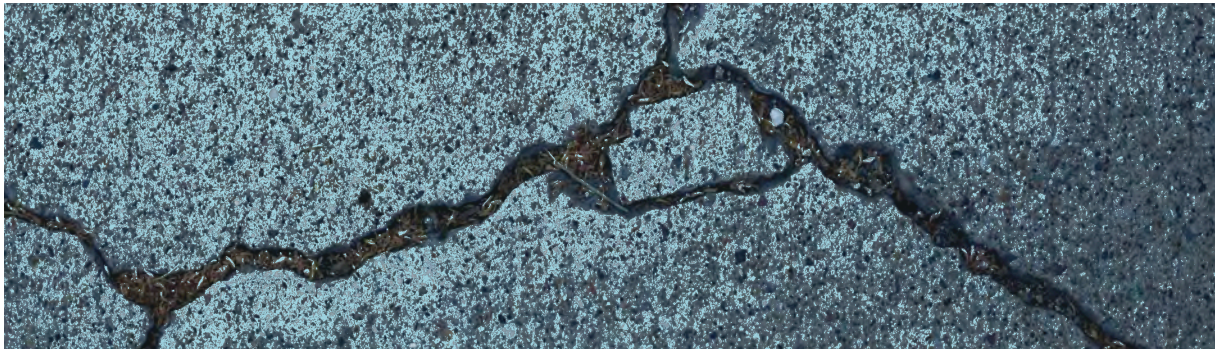


Nordic Comparative Analysis of Guidelines for Quality and Content in Early Childhood Education¹

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Abstract: The article is based on a project intended to further develop understanding of similarities and differences in Nordic binding guidelines and non-binding guidance for content and quality in early childhood education. The study is of a descriptive and comparative nature and the process is based on a research tradition connected to curriculum studies. Both variation and standardisation emerge in the comparative analysis with regard to content construction. Quality is expressed and may be interpreted as operationalised as both structure and process. In relation to the study results, quality may be interpreted as primarily oriented towards institutions, activities and secondarily towards individuals. Quality is consistently related to learning (lifelong learning) and is more linear and oriented towards goal-rationality than non-linear.

Keywords: Content, Curriculum, ECE, Guidelines, Nordic, Preschool, Quality.

Introduction

We are living in a society characterised by increased segregation, mediatisation and globalisation. Marketisation and migration of both people and ideas are bigger than ever before. The fundamental premise is that these rapid changes constitute new social conditions that are posing great challenges to social cohesion, democracy, individual well-being and access to equitable education. Education is currently emphasised as one of the most crucial factors in the fight against segregation and marginalisation.

¹ The paper is based on the Nordic Comparative Analysis of Guidelines for Quality and Content in Early

Early childhood education studies are a key component of education research in the Nordic countries. Comparative studies of ECE are a neglected field of research in general and comparative studies among the Nordic countries are of particular interest because the curriculum approach and guidelines are undergoing similar development in these countries (Åsén & Vallberg Roth, 2012). There is a need for research that focuses on the characteristics of the Nordic ECE model with lines of development significant to content and quality in early childhood education (cf Bennett, 2010; Björk Eydal, 2012; Einarsdóttir & Wagner, 2006; Gulløv, 2012; Jensen, Broström & Hansen, 2010; Karila, 2012; Kjørholt & Qvortrup, 2012; Strandell, 2011).

Research on ECE management is also important in an era when decentralisation is increasing in certain respects while state control is increasing in other respects (Åsén & Vallberg Roth, 2012). A movement from educational theory to economics can be discerned (Johansson, 2010). The tendency is moving towards greater goal-rationality, individualisation and harmonisation.

Aim and overarching question

The aim of the project is to further develop understanding of similarities and differences in Nordic guidelines on the quality and content of early childhood education as they emerge in laws and curricula. Other relevant national non-binding guidance and support material concerning ECE content and quality are also significant. The study is of a descriptive and comparative nature and the process is based on a research tradition connected to curriculum studies. The overarching question is:

- How are similarities and differences in Nordic guidelines on content and quality in early childhood education manifest?

