

## English summaries

**Anita Eriksson, Ann-Katrin Svensson & Dennis Beach:** Municipal administrators as political actors: Perspectives on policy and change within the preschool teacher profession

Over the last two decades, education systems in Europe have undergone several major reforms, which also have implications for teachers and teachers' work. The focus for these reforms has been to raise the quality of education and pupils' school achievements. As regards the Swedish preschool sector, the increased education quality from national political parties is expected to be partly achieved by delegating increased professional responsibility to the pre-school teacher. The revision of the school law (SFS 2010: 800) and the pre-school curriculum, Lpfö 98/10 (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2010) implemented in 2011 are part of this.

In connection with the revisions, the preschool teacher's responsibility for educational activities was specified in detail in relation to responsibilities for teaching in subjects such as language and communication, mathematics and science and technology. Demands were also made for continuous and systematic quality work in the form of documentation and assessment. These developments had consequences too for other members of staff besides preschool teachers, such as heads of preschool and child care workers.

The article describes how government officials in municipal education administration have interpreted and worked to implement 2010 school law and curriculum revisions with a focus on clarifying the preschool teacher's responsibility. Explores the decisions and actions taken by these officials in terms of the assessments they have made concerning preschool teachers' needs in the form of skills development. It enquires into what skills development efforts have already been implemented as a result of policy revisions and what activities are planned.

Issues were investigated using a questionnaire. The results show that investments in quality assurance and pedagogical documentation and evaluation were considered as central issues, as well as formal subject

knowledge in science, mathematics and language. These things have been prioritized more than efforts to support preschool teachers the furtherance of their capabilities to lead educational work and work teams in preschools and the implications of this are discussed in the article. They are said to reflect different interpretations of the administrative officers for the pre-school teacher as a professional actor.

The way in which the municipal administrators interpret and act in relation to the increased responsibility of the preschool teacher and the national policy changes from 2010, shows, on the one hand, a picture of the preschool teacher as a professional and significant actor, while on the other hand there are also interpretations and actions that oppose this. In a professional perspective, one important factor is that a profession has discretion in relation to certain key questions in their specific field (in this case early childhood education) and a degree of autonomy, which actually seems to be reduced at the discretion of other executives. The result also indicates that preschool teachers have not been granted autonomy in the interpretation of their own assignment or the task of the team. In some cases, the interpretation of these assignments has taken place at the administrative level, but in most cases administrators have handed this to preschool heads. To what extent preschool heads in turn have involved preschool teachers in this process has not been investigated.

Professionalization can be assessed in terms of the possession of a specialised education regulating entry to the profession, the locus of control over the educational content, the level of the education, the degree of specialization it comprises, and the level of autonomy it grants to those completing it. It is the deliberations of local authority senior educational administrators (management professionals) that have been considered in the article, which reflects on both what preschool teachers are deemed to need for knowledge and what they are expected to be responsible for. However, what the results suggest is that in terms of professional status, authority and autonomy, although there is a broad consensus across the survey that professional competence is based on specialist knowledge gained in connection with higher studies. The local authority senior educational administrators have primarily followed common sense understanding of (preschool) teacher needs as lying within the domains of subject specific competence (language, mathematics and sciences in particular) and in relation to forms of accountability through the administration of quality assurance protocol. The development of independent leadership skills are barely mentioned. This is however highly important. The legitimacy of a profession often lies just specifically in terms of jurisdiction and responsibility and in the case of pre-school teachers this possibility through the acquisition of key skills and knowledge seems to have been curbed by new Public Management decisions.

**Ann-Christine Vallberg Roth & Ylva Holmberg:** Teaching in relation to care and learning in the Swedish preschool: Multi-voiced teaching and didactic tact?

The defined research problem focuses on teaching in relation to care and learning. In other words, it investigates the possible meanings of the concept of "the whole" in policy documents, and how this might emerge in preschool teaching. The aim of the project is to develop knowledge about possible characteristics of teaching in relation to care and learning, from preschool teachers' written materials and documented collaborative actions in the preschool as part of the Swedish school system.

*The identified problem*

Teachers in Swedish preschools seem to struggle with the concept of 'teaching' in their daily practice. This problem is also the basis of a three-year research and development project on teaching in preschool, of which the study described here is part. As the concept of 'teaching' has been stressed in recent national preschool policies and in daily practice in preschool, it is important to explore how it is used and understood by preschool teachers and managers responsible for preschool assignments.

*The identified research gap*

The identified research gap especially concerns teaching in the Swedish preschool as a school form. In research into subject-based didactics (Tallberg Broman, 2015), Swedish/Nordic studies place more emphasis on the 'learning side' than on the 'teaching side' of didactics (Vallberg Roth, 2018). All of this evokes something of a 'learnification of didactics' (ibid). There is a need for research into preschool teaching in which the scientific foundation is not reduced to an emphasis on learning theory. This does not mean that learning-theory-based research into teaching is irrelevant, but rather that it can be expanded to incorporate other possible theoretical approaches. Examples from teaching studies of elementary and secondary school point out that 'there is in fact no theory that can encompass the total teaching situation' (Arfwedson, 1998, p. 131). In this context, we see a need for research and theory development focusing on teaching in preschool, including its relationship to applicable goal-based management, and open to the potential inclusion of various (meta)theoretical approaches. It may concern, for example, examining teaching in relation to care and learning. There is then a need for research into teaching in preschool applying broader-ranging approaches. There is also a dearth of research illuminating this area based on more extensive empirical studies in collaborative projects.

*Method*

Methodologically, the analysis is abductive and has a didactic perspective. The material includes a total of 349 written documents and 63 hours of video recordings from 121 preschools/preschool departments in ten municipalities. The analytical unit consists of verbal data and audiovisual data.

*Results*

The results show that the concepts of teaching, care and learning may appear both separate and joined together in various ways. The whole analysis is held together and tested through the overall concept of "multi-voiced teaching", which might also cover "didactic tact".