasing the actual practice and opening it up for review, and parties including teachers, children, parents, and others can participate (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). Pedagogical documentation is also prescribed in guidelines from the National Agency for Education (2012). In these guidelines, the pedagogical documentation with its theoretical base is presented as a relational tool. 'Learning is no longer seen as an individual, isolated and independent activity, but rather as something that is interconnected with the surrounding environment and with other people' (p. 10). Pedagogical documentation is linked to the concept of the *rhizome* and the theoretical basis described by post-humanist scholars such as the physicist Karen Barad (2003):

The concept of the rhizome is borrowed from biology and refers to a plant-root system. The system can grow and spread in different directions; unlike, for example, a tree root that always branches at its ends. Rhizomatic thinking makes it possible to describe how learning, like a rhizome, moves in unpredictable paths, and in no way is linear or progressive. Learning does not follow a linear, pre-mapped route, but moves back and forth in unpredictable paths (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2012, p 27). Pedagogical documentation and its link to the concept of the rhizome and the post-humanist theoretical basis is discussed further in chapter 6.

Regarding the question of how professionals view documentation, they were primarily positive and stress that documentation is a democratic tool to visualize child perspectives and a basic tool to qualify the profession. However, a few also expressed concerns. This tension is illustrated by a preschool teacher (in the material from preschools in 2011):

I was thinking, when we had the basic course on pedagogical documentation, there's a lot to do. You work on creation with the individual child, you should interview the child, and the process should be documented and written down and maybe include pictures. And there's a lot of time used and maybe you'll have to use your own planning time as well. And the question is, if it's worthwhile to take this time from the children. I also thought it might be a bit too much. For those who work a lot with documentation, the children are suffering in a way if you work too much. Currently educators are not present when they sit at the computer and work on documentation.

Hence, the professionals criticized the time-consuming nature of documentation and the lack of sufficient time for analysis and reflection on documentation, meaning that the time used for documentation was taken away from time spent with the children.

Different forms of assessment

A variety of assessment forms are enacted in preschool documentation tools. This section describes examples of these forms with different theoretical bases including developmental-psychological assessments, knowledge assessments, personal assessments, self-assessments, narrative assessments, and centre-performance-focused assessments.

Developmental-psychological assessments are based on the assumption that a child's skills in areas such as language, motoric skills, and social-emotional development are age-specific (see e.g. Second Step and health care documents).

1-3 years: Children notice that other children are larger or smaller than themselves. Children begin to respond empathically – for example, by giving a doll to someone who is sad (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b, p. 34).

2-3 years: Children begin to name different phenomena and talk to themselves about what they are doing (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b, p. 43).

There are also documentation tools in which the child's development (for example, in motoric skills and in language acquisition) is assessed and tested in preschools and then reported to health care professionals. Hence, the documentation and assessment which in some cases is carried out by the health care sector is moved into preschool. In the following example (Markström, 2006), the teacher is discussing this kind of assessment with the parent in an individual development talk.

Preschool teacher: When we did the test last year, she couldn't stand on one leg, but now she can.

Parent: Okay. Stand on one leg?

Preschool teacher: Yes, we try to do a test, like in health care, you know? They [the children] have to answer questions about different things and draw a person, and we compare the test with what she did last year. (Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth, 2014, p. 35).

Hence, the tradition of observing children in preschool and assessing and categorizing psychological development is evident in tools such as Second Step and health care documents. This approach may be interpreted as incompatible with the Swedish policy, as the proposed new Education Act (Ds 2009:25) states that preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards.

Knowledge-oriented and graded assessments

The documentation tools also include *knowledge-oriented* and sometimes *graded assessments*. For example, a preschool teacher might record when the child reaches different stages or learning outcomes, such as telling jokes or riddles, writing their name, or pronouncing the 's' sound correctly, using three categories: 'able to', 'partially able to', or 'not able to'. This kind of assessment emerges in standardized material such as TRAS, as follows:

*Can the child speak clearly with all speech sounds and correct word order?
Can the child pronounce words which include m, n, p, b, t, and d? (For example,
man, nose, papa, car, tent, damp?)
Can the child write their name? (Espenakk, et al, 2003, p. 3)*

In the above example, *knowledge assessments* similar to grades can be deduced: the degree to which the child has achieved knowledge objectives in the Swedish language. Graded knowledge assessments such as this may be perceived as output-oriented results and outcomes at an individual child level. This approach can be interpreted as a form of summative assessment, which is incompatible with the Swedish policy statement that preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards (Vallberg-Roth, 2012).

Knowledge assessment emerges most clearly in a preschool with about 200 learning objects in their individual development plans (step sheets/checklists for different fields of knowledge) dealing with language-communication, mathematics, science, and motoric skills and including basic concepts such as colour, shape, location, counting, measuring, sorting, statistics, probability, symbols, patterns, relationships, physical experiments, and more. Another example of knowledge assessment comes from a conversation with a preschool teacher about portfolios in relation to the child's body image. The statement begins with the preschool teacher referring to the revised Preschool Curriculum:

Preschool teacher: They say in the new curriculum, that you should work with the activities, but that you can still go in and look at each individual child. What did little Lisa or Donald learn when we did an activity including pointing out body parts? All the body parts are listed on a sheet of paper, and we make a green check mark for each one the child can point out correctly. Examples of the body parts are the nose, ear, stomach, shoulders, eyes, mouth, belly button, hair, foot, back, head, neck, arm, tongue, fingers, chest, chin, teeth, knees, and nails.

The knowledge assessment in the example above is connected to the preschool activities, as the teacher asks what the child has learned from an activity. Activity-oriented assessment can be interpreted as being intended to evaluate staff's input, and how the preschool works with different target areas in the documentation work (e.g. that preschool should strive to ensure that each child develops their body image). The assessment is then focused on how activities can be changed so that the child will be further challenged and grow. However, this is not emphasized in the example above. Knowledge assessment may be interpreted as being consistent with the curriculum when the intention is to assess the child's changing knowledge in the curriculum target areas (see target areas in Overview 1) in relation to the conditions that the activities provides and contributes in preschool (see Lpfö 98, revised 2010, pp. 15). Activity and centre-focused assessments are further developed below.

Personal assessments

The documentation may also include *personal assessments* that can be based on psychological personality. Personal assessments may appear in child portfolios. These judgements are usually positive, for example: 'He is peaceful and harmonious' (Vallberg-Roth, 2012, p. 21). Personal assessment in systematic documentation is an important issue to address and discuss. The Swedish National Agency (Skolverket, 2008) states that individual documentation should not include scoring students' personal qualities and that the teacher should use objective language. There are no goals concerning personal qualities in the Preschool Curriculum. Thus, personal assessments can be interpreted as not being based on the national curriculum.

Self-assessments

Another assessment form is *self-assessment*. Self-assessments can be related to formative assessments and meta-cognitive theory via the individual's ability to think about and assess their own learning, their own actions, and themselves as a person. As mentioned earlier, arguments for preschool portfolios include a focus on getting children to see and influence their own development, getting the child to be seen as an individual, strengthening their self-esteem, making them take responsibility, and encouraging lifelong learning. This kind of assessment may appear in child interviews registered in the portfolios, with reflections such as *I thought this was fun/difficult/boring, I have learned this, I want to learn that*. One child's portfolio included the following excerpt:

*Is there anything that you find difficult? Drawing words.
What are you good at? Drawing dragons and dinosaurs.
What would you like to improve? Be bigger and marry mom and dad and Mia.
What would you like to learn? Drawing words.
How will you learn it? I'm getting bigger.
What do you like about yourself? Happy with my little sister.*

Self-assessments can be related to judgements in formative sense, and – in contrast to the abovementioned psychologically based and knowledge-graded assessment forms – can be considered compatible with national policy (Vallberg-Roth, 2012).

Narrative assessments

Portfolios and pedagogical documentation may further include *narrative assessments*; in other words, assessments that are woven into the stories of the children in their learning processes, both as individuals and as a group (cf. OECD, 2013). Narrative assessments may be based on different theoretical orientations. Documentation and assessment of the portfolio may show traces of both a meta-cognitive perspective, with a focus on children's thinking about their learning, and a socio-cultural perspective. The socio-cultural view does not primarily see learning and knowledge as representations in the child's head, but instead views learning as contextually situated in the relationship between the individual's body, mind, environment, and

artefacts (this refers to the physical, conceptual, and social reality; see e.g. Säljö, 2011). Documentation as learning stories may be included in the portfolio (cf. Carr & Lee, 2012) and in diaries, individual development plans, and pedagogical documentation. A narrative assessment in a learning story can combine photos and supporting materials with stories that can switch between the individual and group level and between knowledge assessment (*We have expanded our vocabulary*) and self-assessment (*I'm in the photo and I have two sticks in my hands*) as follows:

Within the theme: the mathematical language, we have talked about the size, appearance, differences, and similarities between different trees, looking up various trees and talking even more. We have expanded our vocabulary and practiced our conceptualization with the tree as a basis. / ... / In the photo, Ben has made pear prints in various colours pasted up at the magic tree. / ... / Ben made two trees, one large and one small. I'm in the photo and I have two sticks in my hands, one short and one long (Excerpt from the portfolio).

The teacher is the main actor in the formulation of the story above. These stories can be composed using different registration techniques including photos, text, and sound recordings. Narrative assessment may move between activity-oriented/staff input (*Within the theme, we have talked about the size, appearance, differences, and similarities between different trees, looking up various trees and talking even more*) and outcome, in this case at a group level (*We have expanded our vocabulary and practiced our conceptualization with the tree as a basis*).

