

# Conference report

The 3rd Nordic ECEC conference in Oslo.  
Approaches in Nordic ECEC research:  
Current research and new perspectives







## Foreword

The third Nordic ECEC conference “*Approaches in Nordic ECEC research: Current research and new perspectives*” was held in Oslo 11-12 November 2013. About 80 policy makers and researchers from the Nordic countries participated actively in presentations and workshops on the three conference themes: 1) Investments in children and ECEC, 2) Inclusion for all children and each child – in view of special needs and 3) How can long term development be supported by research?

### **A meeting place**

There are not too many natural meeting points neither for ECEC researchers from different fields, disciplines, traditions and countries nor for researchers and policy makers. In the conferences in 2009 and 2011 many “who should have known each other already” met and made contact. Hopefully this was the case in the 2013 conference too. An important goal for all the conferences has been to gather researchers from different disciplines in order to strengthen multidisciplinary in ECEC research in a Nordic context.

### **Raising questions and sharing experiences**

ECEC research has developed since the first conference in 2009. The volume of ECEC research has increased and we see ECEC research projects in an increasing number of disciplines. In the presentations and in the following workshops questions were raised about how research on ECEC can and should be used by society. We hope the conference contributed to shared experiences and knowledge about policy making and research across and within the Nordic countries. This would be important contributions to a long-term and knowledge-based development of ECEC and society.



# Programme 11. November



	Room: Auditorium B	
	<b>08.00</b>	Registration
	<b>09.00</b>	<b>Welcome</b> by Petter Skarheim, Director General, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training
	<b>09.05</b>	<b>Opening of the conference</b> by Birgitte Jordahl, State Secretary
	<b>09.30</b>	Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Centre, University of Toronto: <b>Early childhood development as economic development</b>
	<b>10.15</b>	Short coffee break
Session 1	Room: Auditorium B	<b>Investments in children and ECEC</b>
	<b>10.30</b>	Guðny Björk Eydal: <b>Investments in childcare policies in Nordic countries</b>
	<b>11.00</b>	Jan Kampmann: <b>Can we afford not to invest in the early childhood education sector?</b>
	<b>11.30</b>	Arna H. Jónsdóttir: <b>Effects of economic crisis on schools with reference to Iceland: How can early childhood education be protected?</b>
	<b>12.00–13.00</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
		<b>Questions to be discussed in workshops</b>
	<b>Guðny Björk Eydal</b> Room: Auditorium B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the Nordic countries invest and organize care support for children age 0-6 years?</li> <li>• Are there different child-care models among the Nordic countries? Are there different politics on childcare policies and childhoods?</li> </ul>
	<b>Jan Kampmann</b> Room: styrerom 1+2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does early childhood education have a pedagogical agenda in its own right, placing it apart from the school?</li> <li>• How can high quality institutions contribute to inclusionary processes?</li> <li>• What do characterize a high quality daycare institution?</li> </ul>
	<b>Arna H. Jónsdóttir</b> Room: styrerom 3+4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the Nordic countries prioritising early childhood education and preschool practices in times of crisis and cut-downs?</li> <li>• The most expensive factor in preschools is related to staffing and adult: child ratios. How are the Nordic countries securing quality in that respect?</li> </ul>
	<b>13.00</b>	Lunch buffet
Session 2	Room: Auditorium B	<b>Inclusion for all children and each child – in view of special needs?</b>
	<b>14.00</b>	Eva Siljehag: <b>Pre-school teachers and special educators - a shared democratic mandate?</b>
	<b>14.30</b>	Anne-Lise Arnesen: <b>Inclusion and challenges in ECEC with reference to Norwegian policies and practices</b>
	<b>15.00</b>	Jukka Mäkelä: <b>How knowledge about the needs and potentials of the developing child can support inclusion in ECEC.</b>
	<b>15.30–16.30</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
		<b>Questions to be discussed in workshops</b>
	<b>Eva Siljehag</b> Room: Auditorium B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do preventive measures in pre-school and special education work mean in the pre-school environment?</li> <li>• What dictates the prevention measures for all children and each child in pre-schools?</li> <li>• Whose interests govern the prevention measures of special education work in pre-school?</li> </ul>
	<b>Anne-Lise Arnesen</b> Room: styrerom 1+2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the scientific basis/knowledge basis for programs of mandatory early screening and testing of small children in kindergarten?</li> <li>• In what ways may special needs knowledge contribute to inclusive practices in kindergarten?</li> </ul>
	<b>Jukka Mäkelä</b> Room: styrerom 3+4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the different and yet common needs of all children?</li> <li>• How can special needs knowledge affect what we do?</li> <li>• How to increase the pedagogic sensitivity of ECEC-personnel?</li> </ul>
	<b>18.30</b>	Aperitif and cultural visit – The ski museum and jump tower in Holmenkollen
<b>20.00</b>	Dinner – “De fem stuer” at Holmenkollen Park Hotel	



## Programme 12. November



<i>Room: Auditorium B</i>	
<b>08.55</b>	<b>Short welcome</b> by Petter Skarheim, Director General, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training
<i>Room: Auditorium B</i>	
<b>How can long term development be supported by research</b>	
<b>09.00</b>	Jan-Erik Johansson: <b>Do we have a Nordic model in ECEC?</b>
<b>09.30</b>	Jyrki Reunamo: <b>Day care based on developmental feedback for the staff</b>
<b>10.00</b>	Bente Jensen: <b>Design and preliminary results of the VIDA-programme: Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in Danish daycare</b>
<b>10.30</b>	<b>Break and check out</b>
<b>11.00–12.00</b>	<b>Workshops</b>
<b>Questions to be discussed in workshops</b>	
<b>Jan-Erik Johansson</b> <i>Room: Auditorium B</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of knowledge production do we need in the future?</li> <li>• How may the concept of quality be handled in planning for long-term research?</li> <li>• Is there a Nordic model of ECEC?</li> </ul>
<b>Jyrki Reunamo</b> <i>Room: styrerom 1+2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to get more resources for professional development?</li> <li>• How to empower educators to develop their work?</li> <li>• What are the possibilities for a shared comparative research across Nordic countries?</li> </ul>
<b>Bente Jensen</b> <i>Room: styrerom 3+4</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development as a key for improving quality in ECEC as shown in the VIDA-program - is this factor international, generalizable or could it be?</li> <li>• Which is the next step after our present VIDA project compared to international research, that identify the impact high-quality preschool, as e.g. Perry Preschool, or EPPE?</li> <li>• How far might a Nordic model of ECEC as VIDA be possible to generalize to other countries?</li> </ul>
<b>12.00</b>	<b>Conference summary</b> Dag Thomas Gisholt, Director General, Department of Early childhood Education and Care, The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research
<b>12.30</b>	<b>Endnote</b> Petter Skarheim, Director General, the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training
<b>12.45 – 14.00</b>	<b>Lunch buffet</b>

Session 3



## About the presenters

### ■ Kerry McCuaig

*Fellow in Early Childhood Policy, OISE  
University of Toronto*

Kerry McCuaig is the Atkinson Charitable Foundation's Fellow in Early Childhood Policy, working with the Atkinson Centre at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. She is co-author of *Early Years Study 3, Making Decisions, Taking Action* with Margaret McCain and Fraser Mustard. Kerry has had a long involvement in early childhood policy development including as communications manager for Toronto First Duty, a pioneer in the integrated delivery of early childhood programming and supports similar integrated ECE service models in Atlantic Canada.

### ■ Guðný Björk Eydal

*Professor  
University of Iceland*

Guðný Björk Eydal is professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Iceland. Her main fields of research: The Welfare State and Social Policy with emphasis on Family Policies; Care Policies; Social Services; Poverty; Child Policies; Crisis Management. Eydal was one of the editors of "Parental leave, childcare and gender equality in the Nordic countries" (2012)

### ■ Jan Kampmann

*Professor  
Roskilde University*

Jan Kampmann is professor and director at the Centre in Childhood, Youth and Family Life Research, in the Department of Psychology and Educational Studies, Roskilde University. His research areas are childhood, adolescence and family; education learning and training; welfare state and welfare society.

### ■ Arna Hólmfríður Jónsdóttir

*Assistant Professor  
University of Iceland*

Arna Hólmfríður Jónsdóttir is assistant professor at the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Iceland. She is also a Department Chair in Early Childhood Education in Pre- and Primary Schools. Her research areas are Early Childhood Education, Educational Leadership and Professionalism. She also has professional experience as a preschool teacher, preschool head teacher and preschool consultant.

### ■ Eva Siljehag

*Lecturer  
University of Stockholm*

Eva Siljehag, Ph.D. in Special Education and lecturer at the Department of Special Education, Stockholm University. She has a background as preschool teacher and special educator. Her research focuses on democratic knowledge processes in education and its social conditions. Of particular interest is research aimed at and with young children in special education contexts, including the activities and their learning opportunities with peers.

### ■ Anne-Lise Arnesen

*Professor  
Østfold University college*

Anne-Lise Arnesen is Ph. D. and professor in the Department of Education at Østfold University college. Her research interests are in marginalization, inclusion and diversity studies in education and teacher education. She has been involved in a number of research projects and supervises students working in these areas. She is one of the founders of the NORDCRIT network (Nordic research network: Critical perspectives on children, young people, welfare and education).



■ **Jukka Mäkelä**

*Doctor and researcher*

*National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki  
and University of Helsinki*

Dr. Jukka Mäkelä is a child psychiatrist and expert in adult-child relationships. He is a Senior Advisor at the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Department for Children, Adolescents and Families. He was the chief expert for children and family services for the first National Development Plan for Social Welfare and Health Care (Kaste Programme) in 2008-2012. Currently his responsibility is the development of multisectoral work with children who have been victims of abuse. He is also a researcher at the University of Helsinki, Department of Teacher Education, where he is a member of the research group in early childhood (special) education (acronym LASSO- Children's stress regulation and learning). His responsibility is the development and implementation of an intervention to support Pedagogical Sensitivity in ECEC-environments to improve learning and prosocial behaviour in children

■ **Jan Erik Johansson**

*Professor*

*Oslo and Akershus University College  
of Applied sciences*

Jan-Erik Johansson is professor at the Department of Early Childhood Education, the Faculty of Education and International Studies in Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied sciences. He is amongst other things involved in "Better provision for Norway's children in ECEC: A study of children's wellbeing and development in ECEC, and new tool for Quality Evaluation". The study is intended to explore the characteristics and quality of different kinds of early years provision and the impact various types of settings have on children's wellbeing, attainment, progress and development.

■ **Jyrki Reunamo**

*Docent*

*University of Helsinki*

Jyrki Reunamo is docent and Ph.D. at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki. He is project director of the Orientation project. The purpose of the project is to establish an educational practice for developmental processes based on reconstructive feedback.

■ **Bente Jensen**

*Professor*

*University of Aarhus*

Bente Jensen is professor with special responsibilities at the Department of Education, Faculty of Arts, University of Aarhus. She is project manager of several projects concerning the research field «Social Innovation and Welfare studies», among these are the research project 'Knowledge-based Efforts for Socially Disadvantaged Children in Day-care' (VIDA).



## Key note

### Early childhood development as economic development

Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Centre, University of Toronto

Early childhood development is economic development with a very high return. A decade ago this statement would have been dismissed. Spending on programs for young children was conceived as consumption, an immediate cost to the economy. An expanding research base refutes this claim and has swelled the audience for early childhood concerns engaging economists, scientists, health providers, and even financiers.

The economic rationale for investing in early childhood programming is gathered from four types of analyses: random control studies, longitudinal tracking of children; economic modelling of labour market effects; and studies examining the early childhood sector itself and its multiplier effects on economies.

Validation of the human capital approach is heavily influenced by U.S. longitudinal studies showing sustained benefits from early interventions for children in disadvantaged circumstances. Based on these findings, respected economists, such as Nobel Prize winner James Heckman, conclude that scarce public resources would best be used for at-risk communities<sup>1</sup>. Population health promoters counter with data showing that developmental vulnerabilities are not exclusive to children from low-income homes—children with vulnerabilities exist across the economic spectrum. Targeting resources, they demonstrate, would exclude the majority of children with vulnerabilities – those belonging to middle class and affluent families.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, economists are questioning whether “scarce resources” are a consideration.

Quebec’s early childhood program has been criticized for its costs. However, analyses have found the province recoups its entire outlay from the additional tax revenue generated by the increased numbers of mothers entering the workforce.

### U.S. longitudinal studies

Researchers have followed three U.S. longitudinal studies on the impact of preschool education on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The participants were largely African-American children deemed to be at-risk because of low family income, and the mothers’ age, educational attainment and lone-parent status. The families typically lived in neighbourhoods with persistent poverty.

Ypsilanti’s Perry Preschool the Abecedarian study in North Carolina and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers have tracked their original cohorts for up to four decades. Each study was unique, but all provided a group program emphasizing parent involvement and the development of children’s literacy skills. Child-to-staff ratios were low and educators had university level training in early childhood education.

