

Early Childhood Education The case of Sweden

Förskolan Skolevågen

A Story of Constructing a
Comprehensive Systemic and Holistic
Early Childhood Education for *All*
Children

Professor Emerita Gunilla Dahlberg
Stockholm University

Politics of Childhood – Questions

What do we want for our children here
and now and in the future?

A Diagnosis of our Time

ECE – 60's early 70's

Huge demonstrations among parents and other supporters of ECE – 70's

The cries score-

nurseries for all

*Child care we
want – but they
have to be good*

Children Preschool Commission
1972

Early Childhood Education – a Public
Space

A Common Good For *All* Children

ECE - Institutions

Sites for ethical and political practices, in which children, teachers and parents as *citizens* are able to participate in a public talk and in projects of cultural, economical and social value.

Children Preschool
Commission

Dialogue Pedagogy

The child's development of a self

Communication

Concept development

A Radical Perspective

JEAN PIAGET

HOMBURGER ERICSON

PAOLO FREIRE

GEORGE HERBERT MEAD

Free Play

ECE - Connected to Social and Family Politics

Maternal/Parental leave

1971 - 6 months

2002 - 16 months (2 months paternity leave)

2016 - 18 months (paternity leave extended to 3 months)

90 days of the 18 months are reserved for the father

The Public Inquiry on Family Support - 1974

Children may have

deep relations

to more than the mother-

significant others

1984

LEX – Pysslingen

ECE should not be for profit

1985

The historical proposition
A preschool as *a right for all children*

*Children's development and learning get a
status of being a specific political question*

Martin 2006

Childcare Guarantee with a
New Law (1995)

Provide a place for children from one
year of age in preschool or family
day care center, municipal or private,
and without undue delay (three to
four months)

1975: 10% of all children
2% of children between 0,5 - 3 years

2016:

48 % 1 year

88 % 2 years

94 % 3 years

96 % 4 years

96 % 5 years

1998: Responsibility is transferred

From Ministry of Social Welfare to
Ministry of Education

From Child-Care to Education – from
one year of age

Internationally unique

The BOSK- Committee

1998: A curriculum for pre-schools.
Revised 2010 and 2018

Stressing Language, Mathematics and
Science – in relation to each specific
child's prerequisites

The Education Act – 2010

Democracy forms the foundation of the preschool

The Education Act (2010:800) stipulates that education in the preschool aims at children acquiring and developing knowledge and values. It should promote all children's development and learning, and a lifelong desire to learn. An important task of the preschool is to impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based.

Fundamental Values

Each and every person working in the preschool should promote respect for the intrinsic value of each person as well as respect for our shared environment.

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between the genders, as well as solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the preschool should actively promote in its work with children.

The activities of the preschool should be carried out democratically and thus provide the foundation for a growing responsibility and interest on the part of children to actively participate in society.

Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98
Revised 2010, p. 3

An open curriculum

Goals to strive towards
(Goals to reach)

Authority to the professionals

The Reggio - Emilia philosophy –
a challenge

Loris Malaguzzi (1922-1994)

Loris Malaguzzi (1922-1994)



Malaguzzi is the guiding genius of Reggio, the thinker whose name deserves to be uttered in the same breath as his heroes Froebel, Montessori, Dewey, and Piaget.

Gardner, 1998. xvi

Respect for the child as a resourceful
and curious child - a child with a
hundred languages and own power and
desire to learn

A competent child

1991 – Time Changes

New conditions and new challenges
open up

Deregulation Market Free Choice

A Pedagogy of Welcoming and Hospitality

Builds on Listening

Lex Pysslingen is abolished

February, 2006

Freedom to establish an independent
preschool

Open up for different profiles outside the
municipality

FOR PROFIT?

Difficult to go back

New conflicts and issues to negotiate and solve

The critics:

- Less quality overall?
- Increased costs?
- Increased segregation? What happens with inclusion/exclusion?