Thoughts about the research task

In a globalised knowledge economy, the tendency is moving towards increased goal rationality, individualisation and harmonisation. There is sharper focus on efficiency and, in a stable trend, assessments are increasingly being formalised at the individual level rather than the group level (Andersen-Østergaard, et al, 2008). In parallel, assessment criteria are being made more comparable, uniform and standardised. This movement is considered characteristic of the principles of New Public Management (NPM).

The task at hand may be seen as an element of market orientation within the framework of the NPM movement in the sense that the project was initiated as an order placed after a public procurement, in which content and quality will be compared in Nordic ECE policy documents. In the global knowledge economy, political leaders are interested in comparative analysis outcomes regarding content and quality, which may in themselves facilitate harmonisation, comparability, standardisation and goal rationality.

In the process, I have attempted to describe Nordic diversity while recounting lines of agreement ('homogeneous' traces). Moreover, I separate discussions of binding and compulsory legislative texts from non-binding guidance and support materials. In so doing, my aim is to contribute to a more nuanced and multifaceted picture of the Nordic countries while tracing currently interwoven threads in a Nordic (transnationally influenced) curriculum orientation.

The term quality has been widely introduced in education policy. Quality is often used in combination with concepts like security, assessment, education, evaluation, accountability and control, but is also presented as an idea and means of creating better conditions for children's lifelong learning (cf Biesta 2011; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence; 2001; Haug, 2003; Karila, 2012; Kjørholt & Qvortrup, 2012; Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2010; Sheridan, Williams & Sandberg, 2013; Åsén & Vallberg Roth,

2012). Scholars have called this focus on quality in education the ‘Quality Turn’. (Segerholm, 2012). This draws attention to the need to critically examine language and policy oriented towards educational quality and not least towards methods of measuring the quality of education and their consequences. It is difficult to object to political intentions to improve education worldwide; what we need to scrutinise is the Quality Turn and its underlying assumptions of the importance of education as a goal-rational process whose chief purpose is to promote economic growth. Schwandt (2012) discusses the balance between the importance of standards, obligatory reporting and quality and the parallel risks of standardisation, over-regulation and control. Schwandt stresses the need to discuss the Quality Turn and the opportunity to balance accountability with human responsibility (cf Schwandt 2012; Segerholm, 2012).

Theoretical and analytical resources

As this work sheds light on curricula and policy documents, I begin with curriculum theory as a theoretical resource. The project’s questions are coordinated through a theoretical perspective that can primarily be placed in the border zone between curriculum theory and didactics (cf Englund, Forsberg & Sundberg, 2012; Gudem & Hopmann, 1998). An expanded definition of ‘curriculum’ was used in the project (cf Gudem, 1997; Vallberg Roth, 2006), which provides an opportunity for comparative analysis and reflections of the content in various types of pedagogical guideline texts that are compulsory to various degrees².

Governance and management

Nordic ECE curricula are embedded in the decentralised system of management by objectives. As a result, a preschool may in addition to the curriculum have its own policy documents or working plans that expand, define, or concretise the preschool’s orientation or methods without contravening the curriculum. These documents may be seen as a complement and may work in parallel with the national curriculum at the individual preschool. ‘What separates management by objectives from other management techniques is steering towards objectives using goals, goal decisions and goal follow-up (Rombach, 1991, p. 31; see also Bergenfeldt, 2008). In this context, management may be defined as ‘the deliberate attempts of actors to influence other actors’ (Lundquist 1992, p. 147). In a world of diversity and complexity, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2001) argue that a curriculum is needed that is based on processes of critical dialogue, reflection and the creation of meaning rather than ready-made and pre-determined content and accepted methods. This implies that a state-controlled curriculum must be re-examined against local curricula in a process whose participants become co-constructors in local processes (cf Osberg & Biesta, 2010).