Narrative assessments can also appear as a boundary object (see chapter 6) between different institutions (cf. Carr & Lee, 2012; Star & Griesemer, 1989), between preschool and home, or between preschool and school or the health care centre. In the narrative assessments, different forms of assessments flow together in the story. The understanding of the assessment as boundary object can also highlight how values are picked up and taken over by those involved, and how assessment is mixed and transformed when values are constructed in co-actions between different actors. The assessment is overtaken in the way that Latour (2005) describes *action being overtaken*. In the following example, the story in the portfolio is interpreted to express the teachers', children's, and parents' voices in a mix of self-assessments and personal assessments:

Peaceful and harmonious guy (the teacher). Mom says I can be anything but calm at times. I have my own will and wish to be followed but I'm easy to persuade. I go to swimming lessons and soon I'll start to play football (Extract from the portfolio).

Narrative assessment can also be illustrated by excerpts from the National Agency for Education's guidelines for pedagogical documentation (National Agency for Education, 2012). In the following reported story, the preschool teacher or *co-researcher* is assessing the co-action of children's knowledge and clay exploration as an ongoing condition of *different becoming in itself* (annorlundablivande i sig själv):

If we compare the first opportunity with the other, this story clearly shows that the children were not 'clay-exploring' children in the first sequence, even though one of the children said she loved clay, but that they quickly became different in themselves – they became 'clay-explorers' – when the activity changed on the second occasion (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2012, p. 38).

The assessment in the story above is based on the post-humanist theory mentioned earlier. The assessments woven into the stories include both self-assessment at an individual level (*one of the children says she loves clay*) and an assessment of a socio-material co-action between children's performance and clay at a group level; an assessment of *different becoming in itself*. This narrative assessment also transfers into an activity-oriented, input, and centre-focused assessment.

Activity-oriented, input, and centre-focused assessments

Finally we have an activity, input (staff, children, and material), and centre-focused assessment. The focus then turns to the learning environment and the aim becomes to evaluate how the institution, its activities, or its environment can be changed to support the children's development and learning. As such, they can be seen as containing features of formative assessments – reflections and assessments of how children can be challenged forward (cf. Carr & Lee, 2012). An example of activity-oriented assessment is given below, taking place between colleagues at work with pedagogical documentation. The example is from an interview in which a preschool teacher described working with pedagogical documentation and a video-tape-recorded activity of children exploring clay on the overhead projector:

He did not touch the clay; he was only interested in the light. How should we interpret this? Well, this boy is very interested in plugs, sockets, and lights. Then you need to find the niche of how we will challenge him. ... Then we have the girl who sat next to him; she just wanted to build with the clay. She was not so interested in the light itself, but she wanted to build with clay next to him on the table. How are we going to challenge her next time?

The examples of centre-focused assessments have a socio-cultural and context-oriented theoretical basis. These assessments focus on how the activity affects the child and how the centre activity or environment can be changed to support the children:

Describe, explain, and SHOW, supported by the documentation, what the child is doing and is interested in right now: Here we use documentation, images, video, and audio to demonstrate the interests we see in the child. We look at situations where children are creative and amazed, where they will find their place and are able to express themselves.

Describe how the above can be deepened, challenged, and developed: We reflect on how we could develop these situations and challenges for the children. What would we wish the child to encounter, what we would like to offer and how can we chal-

*lence the child? How will the children have the opportunity to grow?
Based on the above, describe concrete changes to the activity: We reflect on how we can change the activity for the child to find those opportunities. What can we specifically offer children, what situations can we invite them to explore? What does the child need in terms of materials, time, situations, groups, and so on? (Vallberg-Roth, 2011, pp. 155-156).*

The assessment in the example above focuses on the child's interests, involvement, and questions, as well as the challenges, teacher support, and learning environment that the child needs. The focus then turns to what the child needs to be offered in terms of content, materials, spaces, time, groups, relations, actions, and communication opportunities. This kind of assessment is perceived as compatible with the Swedish policy (Vallberg-Roth, 2011).

5.4 Reflections on assessment forms and documentation tools at the national, municipal, and preschool level

Overall, the documentation tools and assessment forms vary depending whether the structural, procedural, or outcome aspects are in focus. Even if all these aspects may be present at all levels (national, municipal, preschool), documentation and assessment is more directed at structural and outcome aspects at the national level and more oriented to organizational aspects at the municipal level. At the preschool level the documentation tools and assessment forms are more directed at processes, the children and preschool activities. At all levels, learning is more emphasized than play in the assessment forms and documentation tools. However, it is interesting that, in the attitude survey for parents at the municipal level, one of the items with the highest percentage of positive responses (94%) was 'My child gets the opportunity to play with other children.'

Researchers have argued that in a decentralized system, verification of outcomes in local school and preschool practices becomes more important in order to maintain national equivalency (e.g. Lundgren, 2006). Thus, decentralization on the one hand is met with recentralization on the other through increased control (cf. Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000; Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). Recentralization is also evident in this report at the national level, with external inspections and standardized assessment forms designed by the Schools Inspectorate; teachers' professional judgements are thus influenced by standardized and centrally-designed tools. Furthermore, a recentralized organization (Preschool Administration) and standardized assessment forms are evident at the municipal level. Structural and organizational aspects are crucial at the municipal level, with special quality arrangements including organizational structures, specific employments, time for quality work, competence, and facilities. Discursive-cultural arrange-

ments are evident in terms of quality dialogues and new positions including quality supporters in the Department of Quality and Authority, education managers, and team leaders in educational development teams. Socio-political arrangements are stressed in terms of increased effectiveness, equivalence, and a whole-town perspective (cf. Rönnerman & Olin, 2013). The documentation tools and assessment forms are more standardized at the national and municipal levels and more diverse at the preschool level.

From the perspective of preschool professionals and how documentation practices have affected the preschool setting, this report refers to some recent research studies on documentation practices. To a certain extent, documentation at preschool is seen as having a positive, democratic, and emancipatory potential (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2010; Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). Professionals view documentation as a tool to visualize child perspectives, to inform and involve parents, and to qualify the profession. Meanwhile, some more critical research findings have also emerged (e.g. Alasuutari, Markström, Vallberg-Roth, 2014; Andersen-Østergaard et al, 2008; Elfström-Pettersson, 2013; Emilson & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2012; Kallila & Pramling Samuelsson, 2014; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012; Sparman & Lindgren, 2010; Vallberg-Roth, 2013). Research on pedagogical documentation in preschool demonstrates on the one hand that it can be regarded as a resource (e.g. Alnervik, 2013; Elfström, 2013; Lenz-Taguchi, 2012) as well as a 'risky business' due to lack of time and children's participation (e.g. Elfström-Pettersson, 2013; Grieshaber & Hatch, 2003) and on the other that it is still in the bud, and lack of knowledge is evident (e.g. Bjervås, 2011; Emilson & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2012; Vallberg-Roth, 2010; Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). The research results reveal the complexity of documentation and the need for development of competence in this area (e.g. Sheridan, Williams & Sandberg, 2013). Criticism from professionals is also evident in this report, referring to the time consumed by documentation activities and the lack of sufficient time for analysis and reflection; more time spent on documentation means less time spent in direct interaction with children.

Furthermore, the critical research points out that documentation always contains a power perspective (Alasuutari, Markstrom & Vallberg-Roth, 2014; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012), and that the children's being made visible by documentation is not always a positive thing. Pettersvold and Østrem (2012) emphasize that educational documentation in the first place is always about 'the hunt for the normal child'. When children are assessed and mapped in relation to a predetermined and age-normed development, the gaze is directed on children as individuals without context and on children's deficiencies in relation to normal development. Increased use of mapping and monitoring may lead to a narrow view of what is normal. Sensitive information about children is recorded in the name of goodness, and the children's best interests. The logic of a 'force for good' makes it politically legitimate to record basically everything about everyone, from the cradle to the grave. In the name of this force for good, some children may become more exposed and regulated (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012); for example, children in need of special support, who are documented and assessed more

than other children in order to discover their need for support well in advance (Vallberg-Roth, 2013). However, it is not necessarily the case that all this knowledge makes us wiser; nor does it without doubt give us a better life.

Parents' views on the use of assessment and documentation

Documentation tools assume that children and parents accept the premise of what is documented and assessed, and there is little room for parents to resist or protest (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012). This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Our son's day care centre has something called TRAS. Totally worthless, and they use it to judge children. The worst thing is that all the teachers at the day care centre judge completely differently, so you never get an overall picture of how the child is doing. My son was forced to go to a speech therapist in spite of my objections. Nobody took me seriously because TRAS showed otherwise (Familjeliv, 2009).

The desirable parents who emerge in the material are parents who are engaged and satisfied, who provide information, who are positive towards documentation, and who give their consent in the best interests of the child. Online documentation (see the excerpt from the Family Life [Familjeliv] site above) can show how teachers' assessments of children's language skills offline are transformed into assessments of teachers online. The statements also constitute clear examples of documents as co-agents that get things going, raise questions, and make things happen (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2013). This documentation is not focused on the material and guidelines, and it is worth asking how online documentation can be taken into account in future guidelines and quality practices.

Parents are involved in different parts of the process of assessing and documentation in order to establish collaboration between the home and preschool (cf. Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth, 2014). Different documentation tools are used to support but also to govern the parents' gaze on their own children in specific directions, drawing on implicit norms of good parenting and good children in the preschool context. Furthermore, parenthood between offline and online highlights how parents communicate on Internet sites about assessment and documentation of their children, and how online discussions between parents can be used as an arena to criticize and construct meanings and to empower or constrain parenthood (ibid.).

Earlier research (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2010; Holm, 2010) also shows that children may express resistance and discontent towards standardized material and language assessments such as TRAS, which can reveal challenges in relation to children's rights to their own wishes: It is apparent that the child perceives the planned language assessment as a frustrating interruption of his day.

Trine: Sit up here, so we can play.
Hamza: No.
Trine: You have to sit up here – next to me.
Hamza: I don't want to.
Trine: Well, you have to. Come here!
Hamza: I [yuk].
Trine: What did you say, darling? Can you look at me?
Hamza: I want a story.
Trine: OK, we'll listen to a story afterwards.
Hamza: No.
Trine: You really don't want to? (Holm, 2010, p. 173).