Assessed over time, the preschool groups showed greater on-time secondary school graduation, higher college attendance, increased earnings and more pro-social conduct as adults, compared to the control groups. For children born to mothers who never finished high school, the high school completion rates were roughly 10 percent higher and rates of substance abuse and felony charges were roughly 10 percent lower than for children in the no-preschool control group. The outcomes were particularly pronounced for male participants.<sup>3</sup> No long-term effect was found on the IQ of the participants, but preschool did help children develop better cognitive habits and improved impulse control.<sup>4</sup>

1 Heckman, J.J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science*, 132, 1900-1902.

2 Janus, M. & Duku, E. (2007). The school entry gap: Socioeconomic, family, and health factors associated with children’s school readiness to learn. *Early Education and Development*, 18(3), 375-403.

3 Arthur J. Reynolds, Judy A. Temple Suh-Ruu Ou, Irma A. Arteaga, Barry A. B. White (2011) .School-Based Early Childhood Education and Age-28 Well-Being: Effects by Timing, Dosage, and Subgroups. *Science*, Published online 9 June 2011.

4 Barnett, W. S. (2011). Effectiveness of early educational intervention. *Science*, 333, 975-978.





The Chicago and Abecedarian studies included samples of children who attended both preschool and enriched elementary school programming. Others participated only in preschool, or only in enriched schooling. The most consistent and enduring outcomes were from preschool participation. School-aged programming provided added academic and earning advantages, but social behaviours were not appreciably different from the preschool-only groups.

The benefits of preschool were quantified by comparing the original costs of the program per child to their adult behaviours, including employment earnings, taxes paid, social welfare used and criminal justice costs incurred. Preschool's influence on health costs was not considered in the overall tally, but positive results were found in a separate study of Perry Preschool participants at 40 years of age.<sup>5</sup>

Only the financial returns for participants as they entered youth and adulthood were considered by the studies, not modifications in their parents' behaviour. In the Abecedarian study, for example, all-day preschool made it possible for parents to work or upgrade their skills. Parental benefits from lowered welfare use and increased tax revenues paid were not factored into the results, nor were more immediate benefits accruing to the child, such as reduced demand for health care or special education.

As dramatic as the findings from these studies are, the initial outlay was substantial and public investments that take a generation to realize provide little incentive for policy makers whose actions are often determined by election cycles.

<sup>5</sup> Muennig, Peter, Lawrence Schweinhart, Jeanne Montie, and Matthew Neidell, "Effects of a Prekindergarten Educational Intervention on Adult Health: 37-Year Follow-Up Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial," *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 99, 2009, pp. 1431-1437.

<b>COST-BENEFIT FINDINGS FROM THREE MAJOR LONGITUDINAL STUDIES INVOLVING DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN ATTENDING PRESCHOOL IN U.S. URBAN AREAS</b>			
	<b>Abecedarian</b>	<b>Chicago Child-Parent Centres</b>	<b>Perry Pre-school</b>
<b>Year Began</b>	1972	1983	1962
<b>Location</b>	Chapel Hill, NC	Chicago, IL	Ypsilanti, MI
<b>Sample Size</b>	111	1539	123
<b>Design</b>	Random Control	Compared children who only received kindergarten	Random Control
<b>Participants' ages</b>	6 weeks – age 5 & 6-8 years	Age 3 and 4-8 years	Ages 3-4
<b>Program Schedule</b>	Full day/year round	Half day/school year	Half day/school year
<b>Average time in program per child</b>	5 years	18 months	2 years
<b>Additions to preschool</b>	Enriched programming in elementary grades. Health and family supports.	Full-day kindergarten, health and family supports, and enriched programming in early elementary grades.	Health supports and 1.5 hour home visit once a week.
<b>Age last assessed</b>	Age 21	Age 28	Age 40
<b>Costs per child</b>	\$13,900/yr	\$7,428 per child	\$15,166/yr
<b>Benefits calculated</b>	\$143,674	\$83,511	\$258,888
<b>Return on each \$1 spent</b>	\$4:1	\$10:1	\$17:1

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007); Belfield et al (2006). Temple & Reynolds (2007); Reynolds et al (2011)



### Canadian cost-benefit analyses

Canada does not have comparable random control studies. Canadian studies have also differed from the American big three by including the immediate reimbursements produced from the increased workforce participation of mothers and the mid-term repayments from early childhood programs that can be predicted for children, such as reduced need for special education.

In 1998, University of Toronto researchers calculated the impact of providing publicly funded educational child care for all children aged 2–5 years.<sup>6</sup> The net cost of \$5.2 billion annually (1998 CDN dollars) was premised on an overall parental contribution of 20 percent, with individual fees scaled to income. The new system would create 170,000 new jobs, but these would replace 250,000 unregulated child minders, for a net employment loss. New educator jobs were assessed at an average wage and benefit level of \$36,000 annually, a significant improvement on remuneration levels at that time.

The authors determined the benefits at \$10.6 billion. About \$4.3 billion was foreseen for children in improved school readiness, graduation levels and future earnings. The majority, and the most immediate, dividends (\$6.24 billion) came from mothers. Affordable, available child care would allow women to work, to shorten their stay out of the labour market following the birth of their children and would permit them to move from part-time to full-time work. This would afford women more financial independence, increasing their lifetime earnings and decreasing their chances of poverty at the time of divorce or widowhood.

<sup>6</sup> Cleveland, G., & Krashinsky, M. (1998a). Benefits and costs of good child care: The economic rationale for public investment in young children. Toronto: Child Care Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.

### Developing community capacity to support children


Canada's largest study on the influence of programs on children is Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBF). BBBF is a bit of an outlier in terms of studies looking at outcomes for children that can be attributed to preschool attendance. It is more of a study of community social cohesion; an examination of what happens when local service providers come together with families in the interest of children.

It does reveal something about the “dose effect”—how much is enough to change developmental trajectories for children. BBBF looked at eight communities, five focused on children from birth to 4 years of age (the younger child sites), and the other three on kindergarten-aged children to 8 years of age (the older child sites). Each site received a grant averaging \$580,000 each year over five years (1993–97) to enrich programming for children. The sites selected their own interventions, which varied over the course of the study. Program examples included: enriched in-school activities, homework support, after-school recreation, parenting classes, home visits, field trips, toy libraries, family vacation camps, child care referral and/or community kitchens and gardens.

A sample of children from each site was selected to assess the impact of the interventions and compared to a sample from similar communities that did not receive enriched interventions.

Long-term positive effects were found for the children who lived in communities with enriched programming for 4- to 8-year-olds, but not for those in the younger child site communities. The positive outcomes actually strengthened over time in the older child sites, as seen in measures collected when children were in grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. Children in the BBBF communities used health, special education, social services, child welfare and criminal justice services less than those in the control neighbourhoods. The reduction in the use of special education services alone saved more than \$5,000 per child by grade 12. Overall, government funders realized a cost-benefit of more than \$2 for each \$1 invested in the project.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Peters, R.D., Nelson, G., Petrunka, K., Pancer, S.M., Loomis, C., Hasford, J., Janzen, R., Armstrong, L., Van Andel, A. (2010). Investing in our future: Highlights of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research findings at Grade 12. Kingston, ON: Better Beginnings, Better Futures Research Coordination Unit.



Why did younger children receive no lasting benefits from the interventions, while older children did? One explanation is that the modest project investment per child did not provide enough intensity for younger children.<sup>8</sup> Program spending in the older children's sites was on top of investments already made in every child via the school system. Schools offered a universal platform so that enriched supports reached all children, while no equivalent service is available for children during their preschool years.

### **Child care as regional economic development**

Building on U.S. models of economic impacts, a 2004 study of Winnipeg's child care sector demonstrated its multifaceted role in a regional economy: as an economic sector in its own right with facilities, employees and consumption from other sectors; as labour force support to working parents; and for the long-term economic impact it has on the next generation of workers.<sup>9</sup>

Winnipeg's 620 child care facilities provide care to about 17 percent of the city's children. Gross revenues are over \$101 million a year; 3,200 people are employed with total earnings of \$80 million annually. Prentice found more jobs in child care than in the entire Manitoba film industry, and about as many as in the better-known bio-tech and health research or the energy and environment sectors, which are priority areas for development in the city.

Child care is also a job creator. For every child care job, 2.15 others were created or sustained. Child care also allows mothers and fathers to work. Parents with children in child care earn an estimated \$715 million per year. Overall, every \$1 invested in child care provided an immediate return of \$1.38 to the Winnipeg economy, and \$1.45 to Canada's economy.

In 2007, a rural, northern and Francophone region of Manitoba were analyzed. Those studies identified higher returns, with every \$1 of spending producing \$1.58 of economic effects.<sup>10</sup>

### **Preschool as economic stimulus**

Previous studies did not focus on the state as a beneficiary of child care investments. This study released on the heels of the 2008 collapse of the financial markets when governments were looking for stimulus projects, showed how investing in educational child care was a highly effective practice:

**Biggest job creator:** Investing \$1 million in child care would create at least 40 jobs, 43 percent more jobs than the next highest industry and four times the number of jobs generated by \$1 million in construction spending.

**Strong economic stimulus:** Every dollar invested in child care increases the economy's output (GDP) by \$2.30. This is one of the highest GDP multipliers of all major sectors.

**Tax generator:** Earnings from increased employment would send back 90 cents in tax revenues to federal and provincial governments for every dollar invested, meaning investment in child care virtually pays for itself.

The study also quantified the immediate costs of the sector's poor employment environment, which results in annual shortages of about 50,000 educators. The net cost to the Canadian economy was estimated at over \$140-million for the period 2001 to 2007. The shortage of educators also held parents back from entering the workforce. In total, it meant a loss of almost 50,000 person years of employment.

In addition, it assessed that attendance at preschool would still result in reduced grade failures, less reliance on special education and lower rates of smoking and early high school leaving among children from middle class homes. The study concludes that investments in early childhood programming pay for themselves, at the rate of 2.4 over the immediate and longer-term.<sup>11</sup>

8 Corter, C. & Peters, R. D. (2011). Integrated early childhood services in Canada: Evidence from the Better Beginnings, Better Futures (BBBF) and Toronto First Duty (TFD) projects. In R. E. Tremblay, M. Boivin & R. D. Peters, (Eds.), *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal, QC: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development.

9 Prentice, S., & McCracken, M. (2004). *Time for action: An economic and social analysis of childcare in Winnipeg*. Winnipeg, MB: Child Care Coalition of Manitoba., 2004.

10 Prentice, S. (2007a). *Franco-Manitoban childcare: Childcare as economic,*

*social, and language development in St.Pierre- Jolys*. Winnipeg, MB: Child Care Coalition of Manitoba. Prentice, S. (2007b). *Northern childcare: Childcare as economic and social development in Thomson*. Winnipeg, MB: Child Care Coalition of Manitoba. Prentice, S. (2007c). *Rural childcare: Childcare as economic and social development in Parkland*. Winnipeg, MB: Child Care Coalition of Manitoba.

11 Fairholm, R. (2009). *Understanding and addressing workforce shortages in the ECEC sector project*. Ottawa, ON: Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsc.csssge.ca/english/aboutus/completed.cfm#p5>



FIVE CANADIAN COST-BENEFIT ANALYSES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING				
Study	Year	Description	Benefits	Ratio
<b>Economic Consequences of Quebec's Educational Child Care Policy</b> <i>Fortin, Godbout, St-Cherny</i>	2011	Examined benefit of enhanced maternal employment due to low cost child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quebec gains \$1.5B in increased tax</li> <li>Pays \$340M less in social benefits</li> <li>Increased GDP by +1.7%</li> </ul>	1:1.05 for Quebec government 1:0.44 for Canadian government
<b>Better Beginnings, Better Futures</b> <i>Ray D. Peters, et al</i>	2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$580,000 per site for 5-years to enrich programming</li> <li>3 sites focused on children 4-8 years</li> <li>5 focused on children 0-4 years</li> <li>Matched similar neighbourhoods</li> <li>Children followed to grade 12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No difference for sites focused on 0-4</li> <li>Reduced use of health, social benefits, special education, child welfare and criminal justice in sites focused on children 4-8 years compared to control neighbourhoods</li> </ul>	1:2
<b>Workforce Shortages Socio-Economic Effects</b> <i>Robert Fairholm</i>	2009	• Analysis of potential benefits of public spending on child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every \$1 spent on operations creates \$2.02 benefit</li> <li>Every \$1 spent on capital produces \$1.47</li> <li>\$1M on operations creates 40 jobs</li> <li>\$1M on capital creates 29 jobs</li> </ul>	1:2.42
<b>Child Care as Economic and Social Development</b> <i>Susan Prentice</i>	2007	• Examined economic multipliers from existing ECE services in 4 communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector revenue \$101M/year</li> <li>Employs 3,200, annual earning \$80M</li> <li>Every child care job spins off 2.1 jobs</li> </ul>	1:1.38 local economy 1:1.4 Canadian economy
<b>The Benefits and Costs of Good Child Care</b> <i>Cleveland &amp; Krashinsky</i>	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estimated costs of universal ECE program for children 2-5 years</li> <li>Assumed fair remuneration for ECEs and 20% parent contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>170,000 jobs created</li> <li>Increased maternal labour force participation</li> <li>Lower social costs</li> </ul>	1:2 • \$0.75 in social savings • \$1.25 in increased tax revenues

### Early childhood programming: A no cost solution

Initiated in 1997, Quebec's early childhood services are popular. They reimburse both users and the larger society, not only in improved child outcomes, but also with unpredicted bonuses such as higher birth rates and reduced poverty levels.