Lundgren (2006) argues that verification of outcomes in local school practice is becoming more important to maintaining national equivalency and standards. Thus, decentralisation is occurring on the one hand and recentralisation on the other through increased control (cf Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000). State management is exercised through four governance systems: legal (the superordinate system of laws, ordinances and regulations); economic (how financial support is regulated); ideological (i.e., goals, content, organisation); and governance through control and assessment systems (ibid). This project emphasises the legal, ideological and controlling elements connected to the concept of quality. In this context, it can be mentioned that Haug published a meta-evaluation in 2003 concerning Swedish ECE in which he discussed the quality concept and the relationship between the

² The article is dealing with an analysis of guidelines as texts at the national level and is not focusing on concrete doings in the practice.

goals stated in the curriculum and practices in preschools. He discussed quality in relation to structure, process and outcomes, which will be addressed in this project combined with a critical reflection about the meaning of quality (cf Biesta 2011; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2002; Schwandt 2012; Segerholm, 2012) in relation to systematic documentation in which registration comes to the fore (cf Ferraris, 2012; Steyerl, 2003; Vallberg Roth, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b).

Hjort (2008) stresses that the trend in Denmark has gone from having public institutions where only their inherent legitimacy and work performance were discussed among professionals to the current situation in which the institutions must report outcomes and in which public funding is conditional upon these outcomes. She summarises the trend from management by goals to management by goals and outcomes as follows:

- From decentralised goals to central goals that do not take local circumstances, conditions, or preferences into account
- From general goals and degrees of latitude (interpretation of general goals) to specific goals
- From collective goals to individual goals
- From internal evaluation to external evaluation or external goals for evaluation

The question studied in this project is how similarities and differences between legal and ideological governance systems with controlling elements emerge in ECE guidelines in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The project also studies how the quality concept is expressed and operationalised in Nordic ECE policy documents. Does 'quality' refer to quality oriented towards structure, process and/or outcomes at the individual or organisation level? (cf Haug, 2003). Is learning viewed as linear and progressive or are children, teachers, settings, materials and 'subject content' viewed as movable relational fields of potentiality in continuous learning and creation of knowledge? (cf Dahlberg & Bloch, 2006; Elfström, 2013).

Design of curricula and content – with focus on what (content), how (method) and who (target group) The Starting Strong report (OECD, 2012) emphasises that curriculum and learning standards are important to ensuring even quality across different ECEC settings, supporting staff by giving them guidance on how to enhance pedagogical strategies and helping parents make informed choices and better understand child development. According to the report, parents should be regarded as 'partners.' Parental engagement and home learning environments matter for child development and learning. Particular challenges, according to the OECD-report, are related to engaging dysfunctional communities and ethnic minority parents (ibid).

Different countries take different approaches to curriculum design. Generally speaking, curriculum descriptions can be categorised as either taking an outcome-based and academic approach or an input-based and multifaceted approach (OECD, 2012). According to the OECD report, Anglo-Saxon countries tend to take an outcome-based and academic approach, while Nordic countries specify what is expected from staff in an input-based and multifaceted approach. 'Nordic countries tend to avoid using the term "child outcomes", while Anglo-Saxon countries favour the approach' (OECD, 2012, International Comparison: Curriculum Frameworks and Content, p 1). Combining these two curriculum models may have both short-term and long-term benefit (cf Sheridan, Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009).

Curricula are designed to strengthen national competitive advantage and economic growth by making it clear that children's knowledge in subject areas such as language, mathematics and science should be systematically documented and assessed (cf Bennett, 2010). In order to meet the challenges of the globalised society, the EU has identified key competences that it believes every citizen needs (EU, 2007). These key competences may be seen as the outcome of an emerging multi-polar world, a

world order in which there are multiple centres of knowledge, finance and power (cf Sörlin, 2007). The competences believed most important in a situation of global, multi-polar competition are good outcomes in a limited number of skills areas, especially language (communication in the mother tongue and foreign languages), mathematics, science and technology, along with metacognitive learning, social competence, cultural awareness and entrepreneurship. The question is how global and European policy are transformed in Nordic ECE policy documents.

Goal and content constructions seem to shift between object-related constructions (subject, field, theme) and individual-related constructions (key competences). When national goals are transformed to the local level, other influences can be traced through the occurrence of formulated competence indicators and individual-oriented assessments (Hjort, 2008; Jensen, Broström & Hansen, 2010; Johansson, 2010; Vallberg Roth, 2011b; Østrem 2010).