Sparrman and Lindgren (2010) argue that it is particularly problematic to make children visible with the help of pedagogical documentation, partly because the children are captured in an activity where they are daily supervised, monitored, and evaluated, and partly because the documentation is usually mounted (i.e. published) on the walls. They argue therefore that the children are placed in vulnerable positions where they are expected to evaluate both each other and themselves.

To summarize, documentation tools and assessment forms can on the one hand empower, support, and strengthen and on the other hand, weaken, mislead, and restrict actors including children, parents, and professionals.

6 Reflections on quality work in Swedish preschools in relation to conceptual resources

Biesta (2011) argues that we are living in an era in which measurement of educational outcomes has obscured the question of the purpose of education. According to Biesta, both researchers and educators should engage in examining the *raison-d'être* – the function – of education. Biesta discusses evidence-based education between science and democracy, and asserts that the idea of evidence-based or evidence-informed education (the idea that scientific evidence generated using large-scale and randomized studies should influence our educational decisions) leads us to focus on 'what works' instead of focusing our interest on 'what is desirable'. He argues that the problem with evidence-based education is that it 'constrains teachers' opportunities to use their professional judgement about what is pedagogically desirable in different situations' (p. 53). The issue for teachers is not primarily what is most effective, but rather what is appropriate for unique children in specific contexts. Biesta also discusses a prevailing 'accountability culture' in which freedom of choice is all about consumer behaviour in a market and where the goal is to meet the needs of buyers, which should not be confused with democracy (cf. Dahler-Larsen, 1998). 'Consumers can select from a fixed menu. But democracy exists only when citizens are involved from the beginning in deciding what should be put on the menu' (Biesta, 2011, p. 106). This raises the question of how child and parent involvement is manifest in quality work and policy documents. The quality assurance practices/assessment and documentation practices discussed above show more of the consumer who 'select[s] from a fixed menu' than of the citizen who really is involved in the quality work, in co-action, co-design, and co-decisions on assessments and documentation tools/practices (Vallberg-Roth, 2010, 2012).

In a globalized knowledge economy, the tendency is moving towards increased goal rationality, individualization, and harmonization. There is a sharper focus on efficiency, and assessments are increasingly being formalized at the individual level rather than the group level (Andersen-Østergaard, et al, 2008). This is also evident in the present report. In parallel, assessment criteria are being made more comparable, uniform, and standardized. Standardized tools are evident in all levels of this report. This movement is considered characteristic of the principles of the New Public Management. In the global knowledge economy, political leaders are interested in comparative analysis outcomes regarding quality, which may in themselves facilitate harmonization, comparability, standardization, and goal-rationality.

6.1 Summative, formative, or transformative assessment?

Summative and formative assessments are concepts developed in accordance with goals to achieve, knowledge requirements, and learning outcomes with the focus on both the individual and the classroom level²⁵. These concepts are not consistent with the goal of the Swedish preschool system, which focuses on preschool activity and does not specify objects of achievement and learning outcomes at the individual level. Further, summative and formative assessments operate at a local classroom level and between human actors, not in communities of practice outside school at different levels (micro – macro) (Vallberg-Roth, 2012).

Assessment as part of systematic quality work at preschool has both summative and formative features. However, preschool teachers express a stronger focus on supporting rather than controlling, where assessment for learning and development is ongoing. The focus is more on processes than on products. Overall, the emphasis is not on right or wrong answers, or the children's flaws and weaknesses, but rather on when to pay attention to the development, progress, and strengths of the children (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). The tendency for summative and grade-like assessment may occur, for example, in connection with TRAS, which prescribes the teacher to record the degree to which children master specific linguistic skills and abilities. Even if the assessment that is built into the documentation process does not directly involve the child or is communicated directly in the situation to the child (see formative assessment), there are elements, for example in portfolios, where children are involved in self-assessment. The concepts of summative and formative assessment, which were developed in relation to management systems including goals and knowledge requirements for the individual student to achieve, are not fully viable in the preschool setting. The documentation reveals that preschool teachers seem to switch between different forms of assessment, including summative, formative, and other assessments. Furthermore, assessments relating to developmental psychology, graded knowledge assessments based on normed steps/levels/standards, and personal assessments are interpreted as incompatible with the national policy on preschool. Preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards, nor should they be compared to anyone but themselves (Ds 2009:25).

The concept of transformative assessment can articulate and conceptually capture the transforming interaction between different forms of assessment enacted in the practices; between assessments with different theoretical basis including developmental-psychological assessments, knowledge assessments, personal assessments, self-assessments, narrative assessments, and centre-performance-focused assessments.

25 Activities in Swedish preschools are not performed in a single classroom but in departments including several rooms.

The concept can also be examined in relation to the dilemma of how to transform assessment at the individual level (how children's skills change in target areas) into goals and assessments for the preschool activity and centre performance (what needs to change for the child to be challenged and to further develop in the direction of curriculum goals). The revised Preschool Curriculum states that documentation and analysis should include how the skills and abilities of the child continuously change in target areas in relation to the conditions for development and learning that the preschool provides (National Agency of Education), 2010, p. 12). Thus, assessment is not based on fixed and predetermined knowledge requirements or goals to achieve for the individual, which is the case in summative and formative assessment. The transformative assessment is a concept that may be used regarding the abovementioned dilemma.

Further, transformative assessment is enacted in socio-material co-actions in between linear (goal-directed actions) and non-linear actions (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). The non-linear transformative assessment may be understood as described by Osberg and Biesta (2010):

We should not try to judge what emerges before it has taken place or specify what should arrive before it arrives. We should let it arrive first, and then engage in judgement so as not to foreclose the possibilities of anything worthwhile to emerge that could not have been foreseen (p. 603).

Transformative assessment may thus be seen as a movement between the retrospective linear (signs of learning oriented towards the past, planned and goal-oriented learning, and what is already known, or when the intention of the educational intervention is pre-defined) and the non-linear (oriented towards a future that cannot yet be foreseen, a complex and open-ended understanding of process). Transformative assessment could then be understood to guide learning and education by 'expanding the space of the possible and creating the conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined' (cf. Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p. 603). In the following example, transformative assessment may be seen in the preschool material in a transforming interplay between linear assessment at an individual level – 'What words has this child mastered?' – and nonlinear documentation and assessment at a group level: 'And now we bring in four one-year-olds. Now I'll just watch and see what happens here'.

Preschool teacher: What words has this child mastered? Can the child master any words at all? Especially here in this area, with a high proportion of immigrants. We have lots of parents and children – they can't speak Swedish, but they can do other things. But we need to be alert, to check. And of course that type of observation or documentation, it will be a little different than now... I have frozen ice cubes. And I have coloured them red with food colouring and put them in a large bowl and put it on the floor. And now we bring in four one-year-olds. Now I'll just watch and see what happens here. So that's a different type of documentation; it's not more or less important.

Moreover, engagement in transformative assessment should not be seen as something that is done only from the ‘outside’ – professionals judging students; parents judging children – but should rather be seen as a collaborative process, as something that all who are engaged in the activity take part in continuously (cf. Osberg & Biesta, 2010). In that context, transformative assessment can also be seen as a boundary object at different levels (Vallberg-Roth, 2012, 2013, 2014).

6.2 Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at different levels

The material discussed above contains traces of assessment and documentation as boundary objects on and between different levels (cf. Middleton & Baartman, 2013; Star & Griesemer, 1989). In this report, the concept of the ‘boundary object’ is mainly understood as documentation and assessment practices, in the sense of objects which are plastic enough to adapt to the different needs and constraints of the several actors employing them, yet robust enough to maintain intentions across levels and sites. They may have different meanings on and between different levels, but these meanings are common enough to more than one actor to make them a recognizable means of translation, transfer, and transformation (cf. Star & Griesemer, 1989). The different levels include the micro level (individual, group, and activity level), the institution level (between institutions such as preschools, schools, health care centres, and homes), the municipal level (between principal organizers), and the macro level (between state, market, science, and civil sphere). As a boundary object, assessment intertwined in documentation may capture and articulate the existence of relational fields and networks across boundaries on and between different levels (cf. Middleton & Baartman, 2013). The boundaries are viewed as perforated, and assessment and documentation can be seen as moving across boundaries, neither fully separate nor fully overlapping, as illustrated in Figures 6-11.

Traces of assessment and documentation as a boundary object

Boundary object at different levels:

- the micro level – between individual, group, activity
- the institution level – between institutions
- the municipal level – between principal organizers etc.
- the macro level – between state, market, science and civil sphere

Perforated boundary 

Figure 6: Traces of assessment and documentation as a boundary object. Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the micro level

At the micro level, the concept of transformative assessment can articulate and conceptually capture the crossing of the boundary between the individual level and the activity of the group. Assessment in documentation may cross and transcend the perforated boundaries between self-assessments and knowledge assessments, such as in the portfolio below. The assessment moves across the boundary between knowledge assessment at a group level ('We have expanded our vocabulary') and self-assessment at an individual level ('I'm in the photo and I have two sticks in my hand'). It may also capture boundary crossings in co-actions between teacher and child (where the teacher is a main actor) and between different registration techniques such as text and photographs. Transformative assessment as a boundary object at the micro level is illustrated in the following example from a narrative assessment in a portfolio.

Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the micro level

- **Narrative assessment:** Within the theme: the mathematical language, we have talked about the size, appearance, difference and similarities between different trees, looking up various trees and talked even more. We have expanded our vocabulary and practiced our conceptualization with the tree as a base. / ... / In the photo, Ben has made pear prints in various colors pasted up at the magic tree. / ... / Ben made two trees, one large and one small. I'm in the photo and I have two sticks in my hands. A short stick and a long. (Excerpt from the portfolio.)