Economist Pierre Fortin's<sup>12</sup> analysis of Quebec's child care system does not deal with these extras, or with the personal medium- or long-term benefits to the child attendees of children's programs. Rather, he focuses on changes in the mothers' labour force behaviour, setting out to answer three questions:

1. Who is working because low cost child care is available?
2. How much tax revenue are they bringing in?
3. How much less are they drawing on income-tested family benefits?

Publicly funded child care is not a requirement for women to work. Women's tenacity in piecing together underground arrangements takes the pressure off the state to find formal solutions. For some mothers, however, the absence of reliable, affordable child care is an impenetrable barrier. They stay out of the labour force altogether, delay returning to work until their children start school or they work part-time. In 1997, Quebec women were less likely than other Canadian women to work outside the home; today, they are the most likely. The study identified those women whose presence in the workforce could be attributed to available, affordable child care.

<sup>12</sup> Fortin, P., Godbout, L., St-Cerny, S. (2011). Impact of Quebec's universal low fee childcare program on female labour force participation, domestic income, and government budgets.



As of 2008, more than 60 percent of Quebec children ages 1–4 years had access to \$7-a-day, state-subsidized child care. By comparison, in other provinces, only 18 percent of children in this age group were in a licensed care. Quebec's program expansion has been rapid since its inception, reaching 220,000 spaces. Demand still outstrips supply, with full coverage predicted for 2014.

Quebec parents like their options. A 2009 survey found that 92 percent of children's centre users said the centre was their first preference for child care.<sup>13</sup> In addition, 66 percent of parents with other child care arrangements said they would prefer using a children's centre.<sup>14</sup>

Fortin's analysis found that in 2008, 70,000 more Quebec women were at work and their presence could be attributed to low cost child care. The majority of new labour entrants did not have post-secondary credentials therefore their earnings were modest. The availability and the low cost of care removed a prime barrier to their working.

This represented a 3.8 percent boost in women's employment, and a 1.8 percent increase in total provincial employment. Adjusting for hours of work and the productivity of the new entrants, it was calculated that their labour added 1.7 percent to Quebec's GDP. Increased family incomes generate more tax revenues and lower demand for government transfers and credits, with both the federal and Quebec governments benefitting. Parents with children in a \$7-a-day children's centre or after-school program do not qualify for Quebec's refundable tax credit, reducing the net cost of the credit to the province.

The federal government takes its share of tax paid by Quebec's working mothers, while its outlay for income-tested benefits is reduced. A further savings for the federal government is found in the Child Care Expense Deduction. Quebec parents enjoying reduced fee child care do not pay enough to claim the full CCED deduction.

Researchers estimated that for every public dollar spent on the early childhood program, the Quebec government collects \$1.05 in increased taxes and reduced family payments, while the federal government gets 44 cents. The study expects government revenues will increase over time as mothers in the 50-plus age group (those now least likely to work) are replaced by women with a stronger work history.

Fortin's analysis also challenges claims that Quebec's early years investments would be better targeted to low-income families. While not discounting that better efforts could be made to facilitate the inclusion of children from disadvantaged circumstances, Quebec has a greater percentage of children from low-income homes attending preschool than any other province, including provinces where public funding is solely targeted to the poor. Restricting the access of moderate- and middle-income families to affordable care would limit their abilities to earn income, reduce their tax contributions and add to their benefit claims, removing an important source of government income for social spending.

<sup>13</sup> ISQ, *Enquête sur l'utilisation 2009*, Table 6.8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, Tables 4.2 and 9.1





### **Wisely investing in early childhood**

These studies demonstrate the cost effectiveness of organizing early childhood programs so they stimulate children's early development as they allow parents to work. When expanding access to early childhood programming, most Anglo-American jurisdictions persist in maintaining the historic legislative and funding schism between public education programs, and child care. Leaving families to bridge the divide is not only frustrating for parents and children; it also denies taxpayers the full benefit of their investment.

Following the money confirms that effective early childhood programs are:

**Universal:** Reaching out to offer early childhood education to all children catches the substantial numbers of children across the socioeconomic spectrum displaying behavioural and learning vulnerabilities at school entry. Research shows difficulties become biologically embedded if supports are not timely and consistent. Later interventions are costly to both the child and the taxpayer.

**Available and affordable:** When early education and care is available and parent fees do not create a barrier to participation, public program costs are recouped through the enhanced labour force participation of parents.

**High-quality:** Quality in early childhood programming is non-negotiable if the mid- and long-term benefits to children and society are to be realized. Educators well trained in early childhood development and adequately resourced to respond to the individual needs of the children are the prime determinants of quality.

**Systems funding and management:** Integrating early education and care, both on-the-ground and at the systems level, avoids the added and wasteful expense of service duplications and gaps. Stable funding allows the planning for and building in of quality assurances. Effective management ensures equity of access by locating programs in low-income neighbourhoods, facilitating flexible enrollment and instituting fee schedules that acknowledge the financial constraints of some families. These measures help to remove work barriers for the most vulnerable families, and help ensure all children reach their full potential.

To receive maximum financial efficiencies and social benefits, states are advised to organize and fund programs to meet these goals.

## Conference presentations

Guðný Björk Eydal:

### Investments in childcare policies in the Nordic countries - is there a Nordic model?

Comprehensive childcare policies are one of the main characteristics of the Scandinavian or Nordic welfare model (e.g. Hatland & Bradshaw 2006, Eydal and Gíslason, 2013; Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011). The term childcare policies applies to support provided to parents caring for young children, regardless if the support refers to paid parental leave, cash grants for care or services (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998). Although each Nordic country has developed extensive childcare policies, their approaches differ and the aim of this presentation is to compare the childcare policies of the five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The presentation is based on previous publications by the author and Gíslason and Rostgaard (please see further the ref. list).

The aim of the childcare policies is to provide support and services to ensure children's best interest (as discussed in length in other presentations) and enhance gender equality and to provide both parents with opportunities to participate in the labour market and care for their children.

#### Parental Leave

The Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland, developed quite extensive schemes of paid parental leave during the immediate post-war period and according to Gauthier (1996), they emerged as leaders among the OECD countries in this regard. Furthermore, all the Nordic countries extended maternity leave schemes to include parental leave in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite these entitlements of both parents the mothers used the joint rights and in the 1990s all the Nordic countries established the independent rights of fathers to paternity leaves in order to increase father's participation of parental leaves. Norway was the first country in 1993 to implement a fathers quota, right to one month use-or-loose right to paid leave but the other countries have gradually also implemented such entitlements with the exception of Denmark.

**Table 1.**

**Number of weeks in paid parental leave and % of all days, used by fathers in 2011**

Weeks	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Total</b>	50	48	39	57	69
<b>Mothers quota</b>	18	18	13	14	8
<b>Fathers quota</b>	0	9	13	14	8
<b>Father with mother</b>	2	3	0	2	2
<b>% of total number of days used by fathers</b>	7.4	8.3	29.0*	17.8	24.5

(NOSOSKO, various years).

Aside from the fact that Iceland has the lowest total number of weeks and that Denmark has not fathers quota there are big similarities between the countries. The numbers of weeks of fathers quota have been increasing gradually in Finland, Norway and Sweden where it has been discussed to increase to 12 weeks. However some changes have been implemented or proposed, Iceland has enacted laws that will provide parents with 12 months, 5 for each parent and 2 joint months but the government has postponed the start of the increase of weeks that was supposed to start in 2014. Norway is discussing proposal of the government to make cut to the number of the weeks of quota for fathers from 14 to 10 weeks. Thus all the Nordic countries provide well paid leaves for parents to care for their new born children and the policies emphasise that both parents can care for their children, while only four out of five countries provide a special fathers quota in order to promote the father share in the care (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2013).



### Cash grants for care

Along with the political project of fatherhood there has simultaneously been another competing discourse growing, the discourse on the free choice of parents to choose the form of care they believe is best for their children (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011a). In order to ensure the parents with the possibilities to choose schemes of care for child-care or home care allowances have been implemented in some form in all the Nordic countries. These schemes have been politically debated and research shows that such benefits are mainly used by mothers, thus work against the goal of the paid parental leave schemes that emphasise participation of both parents in care.

Finland was the first Nordic country to enact a scheme on cash for care of children in 1985: When day care of young children became an issue in Finland in the 1960s, it was emphasised that parents would have the possibility to choose, between care in the home and care in day care institutions. Thus parents of children under the age of three could choose between day care or home care allowance. Norway enacted home care allowance in 1998 and Sweden in 2008 as part of cash for care policies that also included a gender equality bonus for parents that divided their paid parental leave equally (Rantalaiho, 2009). The take up rates in Finland have been high or 58% of children under the age of 3 years. In Norway the take up rates have gradually declined and the cash for care is now only paid with children age 1-2 years. In Sweden the take up has been very low, 2.5% in 2011, which is understandable keeping in mind the high number of weeks for paid parental leave and high volumes of day care for young children. The Danish system is on municipality level but the eligibility rules are complicated and demanding and very few parents do get such payments (see further Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011a). In Iceland there has been no legislation on home care allowances but few municipalities have enacted home care allowances (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2013).

The names, goals and the entitlements of the home care allowance schemes are quite different in character as following table 2 shows.

**Table 2.**

**Cash for care in Nordic countries.**

	% of AW 2011	Year introduced	Implemented by	Goals
<b>Denmark</b>	24.8	2002	Municipalities	Choice
<b>Finland</b>	10.8*	1985	State	Choice
<b>Norway</b>	9.4	1998	(+ municipalities) State	(Equality) Choice
				Equality
<b>Sweden</b>	10.7	2008	Municipalities	More time Choice

(Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011a). \*There are also additional means tested benefits in the Finish system, please see Rantalaiho (2009) for further info.

The schemes have been debated in Norway and Sweden but less in Finland however it has been proposed that parents should divide the benefits among themselves 50/50 in order to promote fathers participation in care and labour market participation among mothers.

### Daycare

During the 1960s and the 1970s, daycare became an important issue of social discourse within Nordic countries. All five Nordic countries have adopted legislation regarding daycare, Iceland in 1973 and Norway in 1975 (Sipilä, 1997). Subsidised daycare services were developed, based on universal rights, and public regulations were developed concerning the administration of these services. Furthermore, the law declared the municipalities responsible for developing this service (Broddadóttir et al., 1997, Sipilä, 1997). All the Nordic countries have increased the volume of day care but there are important differences among the countries, see table 3.

**Table 3.**

**Children aged 1-2 years and 3-5 years enrolled in daycare institutions and family daycare in the Nordic countries in 2011 shown as a percentage of all children in the age groups**

Years	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
<b>0</b>	19	1	8	4	-
<b>1-2</b>	91	41	80	80	71
<b>3-5</b>	97	74	96	96	97
<b>Total 0-5</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>74</b>

Source: NOSOSKO, 2012.

A more country specific pattern can be observed for the children aged 1-2, Denmark offers day-care for 91% of that age group compared to only 41% in Finland

compared to 80% in Iceland and Norway and only 71% in Sweden. The figures for the age group 3-5 years are very similar 96-7% except for Finland 74%. The main explanation for the differences is the high take up of the home care allowances.

### Nordic care model?

The Nordic countries do share common culture and goals of the child care policies to promote children's best and encourage gender equality, but at a closer look reveal important differences (table 4). Iceland provides the lowest number of weeks and despite quite high volumes of day care for 1-2 years there exist a care gap left for the parents to bridge between paid parental leave and day care. All the other countries provide parents with about one year or more. Another important difference among the countries' leave schemes is the difference regarding the fathers quota, Iceland and Norway both with three months- but both are changing- Iceland towards an increase while Norway is probably facing a decrease. In Sweden it has been discussed to increase to three months quota and Finland has gradually been increasing the number of weeks. In Denmark the government has decided not to fulfil its own goals to implement such rights. Volumes of the day care for 1-2 year old is by far highest in Denmark and lowest in Finland due to the high take up of the cash for care that also influences the volumes of day care for 3-5 years.

**Table 4.**  
**Child care policies in the Nordic countries**

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
<b>0-1 year</b>	PPL (50 weeks) ECEC (19%)	PPL (53 weeks) ECEC (1%)	PPL (39 weeks) ECEC (8%)	PPL (59 weeks) ECEC (4%)	PPL (69 weeks) ECEC (-)
<b>1-2 year</b>	ECEC (91%)	ECEC (41%) Cash for care (58%)	ECEC (80%) Care gap – private solutions	ECEC (80%) Cash for care (25%)	ECEC (71%) Paid parental leave Cash for care (2.1%)
<b>3-5 year</b>	ECEC (97%)	ECEC (74%)	ECEC (96%)	ECEC (96%)	ECEC (97%)

Thus, while all the countries have promoted, quite strongly, the dual-earner/carer model the home care allowances in Finland and Norway- and the lack of care support in Iceland between the paid parental leave and day care has contributed to mothers staying out of

labour market while caring for their young children. Fathers take up of both paid parental leave and home care allowances is low but research shows that fathers quotas have been a successful way to promote fathers take up of leave and increased their participation in care of their young children.