Broström (2012) formulates a curriculum approach that combines a Bildung oriented critical-constructive Didaktik³, influenced by Wolfgang Klafki, with postmodern ideals, influenced by Karen Barad, Gilles Deleuze, Gunilla Dahlberg and Hillevi Lenz Taguchi. There has been a tendency in ECE in recent years, according to Broström, to limit pedagogical practice to school-preparatory activities with strong emphasis on reading ability and mathematics. Broström argues that it is important for scholars and practitioners in the ECE field to analyse and reflect over this tendency and consider developing an alternative approach: 'Critical ECE pedagogy and didactics.' Based on a critical social theory, a theory of acknowledgement (Honneth, 2003), a general-education (bildung) oriented critical-constructive didactic (Klafki, 1997) and childhood studies (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2001), Broström presents a critical ECE pedagogy and didactic between linear and rhizomatic (non-linear, process-oriented) ideals.

Questions studied in the project concern Nordic similarities and differences with respect to the objects of management by goals, such as which knowledge and values are accentuated in the goal constructions (the didactical 'what' question), and the subjects of management by goals (the didactical 'who' question) with connections to age, target group, diversification, inclusion and exclusion. The focus is on similarities and differences in goal constructions concerning children, parents and teachers. Which desirable subjects emerge? Which subjects are included and/or diversified (variation and differences between subjects are created and accentuated) or excluded in the goal constructions? Is focus on subject content and/or on children's varying experiences, interests, backgrounds and needs? Are the ideals that emerge in the guidelines linear or rhizomatic and non-linear? In respect of methods, the study examines the degree to which methodological control and methodological latitude can be discerned. What differences and similarities emerge in relation to method instructions? This is linked to the theme concerning the structure and organisation of staff conditions. The paper does not focus on subject-related analysis, method and structure (for more information, see Vallberg Roth, 2013b).

Learning or education – with focus on the 'why' question

We can discern a clear trend that moves from care, play and learning to learning and knowing – and evaluation linked to lifelong learning (cf Vallberg Roth, 2011b). A study (Alvestad & Berge, 2009) in which Norwegian and Swedish preschool teachers were interviewed about their views on learning and curriculum shows that preschool teachers may feel some 'learning pressure' in the preschool. In her study, however, Vatne (2012) determines that a combination of care, play and learning is still the defining characteristic of ECE in Norway. Biesta (2011) introduces the term learnification as an

³ "The German term Didaktik is not the equivalent of the English term didactics. The concept of Didaktik goes beyond both didactics and the term curriculum by focusing on both democratic aims and content with a liberation perspective" (Broström, 2012, p 1).

expression of a general trend manifested in the individual's responsibility for lifelong learning. Wider latitude for adult-normed content and adult-normed assessment seem to accompany lifelong learning and a cohesive educational system. Grown-up and older generations norm the content and goals of the growing-up and younger generations, with more frequent assessments oriented towards the individual. Through things like the EU key competences, goals, content and evaluation become more oriented towards subsequent and later school years and working life (Åsén & Vallberg Roth, 2012) than towards, for example, play, care and well-being.

According to Jensen, Broström and Hansen (2010) the democratic dimension is still relatively strong in Danish ECE, but at present is interpreted within a framework of test and skills orientation (such as key competences). Political discussions of the content of the ECE curriculum and how it should be put into practice in care and teaching processes are framed by management based on optimising pedagogical practices in relation to standardised goals and outcomes. These researchers are seeking theoretical and practical approaches that unite the concepts of care, upbringing and education in relation to the globalised challenge.

Popkewitz (2008) discusses how the idea of inclusion of all children and the principle of 'no child left behind' are based on cosmopolitan philosophy. This is rooted not only in the theme that has to do with agency, reflection, freedom and emancipation, but also in processes of limitation in the form of the marginalisation of 'children left behind'. Cosmopolitan mentalities embrace a number of universal values about the evolution and progress of the emancipatory project. Popkewitz argues that these are based on complex relationships of both inclusion and exclusion, hope and fear. The hopeful is embedded in the idea of everyone's ability to learn to become a problem-solving, motivated, self-controlled and networking individual who contributes to useful knowledge in the global competition. The sense of fear is bound to all who do not fit the norm of the 'lifelong learning cosmopolitan.' The fear of not being successful is the driver and this is what leads to standards, control and the search for best practices. Those who are given categories as at-risk children who are not motivated, self-controlled, etc., and who are recognized for inclusion also represent, paradoxically, the difference that is cast out. So as well when the notion of difference and diversity controls the discourse, children with a difference that does not fit the norm for the 'successful cosmopolite' are at risk of being excluded.