A New Curriculum 2018

Stressing

- The concept of education and teaching
- The role of the preschool teacher
- The role of assessment and evaluation

Movement from below!
SCHOOLIFICATION?

The Stockholm Project
Pedagogy in a Changing World

- Networking

- Pedagogical documentation

- Progettazione

- Hundred languages

Inspiration from Reggio Emilia

Post-structuralism

Beyond Quality in Early Childhood
Education – Languages of Evaluation

Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, 2013

Diversity

Inclusion

Autonomy

Trust/participation

Standards

Tests

Control

Mistrust?

New Devices of Governing as a Way to Modernize the Public Sector

Total quality management

New public management – public
choice

The competitive world-market Rankings

*How we follow up, judge and evaluate
pedagogical activities is one of the most
pressing issues that we have to take a stand
on.*

Dahlberg, Lundgren & Åsén, 1991

OECD

OECD's early childhood development
and early learning study?

Anglo-Saxon 'testology', is nothing but a ridiculous simplification of knowledge, and a robbing of meaning from individual histories.

Cagliari, et.al. 2016, p. 378

Robbing the meaning from individual histories?

*. . . quality does not seem to be assured
until it is expressed through numbers*

*. . . numbers reign, while qualified
thought is viewed with suspicion"*

Sven-Erik Liedman

TRUST IN MEASURING AND NUMBERS

The decades of the problem child?

Do we “see and observe” more so called problem-children than ever!

Classifying and categorizing children as at RISK and in NEED – a LACKING child!

It is typical for that child!

We can't expect more from those parents!

The problems are placed in the child – and seen as deviances from an imaginary normality?

ESSENTIALISM

Taming children's potentialities and desires?

Taming chance?

What happens to

Democracy?

Equity?

Solidarity?

To think an other whom I cannot grasp
through categories and representations
is an important shift

It challenges the whole scene of
pedagogy

Is diversity our greatest
similarity

*Can we look at life's infinite diversity
and complexity as an opportunity in
our preschools and schools?*

*Instead of as an obstacle to overcome
through shaping it into sameness and
normality?*

A project

Transculturalism and Communication

Childrens traces in Hallonbergen

A project from STELLA NOVA preschool

HALLONBERGEN

A disadvantaged – 'problematic' suburb

Social injustice

Segregation

Recognized and represented as
An immigrant preschool

A LACKING PRESCHOOL?

— LACKING CHILDREN?

*How can the encounter with Otherness -
with difference - take place as
responsibly as possible?*

Stella Nova - another narrative
of this sub-burb and the
inhabitants living there

View the preschool as a site for ethical,
aesthetical and political practice

Having trust in the potentialities *already
inherent and immanent to* children and
preschools

An ethics of an encounter

*Subjectivity is formed in
relations and in exchange in
between children, adults and the
material environment.*

Listening

Not making the other into the same

Stella Nova

MAY WE GO OUTSIDE THE FENCE?

A common answer?

*You know that you are not allowed to go
outside the fence!*

The pedagogues are taking care
of the children's collective
desires

Through bringing in affordances to the
environment: stafflies, papers, pens etc
to bring along for the children.

It is risky – the adults do not know
where the project is going

A lot of planning and thinking by the
pedagogues

A lot of discussions and
negotiations takes place

HARD WORK

Focus

Cooperation

Patience

Concentration

The rich child, rich parent, rich
teachers

Children are already "micro-
politically global" — they are already
involved and participants in the
global community.

We have to have trust and a belief in
LIFE

WONDER

Every other week, every other fortnight, every month, something unexpected, something that surprised us or made us marvel, something that disappointed us, something that humiliated us, would burst out in a child or in the children. But this was what gave us our sense of an unfinished world, a world unknown, a world we ought to know better... To be capable of maintaining this gift of marvelling and wonder is a fundamental quality in a person working with children (Malaguzzi, in Cagliari et al., 2016, p.392).