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**Jan Kampmann:**

## **Can we afford not to invest in the early childhood education sector?**

My approach will not be an argument proving the immediate or long term economic benefits of further developing the early childhood education services, but more some considerations concerning the national general benefits of a continuous qualifying of the day care sector. A central argument will be, that high quality institutions are important and necessary for strengthening children's constitution of identity, social competences and a general ability to handle how to be a child and a human being in a modern world with expectations regarding the children's ability to self-government and being a part of a democratic community at the same time. Partly, this will be of enormous importance for children's preparation for entering the school system, and partly it will be of vital importance regarding strengthening the general inclusion of children into what in the Nordic countries more and more seems to be a "normal childhood". While the day care systems or early childhood education centers in the Nordic countries until fairly recently was seen as necessary for freeing parents to enter the labor market, today the primary challenge for the day care sector is not only to provide care for the children, while their parents are at work, but to be a central actor in securing an optimal socialization of children into society. This change has also consequences for our way of looking at the costs and benefits when evaluating the whole sector.





**Arna Hólmfríður Jónsdóttir:**

## **Effects of economic crisis on schools with reference to Iceland: How can early childhood education be protected?**

### **Introduction**

Study on the effects of the economic collapse 2008 and onward on schools and education in Iceland was carried out by the *Centre for Research on School Leadership, Innovation and Evaluation* at the School of Education, University of Iceland. The data gathering took place 2011 to 2013. Data was gathered in three municipalities at all school levels. The first municipality was in an agricultural area, the second one in fishing and service area, and the third one was the capital city. In this article findings from the first two municipalities will be introduced. When analysing the data a definition of crisis within education from Pepper, London, Dishman and Lewis (2012) is used where a school crisis is seen as “an event or a series of events that threaten a school’s core values or foundational practices” (p. 6). Further, based on the experience from Iceland, it will be discussed how early childhood education can be protected in times of economic crisis and cut-downs and what seem to be the main concerns.

### **The economic collapse in 2008**

As is well known in the international context since the Icelandic bank system collapsed in 2008, there has been a deep financial crisis in Iceland and therefore the economic circumstances of many families and children have changed dramatically in recent years. Before the collapse there was a huge economic expansion, which has been called by some the ‘greediness urge’ (Óskarsdóttir, 2009). During that period ‘modern Vikings’, mainly male, were expanding their activities, buying banks and firms throughout the world, bringing about consequences that the Icelandic public is now paying for.

But there is more to it than that. From the Second World War, no OECD country has experienced as great economic fluctuations (or ups and downs) in national product as Iceland (Jónsson and Helgason, 2013). It is reflected in constantly changing consumption, which has been even more unstable than the national product. From 1995 until 2007 Icelanders experienced

more expansion than ever which ended in the economic collapse or crash in 2008. In this period Icelanders increased their consumption more than any other European country. The consumption can not only be explained by higher wages but also with more debt accumulation, or more borrowing of money. In 2008 debt accumulation of Icelandic homes had grown up to 230% of incomes and Icelanders were there in second place within Europe, accompanied by the Netherlands. Only Danish homes had more debts but their consumption were far less than was the case with their Icelandic sister nation (Jónsson and Helgason, 2013).

If we focus on the pre-schools during the period of expansion before the collapse, untrained staff and some pre-school teachers left the pre-schools because of better paid jobs elsewhere; there was a shortage of staff and constant staff turnover. The staff were required to work overtime to keep the pre-schools open so parents could go to work and means were found beside the formal wage contracts to keep the staff satisfied.

Local authorities run pre- and compulsory schools in Iceland so their policy is important. After the crash the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland made an agreement on the priorities that schools should have during the recession. It is pointed out that basic services such as the compulsory school, and to a certain extent the pre-school as well, should be protected as much as possible (Samband Íslenskra sveitarfélaga, 2008)

In January 2009 a new government of Social Democratic Alliance and the Left Green Movement said in their policy statement:

It is important to be on guard for the educational level of the nation. Free basic education is the key to social equality and the prosperity of the nation for time to come ... An attempt will be made to secure the welfare and well-being of children in pre- and primary (compulsory) schools with a strong cooperation



between the state and local authorities and the ideology of inclusive schooling will be honoured (*Samstarfsyfirlýsing ríkisstjórnar Samfylkingarinnar og Vinstrihreyfingarinnar-græns framboðs, 2009*).

The policy was thus to maintain core services for children/students in the wake of the collapse. For example the government decided that lessons in the basic (compulsory) schools should not be reduced. It is important to have these declarations or guiding principles in mind when focusing on the impact of the crisis on schools in Iceland in the wake of the collapse of the banks.

### Definition of the concept *crisis*

There is not much literature addressing economic crisis like Icelandic community and schools have been dealing with and the examples or case studies describing school crisis is most often referring to different kinds of crises, as physical, regarding human resources, reputational, related to violence or natural disaster. Further, it is argued in the literature that schools and school districts must observe crisis-trends (Gainey, 2009, p. 267) and ensure that the school systems are crisis-ready for both traditional school crises (like discipline issues) or crises that originate elsewhere (like economic crises). Crisis-management is thus seen as vital. Icelandic citizens have said, when looking in the rear window, that the collapse of the banks and crisis following that event, was probably predictable. Although it can be argued that it was impossible for school leaders to foresee in October 2008 how the school life would become in the wake of the crash.

In a recent attempt to conceptualise a theory of crisis within education Pepper, London, Dishman and Lewis (2010) propose a three-part unified theory. First a school crisis is "an event or a series of events that threaten a school's core values or foundational practices" (p. 6); 2) A school crisis is "obvious in its manifestation but born from complex and often unclear or uncontrollable circumstances" (p. 7); and 3) A school crisis demands urgent decision-making. All these three parts are relevant in this report but first and foremost the first part is used as an analytical tool.

### Cyclical model of crisis management strategy

Smith and Riley (2012) have put forward a model of how crisis should be managed in organisations. Decisive leadership is needed and communication is vital. In the process the effects of the crisis is detected, prevented or prepared for, it is resolved in some way, and at last recovered and is hopefully bringing with it some learning. The steps of the model are followed when reporting on the findings from the research on the impact of the crisis on schools and education in Iceland, first in general, and then focusing on the early childhood education.

### Focus of the study

The focus of the study in the two municipalities was on:

- How much influence has the crisis/ recession generated in schools?
- How have schools responded to the situation?
  - What has been cut down?
  - How has the recession influenced management, organisation and structure, curriculum, education etc.?
- Has it stimulated something positive in the operation of the schools?
- Is there much difference between schools in different municipalities?

### Research method

Case studies were carried out in two municipalities in pre-schools (age 1 to 5), primary schools (age 6 to 16) and upper secondary schools (age 16 to 20). The municipalities were chosen because they were known to be hardly hit in the economic crash and crisis.

In the rural municipality, placed in an agricultural area, (municipality 1), the data collection was as follows:

Municipality 1	Number of schools	Data collection: Interviews Focus group interview
<b>Authorities</b>		Major Supervisor of schools
<b>Pre-schools</b>	2	Head teachers (principals), groups of teachers, group of parent representatives
<b>Basic school</b>	1	Same plus assistant head teacher, group of other staff, group of students
<b>Upper secondary school (run by the state)</b>	1	Head teacher, financial officer, group of teachers, group of students

In the service and fishing community (municipality 2) the data collection was as follows:

Municipality 1	Number of schools	Data collection: Interviews Focus group interview
<b>Authorities</b>		Superintendent
<b>Pre-schools</b>	1	Head teacher, group of teachers and other staff, group of parents
<b>Basic school</b>	1	Same plus assistant head teacher, group of other staff, group of students
<b>Upper secondary school (run by the state)</b>	1	Head teacher, group of teachers, group of students

**Main findings: The crisis, detected, prevented and prepared for**

When analysing the data according to Smith and Riley’s (2012) model of how crisis should be managed in organisations we first turn the attention to how the schools have detected, prevented and prepared themselves for the crisis.

The crisis in municipality 1 was partly foreseen in 2006, which made the municipality and the schools better prepared for cut-downs. The economy in the municipality had been sliding some years before the collapse, factories had been closed down and families had moved away resulting in a lower number of students. Even the local bank collapsed before the national crash. This situation made the crisis a bit softer because the schools had already gone through some cut-downs, they were prepared but simultaneously the crisis was more long-term.

In municipality 2, the crash and the crisis in the wake came more as a surprise with fewer former warnings than in municipality 1. This step was thus more unpredictable and short termed.

**Municipality 1: The crisis resolved**

The pre-school teachers were already very tired of cut-downs since 2006. What they thought was the worst action was the reduction equivalent to three whole positions of staff, among them the middle managers, and the cut-downs of the special education, not the least because before the collapse they advertised the pre-school education as having special focus on children with special needs.

The difference compared to the basic school was that the pre-school head teachers and staff was more united in their actions and discussed it more in all levels of the hierarchy. They did not foresee when the cutdowns would stop but said that they could not keep on like this much longer.

	Contain, resolve
<b>Pre-schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of opening hours</li> <li>• Reduction in middle management</li> <li>• Reduction of most positions rather than dismissal of staff</li> <li>• Cut down of overtime, meetings moved into the daily work (2 hours added later because of parents´ protest)</li> <li>• Reduction of substitute positions (the head teacher did more work in the children’s groups)</li> <li>• Less energy devoted to curriculum and evaluation activity</li> <li>• Reduced special education support</li> <li>• Cut down of all materials</li> <li>• Cut down of professional development of teachers</li> </ul>
<b>The head teachers would have liked to have more influence in the process but the staff group was united and discussed the means</b>	

**Municipality 2: The crisis resolved**

In the municipality there had been high unemployment for some years before the crash of the banks and it could be expected that the municipality and the schools had suffered from crisis and cut-downs. The main difference between the municipalities was that in municipality 2 positions of middle management and the staff with children were not reduced. Further, they were getting back after three years some of what had been cut down before, like the amount for buying new material and the wages of the pre-school head teachers. The head teachers were involved in the process the whole time and they suggested most of the actions. Although the cut-downs were more than they expected, they were more content than the pre-school head teachers in the rural area. What they were really annoyed about was related to the professional development of the staff and cutdown of meetings.



	Contain, resolve
Pre-schools The pre-school head teachers were involved in the process the whole time and made suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of opening hours (closed 16:15)</li> <li>• Increasing in number of children (had been decreased before the collapse)</li> <li>• 10% cut down of the head teachers' wages for three years</li> <li>• Reduction of substitute positions (8,33% to 6%)</li> <li>• Cut down of professional development and of overtime, meetings were moved into the daily work</li> <li>• Position of the pre-school councillor cut down (has now been advertised)</li> <li>• Less money for food</li> <li>• Cut down of finances for new material but it has been restored</li> </ul>

### Influences of the crisis on Early Childhood Education

In the following table there is a summary of the influences of the crisis in the two municipalities:

Municipality 1	Municipality 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy was that the crisis should not affect the children's education, but although the teachers were not content with the daily work.</li> <li>• They felt they were protecting the basic needs but not working as educators.</li> <li>• They were especially discontent with the restructuring of the special teaching.</li> <li>• Although, they are planning a developmental project.</li> <li>• The parents did not feel the changes so much but were worried about the staff's endurance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The policy was that the crisis would not affect the children's education, and they were content with the results.</li> <li>• They felt that the crisis and cutdowns had not influenced the children's education.</li> <li>• They were working on a common developmental project in the municipality and needed more time for discussions.</li> <li>• The parents did not complain and admired the leading of the pre-school community and the coherence in the staff group.</li> </ul>

### Municipality 1 and 2: Recovering, learning

In the following table the learning of the crisis is summed up. The main difference between the municipalities was that in municipality 2 the recovering had already begun and there were more optimism that in municipality 1. The crisis was already more long termed there and the staff was about to lose their patience.

Municipality 1 Recover, learn	Municipality 2 Recover, learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff agreed to the cut downs for certain period of time, but said they could not do this forever</li> <li>• Head teachers did not expect additional funding in the near future</li> <li>• Different (more) collaboration existed between staff and parents</li> <li>• Tighter collaboration among staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recovering had begun</li> <li>• It was more easy to cut down as the situation was good before</li> <li>• More stability in the staff group</li> <li>• Collaboration of pre-school head teachers increased loyalty</li> <li>• People were optimistic, the community more relaxed and the staff thought about positive and enjoyable things</li> </ul>

### Was there a pre-school crisis?

According to Pepper et al., (2010) a school crisis is "an event or a series of events that threaten a school's core values or foundational practices" (2010, p. 6). In can be argued that overall basic functions of schools in Iceland has been protected, especially in the basic schools as it is best protected by law and there the disruptions were minor to the general running and basic values of schools. This has been possible as prior to the crisis Iceland was spending relatively much on pre- and primary education and ranked high among the OECD countries in 2007 (OECD, 2007). In the pre-schools there were more disruption of the daily work but the situation was different in these two municipalities that were studied, as there were signs of pre-school crisis in municipality 1 but not in municipality 2.



### How can the early childhood education be protected in times of crisis and cut-downs?

Iceland is the only Nordic country that has been suffering of economic crisis in wake of a bank collapse in recent years although i.e. Finland has gone earlier through similar period. Although, signs of economic rationalization and cut-downs are well known in Nordic and international contexts. If nations are going to protect the education of children and students in the educational system the learning from this research can be put forward in the following elements: The children's education should be prioritised and protected formally in the society, collaboration of stakeholders is crucial, especially teachers and parents, pre-school head teachers should involve every teacher/staff member into the discussion about means, thus top down strategy should be avoided. It is also a very important action to spare reduction of positions of staff educating the children and cut downs should be organised for defined period so recovering can be seen and felt. Where there is a slow recovery within pre-schools and other institutions in the Icelandic society it is increasing stress and irritation.