- **Boundary crossing between:**

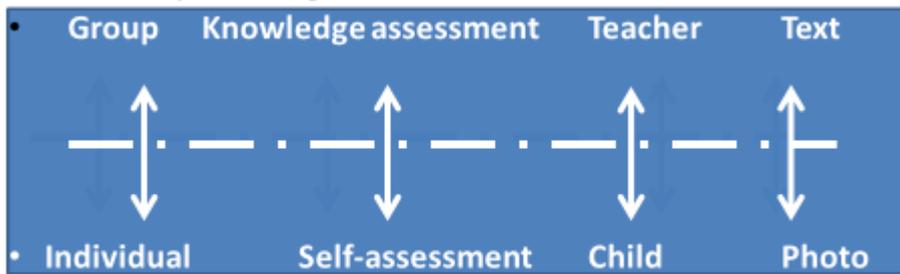


Figure 7: Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the micro level

To summarize, assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the micro level may illustrate boundary crossing between input (*Within the theme, we have talked about the size, appearance, differences, and similarities between different trees, looking up various trees and talking even more*) and outcome, in this case at a group level (*We have expanded our vocabulary and practiced our conceptualization with the tree as a base*).

Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the institution level

As described in section 4.3, many of the documentation tools involve not only teachers and children but also parents and sometimes other professionals; for example, tools such as portfolios, learning stories, and health care documents. This is one example of transformative assessment at the institution level. As a boundary object, transformative assessment includes and connects the views of the parent, the child, and the teacher as well as other potential actors and professionals across sites and institutions. In this boundary crossing process, different actors acquire values and views from those around them, and the ‘assessment may be taken over’ (cf. ‘action is overtaken’ in Latour, 2005), mixed and transformed. In the following example the narrative assessment in the learning story expresses the child’s, teacher’s, and parent’s views in a mix of self-assessments and personal assessments. However, the adults are the main actors formulating the view of the child.

Peaceful and harmonious guy (the teacher). Mom says I can be anything but calm at times. Have my own will and wish to be followed but I'm easy to persuade. I go to swimming lessons and soon I'll start to play football (Extract from a portfolio).

Specific health care documents are a further example of assessment as a boundary object between preschool, home, and other institutions. The child's development (for example, in motoric skills and language acquisition) is assessed in preschool and then reported to parents and healthcare professionals. Hence, the documentation tool and assessment form which in some cases is carried out by the healthcare sector is moved into preschool (Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth, 2014; Schanke & Andersen, 2008). When assessments in the documentation are taken over, mixed, and transformed through boundary crossing between the healthcare centre and preschool, developmental-psychological assessments may be emphasized, contrary to the policy of the Swedish preschool.

Transformative assessment also becomes evident in the relations between preschool, school, and home. For example, when the child leaves preschool, their portfolio is often given to them (actually to their parent) at a handover talk between preschool representatives, school teachers, and parents. The school then has the opportunity to receive part of the portfolio in order to meet the child in their development. Thus, the assessments may be continued from preschool to school. The documentation practice in preschool can also be influenced by the school culture, and may thus be augmented by graded knowledge assessment at the individual level. This can be exemplified by comments such as TRAS helping children when they start school (Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth, 2014). Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the institution level is presented in Figure 8, with a few examples of institutions that may be included at the institution level.

Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the institution level

Assessments in documentation may be taken over, mixed and transformed through boundary crossing between institutions

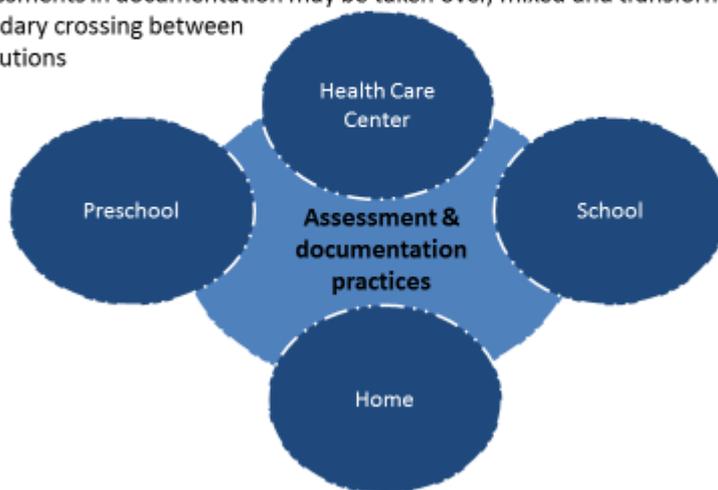


Figure 8: Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the institution level

When assessment and documentation are taken over (transferred), mixed, and transformed through boundary crossings between institutions, assessment forms such as personal assessment, graded assessments, and developmental-psychological assessments may be emphasized, contrary to the policy of the Swedish preschool.

Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the municipal level

At the municipal level, assessment and documentation may be taken over (transferred), mixed, and transformed through boundary crossings in quality dialogues (based on documentation tools such as quality reports, plans, and estimating tools) between for example principal organizers (boards, administrations, and directors), education area managers, quality supporters, and educational development team leaders; or through municipality-network boundary crossings between municipalities, companies, universities, and reference groups (including professionals, co-workers, and parents). When reports and documentation tools are published on the internet, it is also possible to judge and compare the quality work within and between the municipalities. Assessment and documentation as boundary objects at a municipality level are presented in Figure 9, with examples of possible actors involved.

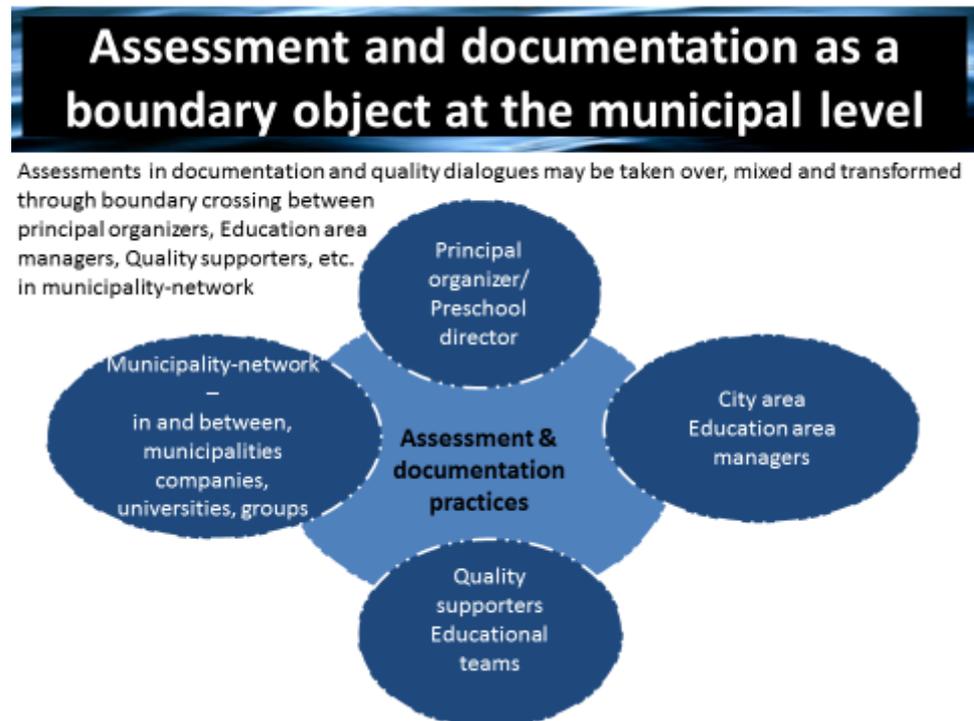


Figure 9: Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the municipal level

When assessments, documentation, and quality dialogues are taken over (transferred), mixed, and transformed through boundary crossings between actors at the municipal level including principal organizers (see Appendix 4), education managers, quality supporters, team leaders, preschool heads, and co-workers, the goal-rational, standardized, and structural aspects may be more emphasized in the quality work than the nonlinear and procedural aspects. In the name of equivalence and high quality, the centralized reorganization stresses harmonization, comparability, standardization, and goal-rationality. At the municipal level there also seems to be an emphasis on management, and a great faith in quality work is expressed in relation to managers, heads, and team leaders (compared to the teachers and co-workers in the preschools at the micro level). Further, the quality work is conducted and transformed between external and internal assessments; between external quality audits (by quality supporters), surveys and internal self-evaluations (by co-workers in the preschools, assessing the quality through self-estimating tools). Compared to the other levels, there also seems to be more focus on staff peer reviews at this level; at the national level, the principal organizer and management are also in focus and at the micro level the child and interaction with teachers are more stressed. In peer reviews at the municipality level, other ECEC professionals from outside settings observe and give feedback to the staff in their quality work.

In the centralized and reorganized municipality, the quality supporters, educational developers, and special education teachers act as key actors. However, they also act as ‘trans-actors’ in a so-called learning organization,

in the sense that when they cross boundaries between sites and settings, they can both be transformed themselves and transform learning and knowledge (via transfer, translations, and transformations of assessments, standards, learning, and knowledge) as they move in and out of various positions in the organization, such as quality supporters and educational developers.

Transformative assessment as a boundary object at the macro level

Assessment and documentation in preschool is also guided, influenced, and reflected in (and intertwined with) the macro level. These influences can be described as the conjunction of both national and transnational discourses. Macro level aspects can be divided into policy/state-related, market-oriented, evidence-related, and civil-oriented areas or dimensions. All these dimensions are consistent in the sense that all are based on documentation and cannot exist without it. However, the dimensions reflect the interests of different actors; individuals are seen as citizens in the policy-related dimension, as customers in the market dimension, as scientific objects in the evidence-related dimension, and as fellow humans in the civil-oriented dimension (Vallberg-Roth, 2014). These dimensions are neither consistent nor coherent within or between themselves, as shown by the perforated boundaries in Figure 10.

