LEARNING AS A RELATIONAL FIELD
Experiences from reggio-inspired early childhood education in Sweden

181020, CEDEP, Tokyo
Ingela Elfström & Bodil Halvars, BUV, Stockholm University
Ingela Elfström

Department of Child and Youth Studies, Section for Early Childhood Education, Stockholm University

• Preschool teacher
• Teacher educator/researcher
• Research areas: evaluation and development of practice in preschool
Bodil Halvars
Department of Child and Youth Studies, Section for Early Childhood Education, Stockholm University
• Preschool teacher
• Teacher educator/researcher
• Research areas: ethics/fundamental values, sustainability, play – linked to preschool didactics
LEARNING AS A RELATIONAL FIELD

Why a heading like *learning as a relational field (of potentialities)*?

- A concept used for visualize the meaning making and the learning processes
- With roots in Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking
- The preschool as a place where the children and their teachers move around exploring through dynamic movements
- Human beings, drawings, furniture, colors, toys, sounds, symbols, children’s singing, smells, traditions, documentations, languaging, written signs, mathematical signs, dramas, desires...
- ... passing through all these qualities and powers
ZOOMNING IN THE FIELD – 4 PARTS:

• The preschool in Sweden - past and present – today’s situation with a recently revised curriculum

• A meeting with the Reggio Emilia philosophy → reggio-inspired projects in Sweden

• The tree-project – focus on an exploring approach

• The roe deer-project – focus on the pedagogical documentation
THE PRESCHOOL IN SWEDEN - PAST AND PRESENT

The Swedish society during the 20th century until today:

• Reforms: the elementary school – school attendance, child benefit, parental leave, child care

• Other reforms: municipalization, ”The reform of free schools” (idealistic or profit driven)

• The preschool tradition – the growth of preschool

• The today’s preschool in Sweden – past and present – with a recently revised curriculum
FAST FORWARD: THE CASE OF SWEDEN
- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Social reforms in the welfare and family policy:
- The general child benefit, 1948
- The parental leave, 1974
- Child care - social to school authority, 1996
- "Max taxa", 1999

School reforms that have affected the preschool growth:
- Compulsory school, in 1842
- Compulsory elementary school, in 1962
- Preschool class, in 2017
1948 - CHILD BENEFIT

• Earnings-related, 1937 → general, 1948
• 1250 SEK (15684 YEN)/month/child, + supplementary child allowance (from the 2:nd child on)
• Until the child is 16 years old
IN THE 70’s - PARENTS WITH CHILDREN DEMONSTRATING FOR DAY CARE

• ”We demand day care for everybody!”
• Women demanded gender equality, participating in working life and society on equal conditions
• Highlighted the need for child care to put pressure on the organization to develop and expand.
1974 - THE PARENTAL LEAVE

- Earnings-related parental leave - a cornerstone of Swedish family policy
- The aim: to enable women and men to combine work and family linked to a goal of gender-equal use of parental leave benefits
- Parental leave, introduced in 1974, gave the parents rights to 6 months leave to share between them
- Today the parental leave has evolved into 16 months, which 13 months are compensated at almost 80% of the parent’s income
1974 - THE PARENTAL LEAVE

• Length of paid parental leave: A total of 480 days, 390 days at 80% of income and 90 days at a flat rate of 180 SEK (2258 YEN) per day
• Each parent has an exclusive right to 90 days of the parental leave
• Talking about Swedish dads and sometimes "latte-dads"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlfNT5EHb_Q
IMPORTANT SCHOOL REFORMS IN SWEDEN

1842 – Compulsory School  
1962 – Compulsory comprehensive School (7-15 years)
2017 – PRESCHOOL CLASS

- From autumn 2018 - compulsory for children to start in a preschool class at the age of 6
- Preschool class activities use the same curriculum as comprehensive schools and day recreation centers
THE GROWTH OF THE SWEDISH PRESCHOOL
A CHILD CRÈCHE IN STOCKHOLM, 1909
THE SWEDISH PRESCHOOL

• With a proud tradition
• Highly internationally ranked
• Preschool - from social to school authority, 1996
THE SWEDISH PRESCHOOL OF TODAY

- Preschool - from social to school authority, 1996
- Preschool is voluntary
- Municipalities must offer preschool for children from the age of 1:
  - when the parents are working or studying
  - when the parents are unemployed or on Parental Leave
- All municipalities use a system with a maximum fee, an upper limit ("max taxa") is set for how high fees can become for different types of families, 1382 SEK (17340 YEN)/child + 461 SEK (5784 YEN) for child 2+3
WHAT IS THE SITUATION FOR THE SWEDISH PRESCHOOL OF TODAY?

- Children in preschool, 1-5 years old: ca 84%
- Children in preschool, 4-5 years old: ca 95%
- An average number of children in preschool group: 15.3
- An average child/staff ratio in preschool: 5.1
- 40% preschool teachers
THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

• Shortage of preschool teachers
• 3½ years education for future preschool teachers
• Master’s Programme
• Postgraduate studies
• Preschool didactics
• Pedagogical perspectives of the discipline: the philosophy, ethics and history of learning, play and care

• The pedagogical perspectives also include the societal, relational and material preconditions of early childhood education

• Inter- and transdisciplinary studying learning, play and care, and the many various encounters children are engaged in within the practices of early childhood education and with the surrounding world

• Studying processes that follow, challenge and develop children’s exploring and experimental play and learning, aesthetic learning-processes and involving information and communication technologies and using pedagogical documentation

https://www.buv.su.se/english/research/research-areas/early-childhood-education