In many ways the Icelandic authorities have done well but early childhood education could be put higher in general on the agenda. The short version of solution, not only in times of crisis, but in all times is: Where there is a will, there is a way.

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**Eva Siljehag:**

## **Pre-school teachers and special educators – a shared democratic mandate?**

Pre-school teachers create a qualitative context around children with special needs (Siljehag, 2012). But are all voices heard? A critical scientific special pedagogy needs to analyze and describe different kinds of perspectives (Siljehag, 2007, 2010; Helldin, 2010). What does this mean?

In Sweden pre-schools have had their own national curriculum since 1998. From that year pre-school institutions belong to the Ministry of Education. This means that all children from age 6 to 16 are included in an educational system. Pre-school teachers have since then a responsibility for the care of the children and of their learning. All children and each child have the right to learn (UNESCO, 1994). The institutions have the obligation to evaluate the pedagogical work. The National Curriculum emphasizes this and writes in their documents how school pedagogies are used in many pre-schools (Skolverket, 2008; 2010). They point out that pre-schools do not have the same obligation as schools. The National Agency highlights that several individual development plans in pre-schools describe special goals of individual knowledge for each child. Pre-school teachers are however not allowed to individually assess each child and special knowledge goals. The National Curriculum was revised in 2010. Mathematics and languages was given new attention. The National Agency for Education highlighted the need for skills training of pre-school teachers.

Our Department (The Department of Special Education, University of Stockholm) was given an assignment to educate pre-school teachers. We created a course and the content was the perspective of special education needs together with languages, communication and mathematics. We implemented the course during 2009-2011. The Swedish Government paid the local authorities. The institutions got the possibility to employ supply teachers. Pre-school teachers were studying half-time in our department.

The students wrote reflections during the course. With their permission I used and analyzed all their reflections (total 1000 pages, 2009-2011). I was looking for some special situations. The pre-school teachers wrote a lot about creative activities. I wanted situations that included both this, mathematics and languages. The situations should also include all children and children with or without special needs. I created small stories from the reflections. Some of them described how the pre-school teachers are searching for children's experiences and interests. Some other stories tell about how the students and the children learn mathematics and languages.

### **Engrossed children**

The examples describe how children with functional impairment, very quiet children or children who communicate with sign support gained motivation and courage in the creative activities. For the first time some of them took the role in a play and another very quiet child started to retell a story. The students described it as a special breakthrough for some kids. I emphasise how certain children "show themselves" and act "independently in the situation" (Siljehag, 2012). In this situation the children were "engrossed" and concentrated (Gadamer, 2002). Peers and the pre-school teachers were the recipients. One of the students writes: "He understood the whole concept, both the form and content. I never saw such a happy child when he received the applause" (Siljehag, 2012). A qualitative context was the conditions for a breakthrough. This included a consciously critical special needs analysis from the students. The work requires awareness of interpretation procedures, meaning of analytical work and area knowledge. But in my final analysis, I pointed out that the children's own thoughts of the events or lessons were not included in the students' reflections. Did we take the children's learning for granted? Their peers saw them act for the first time. Perhaps this means a new role and new learning for the child and for the peers? Is it possible to find out how the children describe this? Special education situations also need knowledge about how to collaborate. This applies both to adults and to children.



### **The impact of collaboration**

The students see in their reflections their team as a resource for giving attention to all children. They underline the importance of having knowledge about every child. This makes it possible to use everyday situations in the pre-school. It means finding time and space for discussions together with the children about different kinds of measures. In these situations it is also possible to make visible how different kinds of special needs are expressed in the group of children. According to the students, it is important how responding to and dealing with these situations is expressed by both the educators and peers. In such situations competence in special education and needs is necessary. The students highlight how these deliberations and measures that follow can show all children and every child how inclusive relationships take place.

### **Bringing and implementing knowledge together**

Pre-school teachers also work together with other professionals. Pre-schools include a lot of people; parents, children and the staff. Since the early seventies the policy documents include written directives regarded necessary to give guidance and support to the staff. It is assumed that different specialists will connect their knowledge to the pre-school and their environment. In the daily work the pre-school teachers and their teams have the mandate to implement different kinds of interventions. It is valuable to work together with other professionals but some of the students wonder about having to take care of this valuable knowledge and at the same time have the responsibility for all the children and the curriculum. One of the students describes this:

*In my work together with other professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists and physiotherapists, I see some difficulties. We are expected to collaborate around the children and each of the professionals highlights their own specific knowledge. It's not easy to bring this knowledge together and combine it with our daily work with the curriculum.*

In pre-school, teams normally have a lot of experience and competence about how to collaborate. Here the student is calling for collaboration with the specialists. The goal is to get an overview and a holistic picture

from the specialists. *Is this part of the job for a special educator? Is it possible to collaborate in a democratic way?*

An ongoing essay-project in our department made it possible for some students to collaborate with pre-school teachers about if and how some pre-schools are working to get an including environment for all children (Siljehag m. fl., script, 2014). The project combines Participatory Action Research (PAR, Boog et al., 2008) with tool in evaluating and improving Quality in Pre-schools; Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) Evaluation and Development in Pre-schools (Andersson, 1999; Andersson & Löfgren, 2010) and conversations with pre-school teachers and children (Halldén, 2003; Pramling Samuelsson m. fl., 2011; Tangen, 2008). They were writing their last essay to obtain a professional degree in Special Education needs. The essay-writers found a lot of happy children and satisfied children. But the children also expressed several suggestions for changes. This was something the pre-school teachers became aware of in the conversation together with the essay-writers and also how the children could take effective part in the developmental work. Together with the essay-writers they problematised if the activities and the environment were adapted to each child. The studies showed that this was a deliberate task for all the pre-school teachers. But it took time and was demanding to be aware of every child in a group of 20 and at the same time see what occurs among the children (Cf. Lutz, 2006; Palla, 2009). One child expresses frustration about a play that did not include his own choices: "It is not allowed to make choices in the playing, another child distributing the roles". Pre-school teachers in the studies above and in our courses express the need for time to reflect. It is important for teams to listen to each child and critically discuss and interpret the situations. Children with special needs have to be allowed to express themselves and make an impact in the activities (Cf. Tangen, 2008). One child told the essay-writer the feeling of alienation when he had to leave his peers: "Mother tongue lessons are not such fun. You have to leave the group when you perhaps would rather be playing". This raised the issue of what can be practiced in the group? To be developed was, e.g. according to the essay-writers; guidance for interaction in the play, support to silent children and bilingual



children, extra gymnastics and support in mathematic learning. Materials needed to be adapted to different degrees of difficulties. Both the children and the pre-school teachers emphasized time for relaxing, peace and quiet.

### **Pre-school teachers and special educators – a shared democratic mandate?**

Special educational implications from these examples above show that several levels in an educational society have to support all children and each child. International and national policy documents give every child the right to be educated and to learn. Those examples describe how the government, the local authorities and the pre-school organization made it possible to educate both pre-school teachers in special education and pre-school teachers to be special educators. The examples also show that education can make impact on both a working team and children. An assignment as special educator involves collaborating with the management, to know different cultures at pre-schools with the intention to look for questions and expectation from the field. It also includes network contacts inside and outside the pre-school (Siljehag, 2007). Traditional special education only highlights individual problems. Today, the special education research includes different knowledge areas and disciplines. It means that a variety of theories and perspectives are used to understand and investigate different situations. Both pre-school teachers and special educators meet each other in those situations. To make the context visible they both use observations and talks and a rating scale. Their standpoint is participatory action research to make it possible to learn about the child's world. Some of the children with special needs show themselves in front of their peers for the first time. When children were asked about their environment at the pre-school unexpected proposals for changes came from children.

What happens then? How can pre-school teachers and special educators together ensure each child (with special needs) that their appearance and proposals make impact among peers and in the environment? This is a democratic process that each child should take part in. It means that both pre-school teachers and special educators have to learn about inclusion, participation and democratic processes (Ainscow et al., 2012; Allen, 2003). In the view of special education special educators are considered as "The Spider in the Web". The special education societal assignment includes counteracting all kinds of alienation and marginalisation of every child. Social justice needs to be discussed and critically investigated with all stakeholders in a special education context (Helldin, 2010). The feeling of inclusion and participation comes "from our hearts perhaps, of being part of something such as an idea [...] inclusion therefore is about ourselves" (Ballard, 2003). A shared democratic mandate makes it possible for special educators to contribute to a transformative pedagogy that allows each child to show themselves on their own terms together with their peers (Siljehag, 2012). It is not reasonable to place special education universal service obligation solely on pre-school teachers. Participant-oriented work together with participatory action research are searching for useful knowledge in collaboration with involved people. This kind of knowledge is called inclusive and not exclusive (Boog et al., 2008; Holmstrand, 2006). Pre-school teachers and special educators have to share all children's and each child's world.

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Anne-Lise Arnesen:

## Inclusion and challenges in Early Childhood Education and Care with reference to Norwegian politics and practices

### Introduction

The aim of this presentation is to explore inclusion with regard to kindergarten as part of the wider societal and educational political landscape in Norway. I raise the following questions:

Which contradictions and tensions exist in Norwegian policies and practices regarding inclusion in the ECEC field within a 'knowledge society' perspective?

What challenges can be identified in view of increasing emphasis on cognitive dimensions of child development and standards, assessment and language testing of small children? Is it correct to say that we are heading towards 'pedagogics of suspicion' rather than embracing diversity?

Finally: What kind of knowledge and research as basis for inclusive practices in kindergartens do we need? How may kindergartens with a diversity of children and inclusive practices?

I start by looking at current changes in the ECEC field and what we may mean by the term inclusion, and what it 'looks' like.

### Changes in the field of ECEC

Along with the other Nordic countries Norway has been held up as a prominent example of a social democratic welfare state, characterized by a relative strength and autonomy of political solutions and universalistic (Esping-Andersen, 1996) and inclusive policies. The neo-liberal wave of the last decades, however, associated with the 'knowledge society', has had considerable impact in all the Nordic countries. During the last decade ECEC in Norway has undergone radical changes. The administrative responsibility for kindergartens has been transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research, accompanied by

reforms and curriculum adjustments. We have seen a fast expansion of the number of children attending kindergarten, with a particular growth of children below 3 years of age. Today almost all children between age 3 – 5 attend kindergarten (97 %). A steadily increasing number of children are reported as being in risk of developing language and behavioral problems, and provisions of special educational assistance in kindergarten are growing (NOU 2009: 18). These changes must be looked into and scrutinized from a perspective of marginalization and exclusion/inclusion.

### What does inclusion mean?

Inclusion is a term with multiple connotations and implications. It is a concept that takes on different meanings depending on what perspective is used and whether it is seen as an end point or as a process. According to UNESCO inclusion is defined as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children through increasing participation in play and learning activities, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (ECEC).

Actively enhancing inclusion also implies not only involving children with special needs to take part in the regular activities, but also actively fight against processes of exclusion - and to expand what is taken to be 'regular' by challenging the environment in using creativity and inventiveness to find alternative solutions to organize activities in which all can take part. I see inclusion and exclusion as two sides of the same coin (simultaneous processes), that can be analysed from multiple perspectives (see models in Arnesen, 2012). Developing inclusive environments for all children involve *complex and dynamic processes* in which political, institutional, relational and ethical (subjective) dimensions interact.





Reviewing research literature on inclusion, we may look upon the notion of inclusion/exclusion from different analytical perspectives, by which inclusion is regarded as

- a *political concept* (e.g. equal access to social goods, participation, belonging to a social community)
- a *value* and a *basic principle* in a democratic society
- *rights* or *obligations*
- *norms* that creates distinctions between ‘the normal’ and ‘the deviant’
- *characteristics* of an environment, pedagogical practice or a person (inclusive, tolerant, open)
- modes of human *interaction (face-to-face)*
- *institutional practices*
- *participation* and *belonging*
- a *desire* to participate and belong
- *feelings* or *experiences* of participation and belonging

This list is by no means comprehensive, but may still provide an indication of what may be contained in the concept. However, inclusion, as all social phenomena has to be contextualised in time and place in order to be apprehended.

### Kindergarten in a ‘knowledge society’ – a political perspective

Political processes of change are always complex. Political governance in democratic societies is brought about through power struggles, negotiations and compromises. There are battles about the definitions, how reality and problems shall be described and understood, and what should be regarded as desirable and with which measures the policy will be realized.

I see the ‘knowledge society’ as one of several possible notions and descriptions of our current society, but by focussing on this particular dimension of society, some particular questions and problems regarding inclusion/exclusion emerge.

The ‘knowledge society’ is underpinned by an economic rationale, which is an important impetus for the most recent reforms and societal changes, also influencing the educational landscape. The European dream of becoming “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (Lisbon 2000), has called for a transformation and modernisation of social welfare and education systems in the region, including kindergarten, by directing the attention “... towards academic standards in school, and *cultivating the cognitive dimensions of children* for the benefit of the individual and in order to be competitive as a nation in the global market” (European Council, Lisbon, March 2000). Despite poor results in the wake of financial crisis in most of the EU countries, the discourse and agenda of the ‘knowledge society’ remain and the impact on educational policies is still substantial.