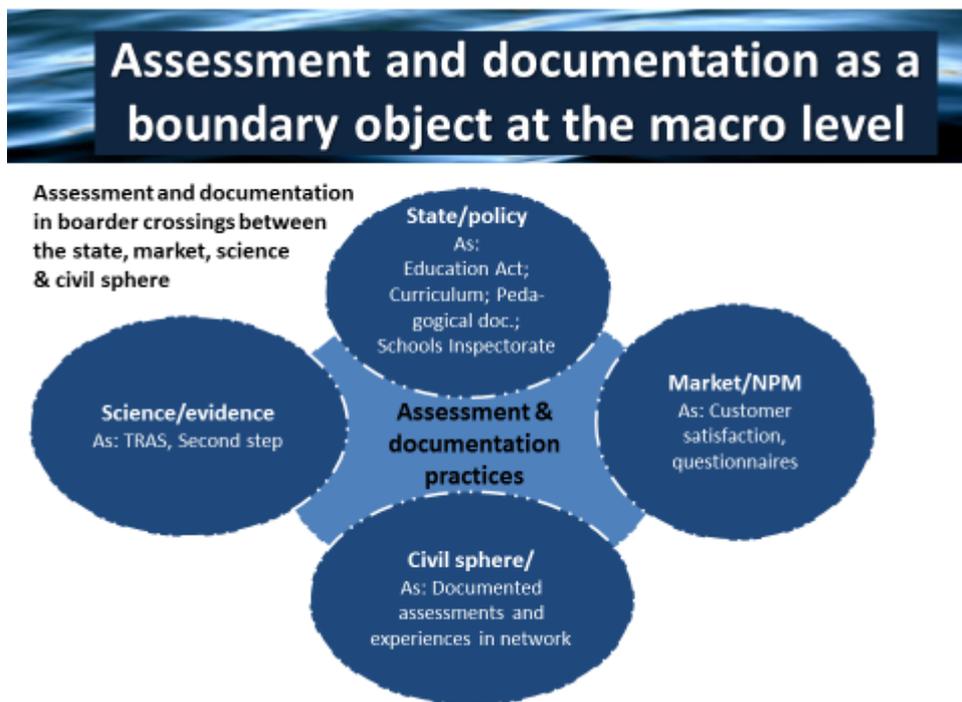


Figure 10: Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at the macro level

The policy-related area concerns the dimension of democratic rights and obligations that are usually state-controlled (in decentralized/recentralized

steering). The main assessment actor in the state/policy dimension in Sweden is the Schools Inspectorate (external assessment). As already mentioned, this actor is a goal-rational actor working on the basis of standardized documentation tools and assessment forms, closely in line with the Education Act and the revised curriculum²⁶. However, policy-related steering is also inherently inconsistent. For example, one might ask how a linear, binding management system with pre-defined directions and goals is compatible with prescribed pedagogical documentation based on non-linear, rhizomatic ideals²⁷. One could also ask how a view of centred children and actors in a humanistic perspective and with universal human rights can be reconciled with a view of decentred children in socio-material co-actions in a post-humanist perspective (Vallberg-Roth, 2014).

Policy-related steering of assessment and documentation is claimed to be justified on a scientific basis, which leads us to the evidence-related dimension. Assessment and documentation are usually justified on the basis of particular theoretical approaches and/or standardization and evidence-based effectiveness, much like Second Step and TRAS. However, there may be a tension between evidence-based documentation and national policy, in the sense that psychological developmental and age-normed assessment is not compatible with the policy that states that preschoolers should not be assessed on the basis of established standards, but should only be compared to themselves (ibid.).

The market-oriented dimension has economic and commercial interests at its core, such as management by objectives and outcomes, and surveys measuring customer satisfaction in the spirit of New Public Management (NPM). The transformative force may be exemplified by the possibility that the results of customer satisfaction surveys may influence preschool activities and assessment even if this influence is not compatible with the national policy. The teacher in the following interview excerpt stresses a customer perspective:

Teacher: Yes, we've done it a couple of times, given questionnaires to the parents. /.../ Yeab, it's clear that as a teacher, an employed teacher paid with the taxpayer's money, I then have a responsibility /.../ I feel that you have a responsibility, both to yourself and to the taxpayer and the customer. I can see things very much from the customer's perspective. So the customer is always right. And it's our job to satisfy them.

This illustrates a market orientation that can produce a tension between parents' desires and pedagogical goals; here, assessment and documentation

26 The Schools Inspectorate can be seen as a governing tool in a recentralization in need of further study. In what way is the work of the Schools Inspectorate evidence-based? See http://www.oru.se/Extern/Forskning/Forskningsmiljoer/HumUS/Utbildning_och_Demokrati/Tidskriften/2014/Nr%201/Skolinspektion%20som%20styrning.pdf

27 The rhizome metaphor as the ideal is prescribed in the guidelines 'Follow-up, Evaluation and Development in Preschool - Pedagogical documentation', National Agency for Education, 2012, p 27.

act as a boundary object between the policy and market dimensions. For example, if the parents wish the teachers to use documentation tools based on graded knowledge assessment (see example below), this is incompatible with the national policy. Hence, tensions are evident between the goal and outcome rationales in the market dimension and the goals of the curriculum in the policy dimension, as the latter states that there should be no prescribed results and goals to achieve for the children. Furthermore, there is a possible tension between the policy of equivalence and the market dimension. The market tends to generate increased differences of quality, as it is based on the idea of a profit-making business where bad results generate low resources while good results generate high resources. Hence, the market tends not to invest more resources in low-quality preschools even though these are the ones most in need of the resources.

Finally, there is the civil-oriented dimension at the macro level. This refers to a sphere of seemingly voluntary actions around shared values, interests and experiences forming a web between fellow humans, which cannot be reduced to commercial, scientific, or political interests (cf. Trondman, Lund & Mast, 2011). The following examples are taken from the Family Life [Familjeliv] website; one shows a positive view of TRAS and the other shows a negative view.

I have heard that there is some type of colour circle [TRAS] where you colour different segments and as the child develops there is more colour in the segments. I have only just heard about this circle and I think it sounds good (Familjeliv, 2009).

Our son's day care centre has something called TRAS. Totally worthless, and they use it to judge children. The worst thing is that all the teachers at the day care centre judge completely differently, so you *never* get an overall picture of how the child is doing. My son was forced to go to a speech therapist in spite of my objections. Nobody took me seriously because TRAS showed otherwise (Familjeliv, 2009).

Parent communities and websites exemplify the civil dimension (also described in 4.4); here, parents discuss TRAS, share their doubts about the statements made by experts and researchers, and express resistance to and concerns about documentation and assessment. Teachers' offline assessments of children's language skills are transformed into online assessments of the teachers themselves. The parents' statements provide clear examples of how documents can work as co-agents that get things going, raise questions, and make things happen; these statements also show how parents' seemingly weak position offline is transformed to an empowered position online (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2013).

6.3 Transformative assessment – a summary

Transformative assessment focuses on reshaping and interplaying assessments that are intertwined in the registration and complex documentation practices in a decentralized and recentralized preschool system. Different

ways of recording – whether written or in the form of photos, videos, or symbols – shape and reshape different versions of reality as an expression of power. All assessments intertwined in documentation are formed from certain positions, interests, and perspectives, and they influence how reality is constructed and enacted. Transformative assessment may interact between different theoretical positions and assemblies, including influences from psychological, socio-cultural, market-economy (goal – outcome – quality), neuroscience, and post-human approaches. Transformative assessment may be seen as reshaping and interplaying assessment in motion between different actors, forms, contents, and functions. The assessment moves between different levels (micro – macro) in complex networks (Vallberg-Roth, 2012), as illustrated in Figure 11.

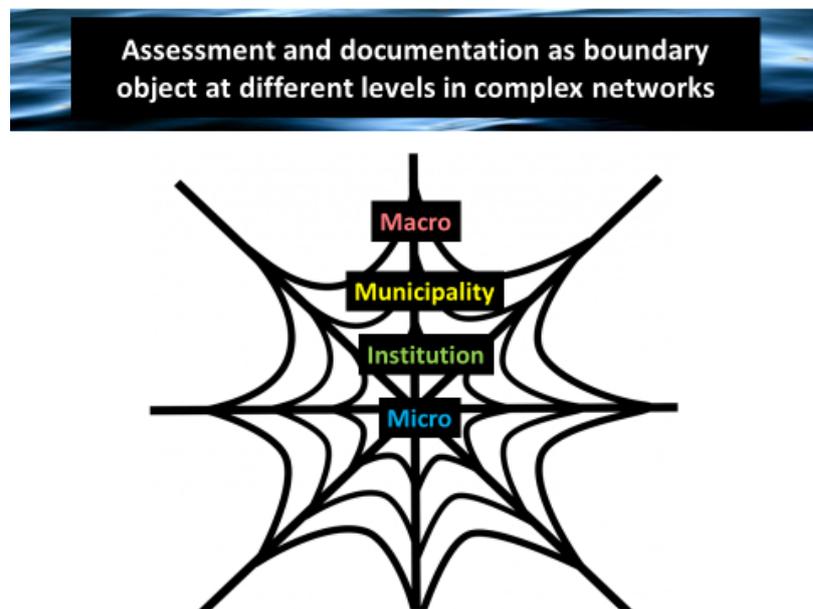


Figure 11: Assessment and documentation as a boundary object at different levels in complex networks

Furthermore, transformative assessment can be regarded as an interplay between linear (goal-directed) and non-linear (rhizomatic) assessment, and between punctual and procedural assessment (ibid.). Non-linear thinking makes it possible to describe how learning takes unpredictable paths (as with the rhizome metaphor), and is in no way linear or progressive (National Agency for Education, 2012). Linear assessment is retrospective, as it assesses signs of learning oriented towards the past, and is related to planned and goal-oriented learning and what is already known; the intention of the educational intervention or activity is pre-defined. The three aspects of quality – structure, process, and outcomes – seem to be assessed in a more linear and goal-directed way than in a non-linear direction. Non-linear assessment and judgement are oriented towards a future that cannot yet be foreseen; a complex and open-ended understanding of processes. Trans-

formative assessment ‘could then be understood to guide education by ‘expanding the space of the possible and creating the conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined’ (cf. Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p. 603).