Biesta (2011) argues that we are living in an era when measurement of educational outcomes has obscured the question of the purpose of education. According to Biesta, both researchers and educators should engage in examining the *raison-d'être* of education, its function. Biesta discusses evidence-based education between science and democracy. He asserts that the idea of evidence-based or evidence-informed education (that scientific evidence generated using large-scale and randomised studies should influence our educational decisions) leads to focus on 'what works' instead of focusing our interest on 'what is desirable'. Biesta argues that the problem with evidence-based education is that it 'constrains teachers' opportunities to use their professional judgement about what is pedagogically desirable in different situations' (p. 53). The issue for teachers is not primarily what is most effective, but rather what is appropriate for unique children in specific contexts. Biesta also discusses a prevailing 'accountability culture' in which freedom of choice is all about consumer behaviour in a market and where the goal is to meet the needs of buyers, which should not be confused with democracy. 'Consumers can select from a fixed menu. But democracy exists only when citizens are involved from the beginning in deciding what should be put on the menu' (Biesta, 2011, p. 106). This begs the question of how child and parent involvement is manifest in Nordic curricula and policy documents.

Biesta (2011) further emphasises that learning is fundamentally an individualist term that refers to what people do as individuals, as opposed to the concept of 'education, which always indicates a relationship: someone educates someone else and the person who educates has a certain

sense of the purpose of their activities' (p. 27). When it comes to the didactic 'why' question and the function of education, Biesta discusses three terms: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. To qualify involves equipping individuals with the knowledge required for citizenship, cultural life and working life. Through a socialising function (a transfer of norms and values), education incorporates the individual into a social order. The individual is inserted into existing ways of doing and being. The subjectifying function is oriented towards the individual's freedom, own voice and uniqueness (as irreplaceable). The process may be understood as the opposite of socialisation and has to do with a way of being that suggests independence of social orders. Socialisation has to do with how we are part of a larger and overarching order while uniqueness expresses how we differ from these orders. Subjectification refers to how the individual begins an act, a 'becoming', but is also the subject of the consequences and how others receive and judge our becomings and acts. Biesta argues that education should facilitate subjectification processes that make it possible for the educated person to become more independent in thought and action. The three functions are joined together. When, for example, we devote ourselves to qualification, socialisation and the subjectifying function are always affected. This paper analyses goal constructions, quality and the 'why' question in light of Biesta's three functions. How is the quality concept expressed and operationalised – are qualification, socialisation and/or subjectification stressed? Do curricula and management systems emphasise standards for children's learning and user satisfaction or do they emphasise education and care, including relationships between teachers, content, children and parents?

Study data selection, method and analysis

Methodologically, the study may be described as abductive in that the analysis and interpretation take place in the interplay between empirically loaded theory and theory-loaded empirics. Theory and empirics are alternated in the research process, wherein both are successively re-interpreted in light of each other (Alvesson & Sköldböck, 2008; Peirce, 1903/1990). The data consist of texts found in policy documents.

Material

The material comprises relevant national policy documents, such as laws and curricula for ECE content and the ECE remit, as well as non-binding guidance and support material. The material is divided into binding policy documents and non-binding guidance. The study includes policy documents and guidelines from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (see below). Policy documents and guidelines were selected partly in dialogue with a Nordic reference group of researchers and partly with advisers in the Nordic ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) network.⁴ In addition to laws and curricula, some examples of other guideline materials are analysed. When the reference group and the ECEC network suggested more than two guidelines, I have chosen two sets of guidance material that can be interpreted as shedding light on the distinctive elements of each country's guidelines – examples, in other words, of Nordic variation. The timeframe and project duration of approximately six months precluded the inclusion of guidelines in addition to those listed in the appendix. The guidelines were collected and analysed during the spring and summer of 2013.