The tension between different policies, as can be illustrated by the following model of patterns of education policy based on different welfare systems (cf. Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006).

	<b>Social democratic policy</b>	<b>Liberal/specialist education policy</b>
<b>Instrumentality of education</b>	Stronger emphasis on socio-cultural functions	Stronger emphasis on economic functions
<b>Value basis of education</b>	Comprehensive values. Individual development of within a framework of social community and social security. Solidarity and social responsibility form a sound basis for the use of human resources. A holistic understanding of the child.  Universalist: open to all	Market values. Elitism and early differentiation. Individual development based on individual rights, private responsibility and individual choice. Empowerment and competition as a sound basis for use of human resources. Preparation for school.  Particularist: aiming at the “needy”.
<b>Initiating changes in education</b>	Central state and politics play a crucial role	Initiation by political, internal and external actors

(Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006)



Education, including ECEC, is supposed to serve several masters simultaneously. Social welfare and economic motives generally exist side by side in education politics, but their relative importance varies over time and between countries. There are tensions between different values and traditions. A tradition founded on a holistic approach to care and learning should be sustained, but at the same time the kindergarten's content and tasks must be developed in accordance with new knowledge and research.' (St. meld. nr. 41 (2008-09) *Kvalitet i barnehagen*).

### **Research and knowledge based practices for inclusion– which research and what kind of knowledge**

'New knowledge and research' as a basis for practice is bringing with it a sense of something stable that is stored somewhere, something that has been collected, ready for dissemination and which can work as a guide for practitioners. However, knowledge is never stable, neutral or objective, and can very seldom work as a guide for practice. Working with people, particularly with children, requires sensitivity, reflectivity, and knowledgeable and ethical judgments that go beyond reference to research. Knowledge in its multiple forms, e.g. "common sense knowledge", "experience", "tacit knowledge", "reflective knowledge", "practical knowledge", and "research-based knowledge", may be seen as imbedded in the professional gaze as resources that always should be negotiated, discussed, and reflected upon.

Hence, acting in a professional field in societal institutions such as kindergarten should include exploring the *social relations of knowledge* and ways of knowing. Furthermore, it will enhance discussions about power; about who is authorized to define particular types of knowledge (Arnesen, 2003). In issues of inclusion/exclusion this opens up important questions e.g. about the power to define what the problems are, how they should be understood, and the status of e.g. parents, children themselves and experts in determining the need, help and provisions for individual children. The knowledge (new research) about children and disabilities may be important to professional work for inclusion, but equally important

is to explore the intersection between all the elements and social and institutional relations that are involved in the children's life in kindergarten.

International research indicates that early intervention is positive for children's lingual and cognitive development, particularly for children from disadvantaged homes or in situations of child poverty, ill-health and special needs. However, these results should be treated with great care (Solli, 2012) due to different cultural contexts, differences in groups that are studied and theoretical and methodological approaches. The results from longitudinal effect studies do only give evidence of a *general effect* of early intervention, without indicating what features or elements in kindergarten that actually facilitate future school success. (St.meld. nr. 23, p. 25, Esping-Andersen, 2007).

It is agreed that any benefit depends on *the quality* of the ECEC provision: close relations, secure environment, adequate and well educated staff, well planned activities and emphasis on the social and emotional development of the children (OECD, 2001). This is certainly also important qualities for enhancing inclusive environments (Solli, 2012). Starting Strong II (OECD 2006) underlines that kindergartens without strong government investment, regulations and supervisions, tend to remain disorganized and of low quality. Their conclusion is that the didactical classroom does not support effectively the holistic development of children. This should be a warning to the Nordic states against the current tendencies of transforming kindergartens to include more formal training in increasingly more 'school-like' settings.

We always see from a particular perspective, in a particular historical time and place. Which questions are worth exploring and what knowledge is given priority are both a political and economic issues. Education, ECEC and inclusion have traditionally not had high priority in research (i.e. at universities, the National Board of Research [www.forskningradet.no](http://www.forskningradet.no)). During the last couple of decennia, with the rise of the new political agenda, educational issues, particularly *learning*, and ECEC issues in terms of *early intervention* have gained much more attention, also in research programmes. However, inclusion/exclusion is still not a high-stake issue (Solli, 2012).



### **Standards, testing and assessment of small children - a pedagogy of suspicion?**

An increasing attention on social inequalities and underachievement in school has actualised the importance of a good start for all, and kindergarten has become a strategic site for intervention. Intervention in itself is not a problem. But how intervention is performed, its objectives, its context, by whom it is undertaken and on what kind of knowledge it is executed must be critically scrutinized.

Kindergarten in Norway has to a great extent been defined by non-standardization. It has traditionally enjoyed substantial freedom to develop as a good childhood environment, and its unique nature of being different from school has been emphasized and praised (OECD, 2001). Setting up detailed achievement goals for individual children should be avoided (Framework Plan, 2006). The institutional regulations involved when children need special educational assistance, will single out and introduce a different order for those children and families that will fall under the suspicious gaze (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2010).

There is a proliferation of high-stakes testing at all levels, not only in schools but also increasingly, in kindergartens. Yet, relative few tests or assessment tools on linguistic development that are in use today meet acceptable standards of reliability and validity (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011). This may not be a problem if the staff have the competence to use them in reflective ways in combination with assessing the children in a variety of settings in the kindergartens (Pedagogical documentation) in which the environments are also under scrutiny. Unreliable testing or lack of adequate follow-up, may cause harmful labelling and increase the risk of marginalizing the children.

Equally important, by giving priority of particular dimensions of the child (language, cognitive dimensions) to be identified, the staff in kindergartens will become more conscious of these dimensions and direct their attention to those areas of learning, often to the exclusion of others of equal educational importance. Hence the benefits of providing effective measures for the youngest children who “need extra stimulation” may be hampered by an instrumental and

narrow discourse about readiness for school which is increasingly heard in the early childhood field (Bennett, 2007).

Assessment and high-stakes testing take time, and time as well as competent staff is needed to support the children that are assessed to have special needs, and in particular to give a provisions that will not isolate the children from the regular environment. In some kindergartens staff consider themselves insufficiently resourced to undertake the work required to do the testing or assessments, and in particular to provide the kinds of intervention necessary for developing an inclusive environment for all (Arnesen, 2012). This can lead, for example, situations whereby the special teacher or assistant attach themselves to children with special needs, which works against inclusive measures and can isolate these children.

### **Epilogue**

The societal changes in the ECEC landscape, entails a growing institutionalization of increasing segments of childhood for a larger number of children, framed by legislation, and stronger regulations and standardized procedures for children with ‘special needs’ (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2010). More of small children’s life is put under scrutiny, and children in kindergarten are, like children in school, to a greater extent than before being assessed through a suspicious gaze which focus on their failure to meet particular standards of achievement.

The perspective on small children primarily as learners and acquirers of competencies, guided by images of the active, creative, well-adjusted and self-governing child, in control of his or her life, may be tempting. However, in order to enhance children’s well-being, thrive, participation and belonging, children must be recognized and sensed in much more complex and multifaceted ways. In fact, inclusive education policies and practices involve acknowledging the uniqueness of the individual child and rendering legitimate also the opposite qualities, e.g. weakness, vulnerability and dependency as part of natural ways of being human – of human diversity.



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Jukka Mäkelä:

## How knowledge about the needs and potentials of the developing child can support inclusion in ECEC

The developmental needs of children are universal. Special needs are adaptations of these universal needs to somewhat more extraordinary profiles of development. The basic essentials are, of course, food, sleep, exercise, and play, but these are not enough for healthy and strong development. All children need:

1. to be **looked upon**. To be looked upon and seen for whom one is. And, for health, looked upon with love, to be enjoyed and cherished.
2. to be **heard**. When a child is heard in what he or she (she, for short, in this article) has to say or express she is valued for who she is and valued as someone worthy to be taken into consideration.
3. **co-regulation** of their inner state. Children need the help of adults to stay within their own window of tolerance.
4. structured **freedom to explore** and to find mastery. Exploration and mastery are key needs for any growing child. Children because they need to get to know and understand and take control of the world they live in.
5. to be **taught** the values and expectations of the culture they live in. Development is cultural by nature (Rogoff 2003). Children have the right to know how to act so as to be accepted members of their world, both small and big. Culture is here understood as the ways of functioning of a family, of a child care group, of a nation etc. And this leads us into the last but not least need which is
6. to be **accepted as a part** of their own group.

### Inclusion is what we expect

Inclusion, in fact, is the human default mode. It is natural to expect to be accepted as ourselves into the relationships that we are brought into: first the family, then others. Early childhood settings of education and care are vitally important in that they confer daily possibilities of inclusive needs being met.

Inclusion is important because we humans are an ultra social species. A major part of our brain capacity is used for building and understanding relationships. This means communicating, sharing meanings with others. Throughout life communication is what matters most. The intricate system of human communication starts from before birth with movements conveying the inner state of the womb and continues throughout life. Messages are sent using the face, the voice, the hands, the body, and language. The Russian philosopher M Bahtin (1930/1981) has said that for a message there is no more painful destiny than to be left without an answer. Every experience of being heard and accepted gives strength and every experience of exclusion depletes some of our potential.

Being accepted, being an included part carries with it a motivation to learn what is important for the group, to learn the culture of the group. For this, children need many adults. Parents need the support of others. Anthropologist Sarah Hrdy (2009) has made a point that we are as co-parenting species, that in every society known, humans have carried the burden of parenting together. This is understandable as the human childhood is vastly longer and, thus, more costly than the childhood of our closest relatives, the great apes. This creates a need to have more adults taking responsibility. In our societies, early childhood education and care is the way in which we organize our communal support for parenting. At the same time, having more adults is the basis of the development of the human intellect.

The human mind, the intellect and personality of a growing child is created in interpersonal relationships. All relationships open up their own unique possibilities. Children have strong inborn capacities to notice and assess interactions. Who is interacting with me and how, and what is going on between others that I see. There also seems to be an inborn moral code to help understand, what kind of relationships feel good and what kind should be shunned. We will go into these in a bit of detail.





### **Skills of interpersonal understanding**

Various researchers have described the inborn skills of assessing interactions. Steven Porges (2009) has described primary ways of recognizing the safety or danger of a situation. It is the interoceptive gut-feeling, the inner body reactions to a variety of signals from both the environment and the people in them. Certain physical signals portend danger for the human: for example sudden loud noises, darkness, and being left alone. Other humans signal safety or danger through their body postures, tones of voice, facial expressions. When the primary perceptive system describes a situation as safe, the child can be socially engaged. This is the state in which learning and development happen.

Colwyn Trevarthen (1998) has documented, how well even a premature baby reacts to rhythmic answers that synchronize with her own expressions. This is called synrhythmia. It is the basic way of experiencing that an utterance is an answer to me and not an arbitrary sound. This is also a part of which Daniel Stern (1985) has called affect attunement. In affect attunement the adult resonates the vitality (the contour of intensity) of ones answer to the expression of the child. Not the emotional content as such (like frustration), but the strength of it. This leads to a contained outcome. Attunements can be short. Still, they are the key to co-regulation of the inner state of the child.

### **Children prefer prosocial others**

A new area of research into the inborn social skills of humans has been moral assessments of very small children. JK Hamlin and her colleagues (2011) have created a series of interaction sequences in which a baby, sitting in the lap of her mother, watches social interactions between different figures. These have been done with figures that either have human-like eyes or not. In the sequences one figure tries to perform a task without managing it on its own; another figure comes to hinder it and a third comes and helps with it.

Right from the earliest years of life children clearly recognize what is the intention of the activity of a figure. I.e. when the figure is trying to open a lid of a box, the child understands that it is the opening, which is the aim of this activity. When the second figure comes and hinders this opening the child reacts to it with aversion. When a third comes and helps with it, the child reacts with positive attention. When the latter two figures are brought to the baby, she will almost always turn towards the one that helped and try to make contact with it, and she will even clearly shun the one that hindered. However, this happens only if the figures had human-like eyes. It is the helping of another that is the reason to prefer one act to another, not the act itself.

From the very first, children are prosocial beings. This explains why it so quintessentially human to share ones food with others (Hrdy SB 2009), which is not something other animal pups do. So there must be a trade-off, an inner reward for being social. We receive a lot of pleasure from being in contact with other human beings. In fact, there are basic neuroaffective systems of pleasure that are connected to interpersonal relationships. Pleasure is a marker of an inner state of positive dynamic balance. In such a state, integrative brain functioning and thus learning is possible. In the state of imbalance, the brain has to react to the offending signals and try to regain balance. In this state, not only is learning of new situations being impeded but also children become less prosocial, and more egoistic and non-social.

It feels good to be in synrhythmic and attuned interaction with another. And contrariwise, instances of not being answered attuned to are experienced intensively and aversively.

This has been demonstrated by research on how children react to their parent not responding to their signals (Tronick E. et al.1978). Children notice quickly when their parent changes from responsive to unresponsive and cease from whatever they were doing. Curious activity towards the surroundings ends, and the child only aims at regaining responsiveness from the adult. Children protest, despair, detach surprisingly soon. When the adult does respond again, children differ in how easily they respond to reconnective attempts and how long they remain in a state of mistrust towards the adult.