Finally, the concept of transformative assessment does not relate to a prescriptive concept (a prescribed ideal, cf. Popham, 2008), but rather a descriptive and reflexive concept; this alternative concept can offer support for critical thinking in a complex documentation and assessment approach. This report has examined transformative assessment as a boundary object and practice in a network between different levels (macro – micro), but the concept needs to be further studied.

6.4 Concluding remarks

Overall, in the quality work and assessment and documentation practices discussed above, linear and goal-rational activities are far more evident than non-linear activities. The theme emerging from the material shows how formal requirements related to documentation in the preschool, along with market management, not only control the presentation of the preschool as an institution but also limit the ability to analyse the ‘real quality’ and develop operations based on the ‘real preschool activities’ including conflict and chaos (cf. Löfdahl, 2009). The constant presentation of an attractive image of the institution as goal-rational, professional, pleasant, and free of conflict could mean that critical views are suppressed and development is inhibited. There are no suggestions for encouraging children and parents to be critical about standardized assessments and documentation. The documentality approach may be a result of enabling comparative analyses and having preschools compete with each other to get parents/children to choose them in a market. The Quality Turn pushes this kind of documented activities and actions to the fore. Documentation also seems to become part of a genre associated with the types of self-presentation observed in social media, where the happy and successful presentation of the person, organization, or family becomes the very purpose. Attracting attention, being desirable, and being spoken about – these components make up the foundation of a consumer society (cf. Bauman, 2007).

When it comes to the Quality Turn and the tensions between accountability versus human responsibility (cf. Schwandt, 2012; Segerholm, 2012) mentioned in the introduction (section 1.1) and chapter 2, the material overall shows more of accountability than human responsibility. However, at a preschool level there are complaints expressed concerning the tension between time spent documenting and time spent in close interaction and as a supportive presence with the children. In this context, human responsibility may be related to Trondman’s study (2011) of what 4-6-year-old children expect of a ‘kind teacher’, which may constitute the starting point for good quality in preschool. Interactive presence, duty of care, empathy, supporting learning processes, confident direction (*tillitsfull ordning*), fairness, and adult responsibility may then be balanced with accountability. When chil-

dren are asked what makes a teacher kind, it turns out that their judgements are concerned with interactive and supportive presence and duty of care. Children do not ask for documentation. One can thus ask whether quality work responds poorly to children's expectations when it comes to an interactive and supportive adult presence. Further, the value of children's rights to an open future and life opportunities may be echoed in the activities, along with children's rights to their version of their personal experiences, freedom of thought, criticism, and wishes – in other words, their right to have a good life in every moment. The question is whether the children get any support in founding a curious and critical questioning approach to systematic documentation.

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- Skollagen/The Education Act SFS 2010:800:
<http://www.skolverket.se/regelverk/skollagen-och-andralagar>
http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800/?bet=2010:800/
- *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98: Revised 2010.*
http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2704
- Uppföljning, utvärdering och utveckling i förskolan – pedagogisk dokumentation (National Agency for Education, 2012)/ Follow-up, evaluation, and development in Preschool – Pedagogical documentation:
http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2808

Appendix 1

Nordic ECE guidelines are studied in the report: Vallberg-Roth, A.-C. (2013). *Nordisk komparativ analys av riktlinjer för kvalitet och innehåll i förskola* [Nordic comparative analysis of guidelines for quality and content in early childhood education.] Nordic Council of Ministers.

Denmark

Ministry of Education

Binding guidelines

- Dagtilbudslov [Day Care Facilities Act]:
<http://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/r0710.aspx?id=137202/>
- Bekendtgørelse for dag-, fritids- og klubtilbud [Announcement regarding day care, after-school centres and club services]:
<http://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=137865/>
- Vejledning om dagtilbud, fritidshjem og klubtilbud 2009 [Guidance for day care, after-school centres and club services in 2009]:
<http://www.ldd.dk/dls/653753685520.pdf>

Non-binding guidance and support material

- National curriculum instructions: Leg og lær: En guide om pædagogiske læreplaner til alle dagtilbud og forældre med børn i dagtilbud
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-og-dagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet/-Faktaomdagtilbud/~media/UVM/Files/Udd/Dagtilbud/111102%20Leg-%20og%20laer.ashx>
- Arbejdet med børnemiljø i dagtilbud – Om krav og muligheder (2010) [Working with children in the day care environment – requirements and opportunities]: http://dcum.dk/webfm_send/647/
- Språkvurdering av barn – 2013 Children’s language assessment of children – 2013:
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-ogdagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet-/Fakta-om-dagtilbud/Sprogvrdering-af-boern/>
- There are several other guidance and inspirational materials accessible on the ministry’s website, including the following on pedagogical curricula:
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-ogdagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet/Fakta-om-dagtilbud/Paedagogiske-laereplaner-for-dagtilbud/>

Reference person: Professor Stig Broström, Aarhus University and the

Finland

The responsibility for children's day care and ECE previously lay with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, but from January 2013 this responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture. New legislation is currently being drafted.

Binding guidelines

- Barndagvårdslag [Children's Day Care Act]:
<http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1973/19730036?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=19.1.1973%2F36/>
- Förordning om barndagvård [The Decree on Day Care]:
<https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1973/19730239>
- Lag om behörighetsvillkoren [The Act on Staff Qualifications in Social Services]:
<https://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/2005/20050272>

Non-binding guidance and support materials

- Läroplan för småbarnsfostran i Finland: Grunderna för planen för småbarnsfostran (Stakes, 2005) [The Curriculum for ECEC in Finland]:
http://www.thl.fi/documents/605877/747474/vasu_svenska.pdf
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health Publications 2002:10
Statsrådets principbeslut om riksomfattande riktlinjer för förskoleverksamheten [Governmental Resolution on National Policy for ECEC]:
http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLFE-9839.pdf

Reference person: Professor Maarit Alasuutari, Tampere/Jyväskylä University and Nordic ECEC Network.²⁹

The national curriculum [Grunderna för planen...] is the main document guiding the quality and content of education for children under 6 years. There is also a governmental resolution that was published before the curriculum (in 2002; see above).

28 The members of the Nordic ECEC Network (Nordic ministries) are Karen Boldt, Head of ECEC unit, Denmark; Tarja Kahiluoto, Special Government Advisor, Finland; Sigrídur Lára Ásbergdóttir, Head of Division, and Björk Óttarsdóttir, Adviser, Iceland; Tove Mogstad Slinde, Adviser, Norway; and Christer Tofténus, Senior Adviser, Sweden.

29 See note 25.

Iceland

Ministeriet för utbildning, vetenskap och kultur [Ministry of Education, Science and Culture]

Binding guidelines

- Leyskolelag [The Preschool Act]:
http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_Annad/Preschool_Act.pdf/
- Läroplan för leyskóla á Ísland [The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools]: 2012 [Aðalnámskrá leyskóla á ensku]:
<http://brunnur.stjr.is/mrn/utgafuskra/utgafa.nsf/RSSPage.xsp?documentId=CA2C880C51C8CE0D00257A230058FCA5&action=openDocument/>
- Lag för læreres och ledares utbildning og anstállning [The Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Preschool, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School]:
http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_Annad/Log_um_kennaramenntun_ENSKA.pdf/

Non-binding guidance and support material

- Referencing the Icelandic National Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning: draft:
<http://brunnur.stjr.is/mrn/utgafuskra/utgafa.nsf/RSSPage.xsp?documentId=A2127FCE8ADA7E3600257B7B004AA6F5&action=openDocument>

Reference persons: Dr Fanny Jonsdottir, Malmö University in dialogue with Sigrídur Lára Ásbergsdóttir, head of division for ECEC matters and Björk Óttarsdóttir, adviser, Icelandic Department of Education.

Norway

Ministry of Education and Research

Binding guidelines

- Barnehagelov [The Kindergarten Act]:
<https://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumenter/barnehageloven/id115281/>
<http://www.lovdatab.no/all/hl-20050617-064.html/>
- Läroplan för barnehage i Norge (binding) Ministry of Education and Research (2011). Rammeplan for innhaldet i og oppgåvene til barnehagen [The Curriculum for Kindergarten in Norway]:
<http://www.lovdatab.no/ltavd1/filer/sf-20110110-0051.html/>
http://www.udir.no/Upload/barnehage/Rammeplan/rammeplan_bokmal_2011nett.pdf?epslanguage=no/

Non-binding guidance and support materials

- Språk i barnehagen – mye mer enn bare prat (Directorate of Education, 2013) [Language in the kindergarten - much more than just talk]:
<http://www.udir.no/Barnehage/Stotterressurser/Sprak/sprakveileder/>
- Fra eldst til yngst: Samarbeid og sammenheng mellom barnehage og skole (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2008) [From the oldest to the youngest: collaboration and coherence between kindergarten and school]:
http://www.udir.no/Upload/Brosjyrer/5/fra_eldst_til_yngst_veileder_fra_kd.pdf/

The Ministry of Education and Research has produced a series of themed pamphlets to support the implementation of the framework plan:

<http://www.udir.no/Barnehage/Rammeplan/>

More information can be found on the website of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training:

<http://www.udir.no/Barnehage/Pedagogikk/Veiledere/>

Reference person: Professor Jan-Erik Johansson, University of Oslo and Nordic ECEC Network.³⁰

30 See note 25

Sweden

Ministry of Education and Research

Binding guidelines

- Skollagen [The Education Act] SFS 2010:800:
<http://www.skolverket.se/regelverk/skollagen-och-andralagar>
http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800/?bet=2010:800/
- Läroplan för förskola i Sverige (binding) [Curriculum for the Preschool] Lpfö 98: Revised 2010:
http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2704

FOLLOW-UP, EVALUATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

The quality of the preschool shall be regularly and systematically documented, followed up, evaluated, and developed. Evaluating the quality of the preschool and creating good conditions for learning requires that the child's learning and development be monitored, documented, and analysed. Supporting and challenging children in their learning entails knowledge of each child's experiences, knowledge, and participation, as well as influence over and interest in the different goal areas. This also requires knowledge of how the child's exploration, questions, experiences, and involvement are used in the preschool; how the child's knowledge changes; and when they experience the preschool as interesting, fun, and meaningful.