### **The shame and pain of exclusion**

This is an example of the immediate effects on children of not being answered to, of not being held in interaction. Exclusion is an experience of being left out. This creates the emotion of shame. Shame is a necessary emotion in social animals, giving motivation to look for better ways of functioning so that the group will accept one as a part. In this way shame is a socializing emotion and has been used extensively in child rearing. However, shame is very easily overwhelming, and shame should be avoided. When shame experiences abound, they are a risk factor both for depression and for aggression. One reason for this is that the experience of exclusion causes true pain.

The same areas in the brain that activate with actual physical pain activate with experiences of social exclusion. As this pain is not localized it has not been taken for real before new functional magnetic imaging of the brain (Eisenberger, N. I 2003). In literature and music the heart-rending pain of being left alone has received much understanding. Depression is the feeling of not being able to change ones hurtful lot. When excluded, there is very little one can do. Except, of course, try to hurt the other. Exclusion increases bad will towards others and leads to the rise of aggression (DeWall, C. N 2009). In fact, social exclusion can be seen as to be the greatest developmental risk factor for children. It has been estimated that, in Finland, over five per cent of youth are at risk of social exclusion. This is a human catastrophe to the youths themselves, a tremendous loss of human potential for the society. It also comes with a high price tag, with an estimated € 1 million for increased service costs for the lifetime (Nilsson I, Wadeskog A 2008). As many trajectories of social exclusion stem from the early years of childhood, ECEC is a major potential for early prevention of social exclusion.

### **Prevention is possible**

The prevention of exclusion starts from making sure every child is accepted as a part of its group. Being seen and accepted for whom one is, being heard supported in one's group leads to empowerment and the increase of agency. Organizing the ECEC system so as to offer experiences of inclusion to all children has a high value in itself. It is a good social investment to create settings in which children with various

backgrounds and various needs come together in groups led by adults whose training increases their capacity to support inclusion of all. The ECEC must organize itself so as to accommodate the individually different developmental needs of children.

The individual developmental needs of children should not be seen as diagnoses but as variations of the human condition (i.e. the normal variations in impulsivity or in the capacity to intuitively understand the emotions of others). These needs, whether special or not can be met only in the moment-by-moment co-regulation of the inner state of the child. When children are sensitively answered to in every-day situations, they can attain a larger part of their own potential.

### **Pedagogical sensitivity**

Pedagogical sensitivity is the capacity of the adults to notice signals that individual children send, while keeping group functioning a priority (Ahnert L et al 2000). Through attuned oversight and timely but short responses, an adult can support the stress regulation of individual children while supporting primarily the functioning of the whole group. From an individual child's point of view it is vital to know that when their stress rises towards an intolerable level, this will be noticed and co-regulated by the adult. The group offers the adult support through the inherent sympathetic capacities of children. Helping one child to manage her negative stress supports others in their trust that they, too, will be helped when in need. Likewise, children learn to help each other when the adult's intervention is attuned.

In the LASSO research group of the University of Helsinki led by Associate Professor Nina Sajaniemi, we are developing and testing an intervention protocol to support pedagogical sensitivity in ECEC. It uses short video-clips from real-time situations to demonstrate how children show their needs and react to having them met. There is a short theoretical manual that covers the developmental needs of children as outlined above. There is a focus on how to support learning and prosocial behaviour through co-regulating children's stress. This brings about more positive affective states.



### **Developmentally supportive ECEC practices**

Positive emotions support development and learning. The brain-body systems of all social mammals have distinct systems of motivation and action that end up in positive emotions (Panksepp J.1998). First is the pathway of exploration and mastery. By nature, children curiously try to understand their world and manage how it works. When successful, they develop a sense of mastery. The sense of mastery is crucial for gaining a sense of agency in one's own life and the world. The neurotransmitters of expectant reward, especially dopamine, support this positive feedback loop.

The second pathway for intense positive emotions is play, especially rough and tumbles play (Panksepp J. 1998, 2007). The more physical contact and physical movement, the more it seems to create emotions of intense joy. These rewards come partly from the increase in endorphins, the neurotransmitter of pleasure. Where there is joyous play, there is no room for depression. In animal models, play has also been shown to increase brain growth factors of the higher cortical areas. Thus, it would seem that after a bout of intense physical play, children are for many hours in a state of being able to create new combinations in their higher thinking cortices. Thus, a rhythm of play and learning is a nature-given way for children to develop.

The third pathway is care when being cuddled, stroked, hugged. It is channelled mainly through the neurotransmitter oxytocin. This is called the attachment system, and it activates especially when there is a need for comfort and care. When the child is hurt or tired, cold or hungry, sick or desolate, she can regain a positive state through the consolation by a sensitive adult (or other attachment figure, which can range from siblings to dogs...). Adults answering to these needs sensitively and timely support a feeling of security that leads to a stronger sense of being able to manage one's world.

The ECEC should use all these three systems to support the positive developmental states in children. I would add a fourth, the specifically social system of feeling good in companionships. There is no clear affective neuroscientific research on how companionship creates its rewards. I suggest that it taps into all the previously mentioned. Companionship leads to exploration and mastery and creates own areas in which mastery can be found. It facilitates play and gives experiences of being accepted and understood. This is, in itself, an experience of security and attachment.

The key ingredient for effectual interaction is firm engagement. We believe that it can be taught to ECEC professionals. In our observations non-engagement is all too common in ECEC environments. This corresponds to what professor Elly Singer has found in the Netherlands (Singer E 2013). Through gaining new insight into pedagogical sensitivity, adults seem to find ways of increasing their presence and engagement within the normal everyday activities. This supports the inclusion of those children who are most easily left out and, finally, the development of all children.



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Jan-Erik Johansson:

## Do we have a Nordic model in ECEC? Past, present and future knowledge production from the horizons of staff, administration, politics and research, in a period of full provision for all children of under school age

If we map the broader Early Childhood Education field of knowledge, one important characteristic is the different knowledge interests of the different stakeholders involved, namely the political system, state and local administration, and staff, parents and children. These groups focus on different aspects of ECEC, which creates a resource problem since knowledge development is expensive: parents think of their children, state administration focus the total system etc. Another characteristic is the different focuses of academic disciplines – there is no consensus among researchers on the most important aspects of ECEC, compounded by diverse specialties relating differently to the stakeholders in the field. For example, parents are probably more interested in the provision of qualified staff than in cost-benefit studies made economists.

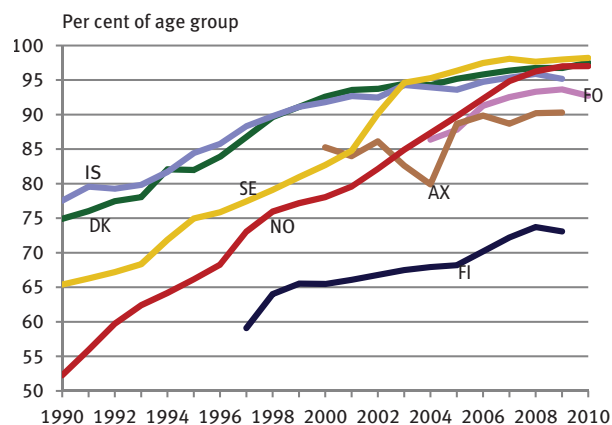
There is now full provision of ECEC in the Nordic countries, a massive change in a relatively short time. We see a change in gender positions in schools, universities and the workforce with women playing important roles within the wider society and workplace. There is new legislation on family, taxation, divorce, inheritance etc. More and more women have fewer and fewer children, to cite Gunnar Qvist (1980). Family planning means that women in many parts of the world can now control their reproduction. Without support to mothers it seems as if population declines. But the role of ECEC is not direct, since also Denmark has low birthrates. Is Norway next? The table below is extracted from a Nordic Council of Ministers report (2013, p. 15); and the figure is from a Nordic Council of Ministers report in 2012 (p. 9).

### Children in day care by age 2011

	DK	FI	IS	NO	SE
<b>Total number of children in day care by age group</b>					
<b>Total</b>	82.7	50.0	74.6	76.2	72.0
<b>0 years</b>	18.9	1.0	6.8	4.3	0.0
<b>1 years</b>	89.4	29.8	65.9	70.6	49.3
<b>2 years</b>	91.7	51.4	93.6	89.0	91.4
<b>3 years</b>	97.9	68.0	95.5	96.7	96.1
<b>4 years</b>	97.2	74.0	96.7	97.3	97.7
<b>5 years</b>	97.2	78.2	93.8	98.9	98.3

Chil 03. Children in totally or partly publicly funded day care

### Children in day care in the age group 3–5 years



Source: Nordic database.

Norway and Sweden have the highest proportion of children under 3 in full day care institutions. In Denmark and Iceland half of the children under 3 are in family day care (included in the table here). In Finland a high proportion of children under 3 are at home because of *Cash for Care Benefit* support, fewer in Norway and Sweden and almost none in Denmark.





*A focus on practical work.* Education is defined as ‘technology’, not an academic science, if we follow George Basalla (1988) where technologies according to a Darwinist approach develop continuously, neither through revolutions nor as ‘educational technology’. In such a perspective pre-school teachers are the ‘users’ of ECEC technology, interacting with children in the ECEC life-world framed by structural variables, only partly influenced by research, teacher education and national curriculum. Today there are floating norms for structural variables in many countries: child group size and composition; staff education and ratios; room composition; staff turnover, supply staff etc. which are no longer prescribed. For the future I suggest we at least consider: (a) more solid descriptive statistics of determinants of ECEC and a variety of quality studies, (b) the collection of studies of child–staff interaction as the foundation of education, and (c) more studies based on a broad conception of the concept of curriculum including teacher experience. This raise three initial questions (1) What kind of knowledge about ECEC do we need in the future? (2) How may the concept of quality be understood? (3) Is there a Nordic model of ECEC?

### **Q1. Knowledge or Research?**

ECEC technologies developed without any support from modern research; there is no R&D design underpinning this area of education. Nordic ECEC models are based on philosophy and practice, on Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Fröbel, as applied by pre-school teachers and their allies. Medicine which builds on a combination of research and documented practice or cases, could be a model for the future (Sykes & Bird, 1992). One solution is to be grounded in everyday professional ECEC practice and then develop practice-oriented research as a part of a general research programme, as in the PRAKUT research in Norway. One problem is that the Froebelian Kindergarten has been under attack from school, state and churches since 1848. Today you may get the impression that ECEC is too important to be ruled by pre-school teachers: economy, administration, and academic disciplines are aiming at the ECEC field. It is a known problem for new professions or disciplines to be accepted by universities. Women were not accepted inside universities for long. In Sweden, *Elsa Köhler* (1879–1940) from Vienna, *Carin Ulin* (1886–1971) and *Alva Myrdal* (1902–1986) in Stockholm, had no

easy academic lives. Still today very few pre-school teachers in Nordic countries have a PhD, even fewer are professors, as a result of earlier academic discrimination. In ECEC also the relation to school might be a problem. In the 1984 reform in the Netherlands when school start changed to the age of 4, pre-school teachers lost their positions. Today quality is much lower (Vermeer et al., 2008). In France, the school controls *Ecole Maternelle* since 1989 and children’s play is reduced (Brougère, Guénif-Souilamas, & Rayna, 2008). There are different professional focuses also in teacher education. There have been no specialised pre-school teachers after 1992 in Denmark, only a more general education. In Finland there is a dual solution with a low number of pre-school teachers competing with social workers. In Norway 1/3 of the ECEC staff are pre-school teachers, whereas about 50 % of staff lack professional training. Sweden had a unified teacher education system in 2001 with weak professional orientation, but since 2010 specialized pre-school teacher education is back. There is hence a need for systematic, long time support of academic careers of pre-school teachers doing ECEC research. This could develop a deeper understanding of the knowledge base of ECEC from the horizon of the professionals and research.

### **Q2. Quālis or Quality**

*Quality* in education is an established area of disagreement – there is no agreement on quality in ECEC, not between, nor from within different paradigms. Do we have to reintroduce operational definitions and talk ECERS as different from CLASS quality in quantitative research, and constructivist or post humanist quality in qualitative research? In Latin quality is *quālis* – in English ‘which’ – asking about specific things or persons. *Quālis* is a very frequent Latin word, among the top 1000. We have most likely always been interested in the *which* of the world. From the horizon of ECEC there is a strong need for more knowledge, so why choose only *one* paradigm, if we can have a number albeit competing for attention? International studies such as the PISA study provide evidence for a local perspective on education general knowledge which is not easily available. Andreas Schleicher already in the *Reading Literacy* study, some decades ago, described problems regarding comparative studies. He suggested that is impossible to compare educational systems, because of the variation in the



local context that determines the outcomes. On the other hand, since we cannot do without international comparisons, we have to be careful when assessing the results and all nations cannot be on top at the same time! In the history of education, problems arise when one paradigm rules: *New math* during the 1960's is one case of external expertise inducing problems. The *Direct method* in language teaching is another strange idea, based on the dogma not to use vernaculars! Not to mention the investment in *Programmed instruction* during the 1960's. One solution is to accept variation and long term development (cf. Basalla) instead of frequent pendulum swing revolutions. Since education is both locally and internationally determined, multiple perspectives and all kind of studies with a direct focus on ECEC are needed.