The aim of evaluation is to obtain knowledge of how the quality of the preschool (i.e. its organization, content, and actions) can be developed so that each child receives the best possible conditions for learning and development. Ultimately this involves developing better work processes, being able to determine whether the work takes place in accordance with the goals, as well as investigating what measures need to be taken in order to improve the conditions for children to learn, develop, feel secure and have fun in the preschool. Analyses of the results of evaluation indicate areas that are critical for development. All forms of evaluation should take the perspective of the child as the starting point. Children and parents should participate in evaluation and their views are to be given prominence.

Guidelines

Preschool teachers are responsible

- that each child's learning and development is regularly and systematically documented, followed up and analysed so that it is possible to evaluate how the preschool provides opportunities for children to develop and learn in accordance with the goals and intentions of the curriculum,
- that documentation, follow-up, evaluation and analysis covers how the goals of the curriculum are integrated with each other in pedagogical work,

- that the preschool as a whole i.e. its conditions, organisation, structure, contents, activities and pedagogical processes are documented, followed up and evaluated,
- that documentation, follow-up and analysis covers how the abilities and knowledge of children change over time in the goal areas in relation to the preconditions for learning and development provided by the preschool,
- that evaluation methods, how documentation and evaluation are used and influence the contents and working methods of the preschool, as well as the child's opportunities for development and learning in all goal areas are critically examined, and
- that the results of documentation, follow-up and evaluation in systematic work on quality are used to develop the quality of the preschool and thus the child's opportunities for learning and development.

The work team should

- regularly and systematically document, follow up, and analyse each child's learning and development, as well as evaluate how the preschool provides the child with opportunities for learning and development in accordance with the goals and intentions of the curriculum,
- use different forms of documentation and evaluation to provide knowledge of the conditions for the child's learning and development in the preschool, as well as making it possible to monitor the child's acquisition of knowledge in different goal areas,
- document, follow up and analyse
 - communication and interaction with and between children, their participation and influence, as well as the occasions when children experience preschool as interesting, meaningful and fun,
 - how the child's skills and knowledge change continuously over time in the goal areas in relation to the preconditions for learning and development provided by the preschool,
- document, follow up, evaluate and develop
 - the child's participation and influence in documentation and evaluations, where and how the child can exercise influence, and how their perspective, explorations, questions and ideas are used, and
 - influence of parents in the evaluations, where and how they can exercise influence, and how their perspectives can be used. (Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98: Revised 2010, pp. 14-15).

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEAD OF THE PRESCHOOL

As the pedagogical leader and head of the preschool teachers, child minders and other staff in the preschool, the head of the preschool has overall responsibility for ensuring that the preschool is run in accordance with the goals of the curriculum and its overall task. The head of the preschool is responsible for the quality of the preschool, and within given constraints, has specific responsibility for:

- systematically and continuously planning, following up, evaluating and developing the preschool,
- carrying out systematic work on quality together with preschool teachers, child minders and other staff, as well as providing the child's guardian with opportunities to participate in work on quality,
- developing working forms for the preschool so that the child's active influence is encouraged,
- structuring the learning environment of the preschool so that the child has access to a good environment and material for development and learning,
- organising the preschool so that children receive the special support, help and challenges they need,
- establishing, carrying out, following up and evaluating the preschool's action programmes for preventing and counteracting all forms of discrimination and degrading treatment, such as bullying and racist behaviour amongst children and employees,
- developing forms of cooperation between the preschool and the home, and that parents receive information about the goals of the preschool and its methods of working,
- developing forms of cooperation with the preschool class, the school and the leisure-time centre, and that coordination takes place to create conditions for a shared view, in close and trusting cooperation, and
- the staff regularly obtain the competence development required to be able to carry out their tasks in a professional manner. (Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98: Revised 2010, p. 16).

Non-binding guidance and support materials

- Systematiskt kvalitetsarbete – för skolväsendet (National Agency for Education, 2012) [Systematic Quality Work – Education System]: http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publika-tion?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2901
- Uppföljning, utvärdering och utveckling i förskolan – pedagogisk dokumentation (National Agency for Education, 2012) [Follow-up, Evaluation and Development in Preschool – Pedagogical documentation]: http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2808

There is a range of guidance material available on www.skolverket.se/ using the search term 'Allmänna råd'.

Reference person: Professor Ingegerd Tallberg Broman, Malmö University and the Nordic ECEC Network.³¹

31 See note 25.

Appendix 2

Below is an abbreviated version of a documentation tool and assessment form at a national level. See:

<http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Regelbunden-tillsyn/bedomningspunkter/bedomningspunkter-forsk.pdf/>

1 Preschool work towards the goals

The aim of education in the school system is to nurture and develop children's and students' knowledge and values. It should promote all children's and students' development and learning, as well as a lifelong desire to learn. The training should take into account children's different needs. Children and students will be given support and stimulation so that they develop as far as possible. Effort is made to compensate for differences in children's and students' potential to benefit from education. Another aim of education, in co-action with the home, is to promote children's and students' overall development into active, creative, competent, and responsible individuals and citizens.

1.1 Development and Learning

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschool head and preschool teachers explain the goals of education to the children and parents. The preschool has a varied content that stimulates children's development and learning and offers safe care.
- The preschool makes deliberate use of play to promote each child's development and learning. The children are given the opportunity to develop their creative abilities in many forms of expression (such as images, movement, music and song, dance, and drama).
- The preschool works to enable children to develop their motoric skills, coordination, and body image.
- The preschool works consciously with the children's language development. For children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, this means developing their own native language, the Swedish language, and the Swedish cultural identity.
- The preschool works consciously with mathematics, science, and technology.
- All children in the preschool are given the support and incentives they need based on their own conditions to develop as far as possible according to the educational aims.

1.2 Basic values and influence

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschool works systematically to establish the values that our society is based on, including empathy and concern for others as well as openness and respect for differences in people's beliefs and ways of life. This work includes counteracting traditional gender patterns, managing

conflict, understand one's rights and obligations, and taking responsibility for common rules.

- The children's best interests are the basis for the activity, and the children are given the opportunity to participate actively in their education.

1.3 Safety and a healthy environment

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschool environment is characterized by security, concern for children's welfare, and good care.
- Care, rest, and other activities are weighed together in a balanced way. The security and safety of the children is ensured.
- Targeted work takes place in the preschool to counteract abusive treatment of children.

1.4 Special support

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The children in preschools who have physical, psychological, or other special needs receive the support that their special needs require.
- The preschool head ensures that the child is given such support.
- The child's guardians are given the opportunity to participate in the formulation of the specific support initiatives.

1.5 Preschool and home

The points within this area of assessment are:

- Preschool work is done in close and trustful cooperation with the home.
- Parents receive information about both the child and the establishment in general.
- Parents are offered developmental talks at least once a year.

2 Leadership and development of education

In this area, the Schools Inspectorate examines how the principal organizer is responsible for the activities, how the preschools are organized, whether the requirements for skills and education are met, and whether the preschools meet constitutional requirements for the management, monitoring, and development of education.

2.1 Educational leadership and the development of education

As an educational leader and head of the teachers and other staff in the preschool they have the overall responsibility for ensuring that the preschool activities are focused towards the national targets. The preschool heads are responsible for ensuring that the preschool's goal achievement is monitored and evaluated in relation to the national goals.

2.2 Management structure and organization of the education

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschool units' external and internal organization and management structure are consistent with the constitution.
- The educational work at each preschool is led and coordinated by a preschool head.

2.3 Staff qualifications

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschool managers have educational insight acquired through education and experience.
- The staff at the preschool units have the education and skills for the tasks they will carry out.

3 Availability and preconditions

In this area, the Schools Inspectorate examines the municipality's work to ensure that children have access to the education they are entitled to and that children's rights are met.

3.1 Offer of education

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The municipality provides information about the right to a place in preschool or other educational activities.
- The municipality offers a place for all children within four months after the child's guardian has reported their desire for a place.

3.2 Material resources

This area of assessment includes one point:

- The preschool has the facilities and equipment needed for it to carry out its purpose.

3.3 Processing routines

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The preschools have functioning administrative procedures, and decisions are made in accordance with the constitutions.
- There are routines to transfer complaints about education to the principal organizer.

3.4 Group compositional suitability

The points within this area of assessment are:

- The principal organizer ensures that groups of children are of a suitable composition and size, and that the children are also otherwise offered a good environment.

- The principal organizer and preschool heads adapt child groups so that appropriate care can be provided and the educational mission can be met.
- The principal organizer and preschool heads monitor and evaluate the composition and size of groups of children.

Appendix 3

Below is an abbreviated version of a national standard for principal organizers and preschools regarding self-quality control before a visit by the Schools Inspectorates visit. See <http://www.kolladinforskola.se/>

1 Development and learning 1

The municipality takes into account the varying conditions, abilities, and needs of the children, and ensures that quality is equivalent in all the municipal preschools.

2 Development and learning 2

Preschool work is performed in close and trustful cooperation with the home. There are a number of questions about the ways in which preschool heads and preschool teachers clarifies the preschool mission and goals for the parents. Have the parents been offered the opportunity to exert influence over the activities, and have they received the information they need? Can parents follow their child's development through ongoing conversations with preschool staff? Are parents offered developmental talks at least once a year? How do parents perceive the activities and the contact they have with the preschool?