### Q3. A Nordic model

The Nordic region is almost a federation, connected through history and migration. There are thousands of relationships involving all kinds of NGOs, churches, political parties, footballers, civil administrators, companies and families and so on. Then follows formal collaboration jointly financed. But what about ECEC? France, Belgium, UK and USA meet Fröbel 1850 through the first generation of Froebelians. Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway develop contacts decades later with *Henriette Schrader Breymann* (1827–1899) and *Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus* (P-F-H) in Berlin (cf. Denner, 1988) where she developed a social-pedagogy to save working class children. She aimed at play, work and learning in a homelike institution. One principle is *intellectual motherhood*, and the aim is to compensate for loss of home experiences. She uses much of Fröbel's programme except his play theory. The teacher role is to be internally active and externally passive. The content is organised in monthly themes such as seasons and holidays. The idea is to build on the child's drive for activity. The result is a programme at a distance from traditional school, and a somewhat invisible pedagogy, because of the teacher's indirect control of the children. This version of Froebel comes first to Finland and Helsinki with *Hanna Rothman* (1856–1920); *Anna Wulff* (1874–1935) in København is trained in Dresden;


*Anna Warburg* (1881–1967) works in Stockholm and Hamburg; *Ruth Frøyland Nielsen* (1902–1989) in Oslo is trained at P-F-H. In Iceland staff could be trained in Denmark and Sweden. There were also Nordic ECEC congresses every 4<sup>th</sup> year ending in 1972 with the 12<sup>th</sup> as a mistaken decision by the leaders.

### Three fields of future study

**a. Structural variables.** When standards in structural variables are getting weaker, there is strong need for almost real-time information about group size, group composition, staff competence and age etc. We also have to look at staff workload in documentation, testing etc., an argument from William Corsaro (at a seminar some years ago) with the aim of ending vicious circles of staff overload and malpractice. There is a need for systematic studies of indicators of quality together with detailed national statistics. Reports sometimes present France and the Nordic countries on top in structural variables, (Unicef, 2008) but what is behind? Case studies of quality are needed as in the EPPE project.

**b. Interaction quality.** I prefer to think that there is a specific human, fundamental way of interaction, love and learning. In the beginning of ECEC is Fröbel's idea of *Play care*. Today Iram Siraj Blatchford develops the concept of *Sustained Shared Thinking* (2009). Colwyn Trevarthen points in the same direction as does Lev Vygotsky and others. We also have to look at our own part of the world, where for instance we find Stig Broström in København, Maritta Hännikäinen in Jyväskylä, Johanna Einarsdóttir in Reykjavik, Berit Bae in Oslo, Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson in Göteborg – just to mention a few of Nordic researchers aiming at ECEC practice. We don't have to look west to the strong US research only, our local contexts and policies are different (cf. Mahon, 2010).

**c. Nordic curriculum.** Educational systems are international and local, contextual – rooted in every nation's life-worlds and also influenced from outside. The Nordic version of Fröbel based upon Pesta-lozzi-Fröbel-Haus is one starting point. A local aspect could be the importance nature plays in Norwegian life. But we don't see the battle about the souls of children as in Germany, or as in France where the whole educational system became *laïc* or confession free during the 1880's. There is a strong need for curriculum studies



and a historical-comparative focus. The distinction between pre- and inter-active curriculum by Philip Jackson (1968) is one starting point. We should not study the national curriculum only but the whole system. A start would be to describe and analyse practical knowledge and experience as cases, for instance as in Medicine and Law.

### At the end

Important tasks are to focus on the effects of the strong growth in ECEC of children under three years of age, especially in Norway and Sweden, as an important educational field – and how to support families of today, in a world with cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. Earlier Nordic monolingual, monocultural protestant societies are no longer found. In the Nordic countries ECEC has not been school-oriented, and so it is necessary now to rethink an effective strategy based upon identifying indicators of quality through more in-depth case studies of actual practice across the Nordic area – also for the school system, which has not adapted to working mothers (cf. limited interest in after school programmes). Earlier ECEC could often support children with particular problems, such as special educational needs, now all children are recruited, no selection is done. We now have a situation with many different providers of ECEC, such as Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia etc. There are many legitimate knowledge interests: Politics, state and local administration, ECEC centres, and staff, unions, parents and children. Hence knowledge development has to develop in relation to different users, and to different knowledge producers, for example national statistics, academic research, and staff originated knowledge development. In this process, pre-school teachers, as experts in their field, are one important stakeholder group, traditional disciplinary academic research is necessary but insufficient as the sole generator of knowledge. We need a professional knowledge perspective focusing on children in ECEC settings and hence ECEC initiated research, a balance between professional and disciplinary research, together with the needs of administration and parents, in a web of varied studies.

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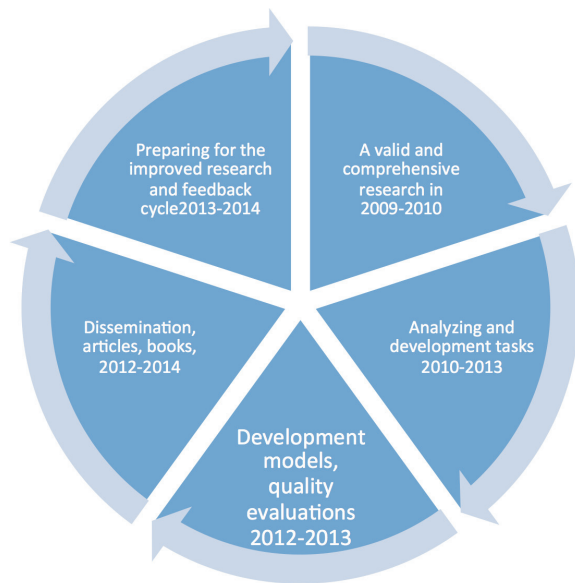


Jyrki Reunamo:

## Day care based on developmental feedback for the staff The Orientation project – a longitudinal study of day care and pre-school activities

The Orientation project is a research and development project conducted in Finland and Taiwan concerning Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). The project includes comparative research and learning environment development based on research results. The purpose of the project has been to find out the everyday practices in day care and how children orientate in day care. The project outline is in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**  
Orientation project outline

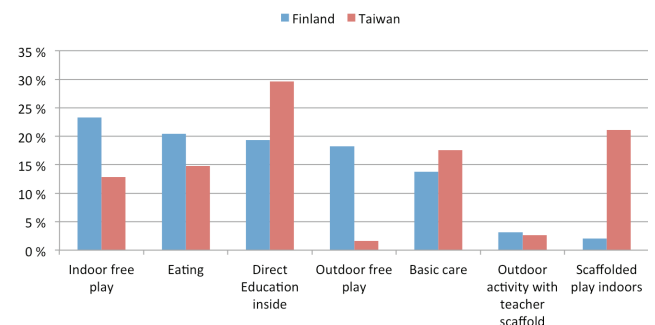


Based on the research results (<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/orientate/products/the-scientific-products-of-the-apu-project/>) we produced 217 development tasks for the staff in spring 2011 (cf. <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/orientate/development-tasks/>). The staff produced and tested development models based on the tasks. These models were disseminated for the first time in May 2012 (cf. <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/orientate/development-models/>). In this paper is one example of the development cycle concerning scaffolded play.

In the observation instructions scaffolded play was defined as follows: *Teacher scaffolds children's play to enrich children's own processes.*

The example is based on the observation research results. There were altogether 29,856 observations made between December 2009 and June 2010 in Finland and Taiwan. The observations give a random sample of the children's actions in the morning from 8.00 to 12.00 in day care both in Finland and Taiwan. The children were observed at four minute intervals according to a systematic sampling. The observed items were the general act from 8.00 to 12.00 in the day care centre, the children's actions, the children's objects of attention, the children's nearest peer contacts, the children's physical activity, the children's involvement (Laevers, 1995), the nearest educator's actions, and whether the nearest educator was concentrating on the observed child or not. The observation instrument is available at [http://www.helsinki.fi/~reunamo/apu/observation\\_instrument.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/~reunamo/apu/observation_instrument.pdf).

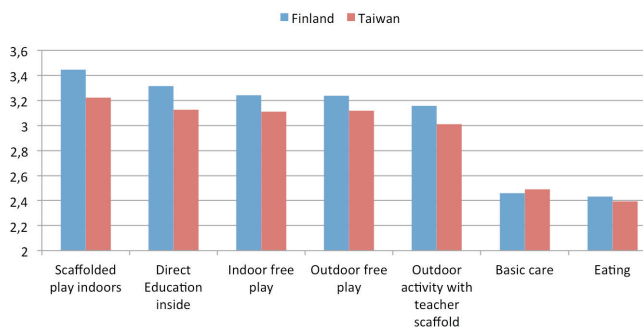
**Figure 2.**  
The percentages of different general activities in Finland and Taiwan





As can be seen in Figure 2, in Finland only 2% of the activities were scaffolded play. In Taiwan scaffolded play included 21% of the general activities in day care. The difference is huge. In Taiwan scaffolded play is the second most frequent activity, in Finland the least frequent activity.

**Figure 3.**  
The mean of children's involvement in different activities



In Figure 3 we can see that scaffolded play was a very involved activity both in Finland and Taiwan. This means that during scaffolded play children were processing deeply the activity they were engaged with, making the activity a fruitful context for learning. In Figure 4 is an example of Taiwanese scaffolded play.

**Figure 4.**  
An example in which children are scaffolded in restaurant play

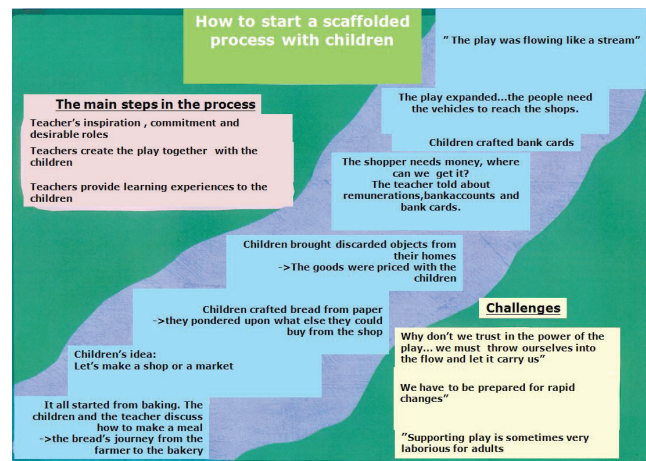


In the example, the children were able to produce a highly complex and refined play world which included a restaurant, a bank and a beauty salon, all operating at the same time. The children could earn money in different tasks and get services with their earnings. For example, in the picture children do complex mathematics as they take the orders. The play had been evolving already for three months and both

children and educators were wondering if the play could take them even further. Because scaffolded play turned out to be a valuable way to work and children could enjoy it for long periods of time, one task in Finland became the following:

The staff of one day care centre planned, developed and tested a solution model for a year. They presented their development model in May 2012 together with the other 2016 models, see Figure 5.

**Figure 5.**  
The solution model for scaffolded play produced by the staff in Sorvankaari day care center in Nurmijärvi Finland.



The project is based on developmental feedback. For that feedback we need to see that the activities are evolving. Our next data collection will be in 2015. We invite our Nordic colleagues to join us in the research. A proposition for a comparative research in Nordic countries can be found in [http://www.helsinki.fi/~reunamo/apu/Nordic\\_ECEC\\_comparison15.pdf](http://www.helsinki.fi/~reunamo/apu/Nordic_ECEC_comparison15.pdf). Take a look at the Orientation project blog at <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/orientate/>. If you find the idea worth considering, do not hesitate to contact me. The everyday interaction and dynamics in Nordic ECEC need to be studied. There is no existing comparative research of the everyday practices and processes taking place in and between Nordic countries. How can we discuss Nordic ECEC if we do not have any solid knowledge on what is going on?





**Bente Jensen:**

## **Design and preliminary results of the VIDA-programme: Knowledge-based efforts for socially disadvantaged children in Danish daycare<sup>15</sup>**

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This study investigates the effects on children of the VIDA intervention in Danish daycare institutions from 2011 to 2013. The purpose of VIDA is to improve child learning and socio-emotional outcomes, especially among socially disadvantaged children. Cunha et al (2006) found that the foundation for children's future success in life is laid very early. Hence, it is very important to establish high-quality child care and early childhood education programmes to improve child development. This requires greater knowledge of how to design early childhood programmes. At the same time, it has become clear that socio-emotional skills are as important as cognitive abilities (Heckmann, et al. 2010). The VIDA programme is based on these findings.

The VIDA approach is based on studies of professional development, learning and innovation in the public sector, as well as research on practice-based innovation. More specifically, the VIDA programme aims at improving quality in pedagogical work based on learning and knowledge sharing among daycare professionals.

VIDA is a randomized controlled trial where some daycare institutions have received extra training of the daycare professionals (VIDA Basis), some have received extra training of daycare professionals while additionally implementing a programme for the parents (VIDA+), and some institutions have not received any extra training (control institutions). Child outcomes are measured on five dimensions of the SDQ scale.

The final project report was made available online in December 2013. See <http://edu.au.dk/forskning/projekter/vida/>

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