3 Development and learning 3

Preschools should have a varied content that stimulates children's development and learning, and they should offer safe care. Preschool activities should stimulate children's development and learning. The Schools Inspectorate asks questions about the ways in which the preschool consciously uses play for this purpose. Does the preschool consciously work with the children's language and ability to communicate with others? Does it also involve motoric skills, body image, and coordination, giving children the opportunity to develop their creative abilities in different ways? (For example, image, movement, music and song, dance, and drama). Are children with a native language other than Swedish given the opportunity to develop their own language, the Swedish language, and the Swedish cultural identity? In what way are children ensured the opportunity to develop an understanding of science and to explore technology in everyday life? How does the preschool work with mathematics and the ability to reflect and try different solutions to problems? Are children given the opportunity and inspiration to explore the world around them?

4 Development and learning 4

All children in preschools should be given the support and incentives they need, based on their own circumstances, to allow them to develop as far as possible according to the aims of the education.

5 Development and learning 5

Do the children in preschools who have physical or psychological limitations, or who are otherwise in need of special support, receive the support

that their special needs require? Will all children in preschool who need it get support for their special needs? Does the preschool head ensure that the child gets enough support? Do the parents/guardians have the opportunity to participate in the formulation of the specific support initiatives?

6 Basic values and influence 1

The preschool works systematically to establish the values on which our society is based. The preschool, like the school, will conduct its activities in a democratic framework based on our society's basic values. Does the preschool work to develop children's capacity for empathy and concern for others, as well as openness and respect for differences in people's beliefs and ways of life? In what ways is the preschool working for equality? Will girls and boys in the preschool have the same opportunities to develop and explore their abilities and interests, with no restrictions on gender stereotypes? Will children get the opportunity to develop their ability to work individually and in groups, to manage conflicts, to understand their rights and obligations, and to take responsibility for common rules?

7 Basic values and influence 2

The children's best interests are the basis for the activity, and the children are given active influence over their education. Will the children be involved and have a real influence in the education, related to their age and maturity? Is there a plan for how the children can have an influence? Will the children get enough space to take an active part in preschool development work, and are they provided with information when dealing with issues that concern them? Do they get the opportunity to express their views, and do the adults in preschool listen to them? Is the planning and environment in the preschool designed on the basis of what the children have expressed an interest in?

8 Safety and good environmental conditions 1

The environment is characterized by security, concern for children's welfare, and good care. Is there a well-balanced daily rhythm so that children can switch between rest and activity? Is the environment appropriate to their age and length of stay? Do children get the care that their needs require? Is the preschool environment safe and secure?

9 Safety and good environmental conditions 2

Targeted work takes place in the preschool to counteract abusive treatment of the children. Do the preschool staff work actively to ensure that no child shall be subjected to degrading treatment? Is there a plan to eliminate abuse, describing how the preschool will work to prevent children from being victimized? Is there a clear action plan available describing procedures for what the preschool should do if a child is subjected to abusive treatment by another child or an adult? Does the preschool carry out regular surveys of children's safety and happiness? Is the survey used to formulate concrete goals and actions? Are the children involved in the work, for example by telling staff about unsafe places or situations? Is the plan fol-

lowed up?

10 The management and development of education

Does the principal organizer for the preschool take responsibility for ensuring that systematic quality work is carried out consisting of planning, monitoring, and development of education? Does the organizer clarify the requirements, goals, and guidelines that should be monitored and evaluated, and how this should be documented? Does the organizer clarify the responsibilities between themselves and the preschool units?

11 Educational leadership and development of education 1

Does the preschool head ensure that the staff at the preschool are working on the basis of the curriculum, the Education Act, and other regulations governing preschool? Has the preschool head actual knowledge of how the work is conducted at the preschool? Does the preschool head take responsibility for driving the development of the preschool?

12 Educational leadership and development of education 2

How does the preschool head take responsibility for the planning, monitoring, and development of the education? Are both preschool teachers and other staff involved in the work, and is there an opportunity for children and their parents to participate? Are there procedures in place to address the identified development needs with the principal organizer?

13 Management structure and organization of the education

Does the preschool head lead and coordinate the work at preschool? Is it clear to whom and in what cases the preschool head has assigned specific managerial or decision-making powers? Does the preschool head ensure that the people assigned these management tasks have sufficient competence and experience to perform the tasks and make appropriate decisions over the matters concerned?

14 Preschool teachers and educational activities

Do preschool teachers take responsibility for: (1) ensuring that the work in the group of children is carried out on the basis of the curriculum objectives, (2) implementation of a continuous and systematic documentation of each child's development and learning, (3) follow-up and analysis to enable evaluation of preschool work on the basis of the children's development and learning, and (4) deciding how development talks will be carried out?

15 Staff competence 1

Does the preschool head have the educational background and experience (for example, a college degree that includes pedagogy) that ensures they will have educational insight?

16 Staff competence 2

Do the staff at the preschool units have the education and skills for the tasks they will conduct? Do preschool teachers have the responsibility for

the goal-driven processes in the preschool? Do others who work in the preschool have the appropriate educational background or experience to allow them to promote children's development and learning?

17 Staff competence 3

Are the staff at the preschool units given the opportunity to develop their skills and have the necessary insights into the regulations for the school system? Do all staff know about the content and meaning of the Preschool Curriculum? Are the staff given the opportunity for the professional development they need to carry out their professional functions?

18 Offer of education

Does the municipality provide clear and accurate information about the right to a place in preschool or other educational activities, how to apply, and anything else that parents need to know? Is the information available in multiple languages?

19 Right to preschool

The municipality is responsible for providing preschool (or educational care) in accordance with the constitution. Does the municipality provide preschool within the specified time limits; that is, within four months of the child's guardian reporting the desire for a place in preschool? Does the municipality handle other requirements regarding the children of unemployed parents, children during parental leave, and children with special needs? Does the municipality offer the child a place in public preschool from the year the child turns three?

20 Group compositional suitability

Children have the right to a healthy environment in preschool. How have the principal organizer and preschool worked to create a good physical environment in order to prevent ill-health, and to otherwise create a safe indoor and outdoor environment for the children? Have they taken into account the age of children when groups are assembled? Have they taken into account the children who are in need of special assistance, the different conditions and needs of the children, and the children's attendance times at the premises in terms of the expertise and staffing available?

21 Material resources

How do the facilities fit with the activities conducted in the preschool? Are the facilities safe and environmentally appropriate for children, and is it possible to implement an activity where the children can switch between different activities and be given opportunities to rest and be cared for? Does the preschool provide facilities and organization of space for the children's own plans, imagination, and creativity in play and learning, both indoors and outdoors? Are the children involved in how the environment is structured? Do the preschool staff exhibit a thoughtful approach and a readiness to act, and are there written procedures for situations and accidents that may occur with the children? Does the preschool have clear pro-

cedures for reporting injuries and incidents to the responsible board?

22 Management routines

Does the preschool have functioning administrative procedures in accordance with the constitution? When staff fear that a child is being abused, does the preschool report this to social services? Does the preschool have available forms of collaboration with other community agencies regarding children at risk? Does the preschool have appropriate procedures for handling complaints against preschool education, and are these complaints passed properly on to the principal organizer?

Appendix 4

Results of parental survey in a major city municipality in the south of Sweden (2013). See:

<http://www.malmo.se/download/18.228b8e2313f816262748e50/1383645586865/Attityd+f%C3%B6rskola+2013.pdf/>

A total of 10 638 guardians responded to the survey, representing a response rate of about 58%, which is statistically sufficient to give a good insight into the city municipality. (This is an increase of 37 percentage points over the response to a similar survey in 2011, where the response rate was only 21%). The report's findings can be summarized in the following points:

The two main areas with the highest proportions of positive responses were:

- Wellbeing (90% positive responses)
- Security (87%)

The two main areas with the lowest proportions of positive responses were:

- Information provision to guardians (64%)
- Participation and influence (60%)

The three issues with the highest proportions of positive responses were:

- My child gets the opportunity to play with other children (94%)
- My child has fun at preschool (91%)
- My child feels safe at preschool (91%)

The three questions with the lowest proportions of positive responses were:

- My child can participate in deciding what children should do at preschool (43%)
- My child is learning mathematical concepts (52%)
- My child is developing their interest in science (54%)

Differences on the basis of birth:

- In general, no significant differences were noted between age groups, except that guardians of younger children were consistently more likely to choose the 'do not know' response option. It is likely that the main reason these guardians found it difficult to answer the questions was because they had less experience of the preschool.
- With respect to the item 'information provision to guardians', the guardians of the oldest and youngest children gave more positive responses than the other guardians. It is likely that the guardians are more informed when the child starts preschool and at the time of the transition to preschool class.
- There were major differences when the results were compared at the preschool level. For most of the main items, there were some preschools with about 90–100% positive responses but other preschools with only about 50–60%.

Differences between preschools:

- There were major differences when the results were compared at the preschool level. For most of the main items, there were some preschools with about 90–100% positive responses but other preschools with only about 50–60%.
- There were usually about 15–20 preschools per subject area with at least 20 percentage points of difference in the proportion of positive responses between the guardians of girls and boys. Among these preschools, the guardians of the girls were often more positive.

Differences between the principal organizers:

- The guardians with children in independent preschools were consistently more positive in all areas, in comparison to guardians with children in public preschools. A significantly higher proportion of guardians with children in public preschools answered 'do not know' or 'partly true'.
- One conclusion from this is that many municipal preschools need to get better at dialogue, and better at informing guardians about their children's preschool situation and the activities in the preschool. When positive responses were given to items regarding information, responses to the other questions also tended to be more positive.

Individual development talks:

A number of parents, even those of the oldest children, stated that they had not had an individual development talk in the past year. There thus seem to be preschools in the municipality which are failing to provide the annual development talk which the guardian

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