Analysis

⁴ Members of the Nordic ECEC-Network (Nordic ministries); Karen Boldt, Head of ECEC Unit, Denmark, Tarja Kahiluoto, Special Government Advisor, Finland, Sigríður Lára Ásbergdóttir, Head of Division & Björk Óttarsdóttir, Adviser, Iceland, Tove Mogstad Slinde, Adviser, Norway and Christer Tofténus, Senior Adviser, Sweden.

The analysis and approach may be described in terms of critical text analysis in an expanded hermeneutic approach (cf Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008; Silverman, 2011). I approach the study object by critically problematising, asking questions and illuminating formulations, tensions and traces. The comparative analysis traces ‘invariant and variant relationships between studied phenomena in different countries’ (Backström-Widjeskog & Hansén, 2002, p. 68). Critical text analysis – intertextual analysis – is performed by means of comparative illumination of texts and their interaction at various levels with focus on the state and Nordic levels, including transnational influences. Intertextuality refers to the notion that texts are shaped on the basis of other texts and formulations: ‘A dense network of cross-referencing, and shared textual formats, can create a powerful version of social reality’ (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011, p. 90).

The collected material was processed and analysed against preformulated questions and the described theory/analysis framework. The analysis alternates between whole and part, between empirical oriented analysis, an open reading/coding and theory-oriented categorisation. Processing and analysis occur in a flowing process of steps and clusters that are partially overlapping/integrated. In concrete terms, the first step is to read process and code the material. At this stage, I am looking for prominent traces in the form of words (word frequency analysis), formulations and content. I then categorise the content according to research questions that coalesce into various themes, as exemplified by the titles in the result section of this paper. The close empirical analysis is exemplified by the word frequency analysis. The words selected in the frequency analysis are words related to questions: these can also be linked to EduCare (Education and Care). I call these words signal words.⁵ The word frequency analysis is not as precise as it might seem to be. For instance, the number of words is related to the number of pages and the length of the documents (more words fit on more pages). In addition, words that happened to be misspelled are not included and translations of words may be inexact when words in different languages are not direct equivalents, etc. The word frequency analysis may, therefore, be regarded as more of an indication of a direction rather than an exact representation. Further, the collected material was analysed against the described theory/analysis framework. The theory-oriented categorisation can be exemplified by the functions (Biestas concepts of qualification, socialisation and subjectification) described in the section entitled *Distinctive features of the guidelines of each Nordic country*.

Group designations

The title of the project is: Nordic Comparative Analysis of Guidelines for Quality and Content in Early Childhood Education and I use the term ECE when I need a general term.⁶ ‘Nordic guidelines’ is a group term for all policy documents analysed, including both binding and non-binding material. The Nordics comprise the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the self-governing territories of the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The self-governing territories are not included in the paper based on the commissioned report.

Summary discussion of Nordic guidelines – EDUCARE

Earlier research includes both more homogeneous and, to a certain extent, heterogeneous traces concerning the Nordic ‘ECEC model.’ The homogeneous traces with transnational influences concerning quality, evaluation, individualisation, parental and child participation (satisfaction) and

⁵ Signal words: Learn, development, know/ledge, play, care, welfare, secure, bring up, teaching, general education/education, freedom, solidarity, well-being, Christian, non-confessional, democracy, equality, gender equality, responsibility, influence, planning, evaluation, document, quality, method, special/needs, disabilities, native language, language, age, gender, girl, boy, woman, man, child, parent, family, guardian, staff, teacher, preschool teacher, educator, supervisor and manager.

⁶ The analysis generally shows an orientation more towards education than care, which may legitimise the choice of the term ECE as a general designation.

lifelong learning emerge in the comparative analysis (cf Bennett, 2010; Einarsdóttir & Wagner, 2006; Karila, 2012). The undertone of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and an ‘OECD regime’ that emphasises lifelong learning (cf Bennett, 2013) may be interpreted as echoing in the guidelines. The ECEC model described in terms of EduCare is thought to be moving more in the direction of Education than Care in earlier research. The ‘Edu’ orientation also emerges very strongly in the comparative analysis, while ‘Care’ is considerably weaker in the documents. This is particularly interesting considering that the Nordic model includes children in the age groups of 0/1-5/6. This is an important difference in an OECD comparison, as non-Nordic countries often do not offer preschool (ECE or the equivalent) to children under the age of about three (cf Moss, 2013). Earlier research also notes that ECEC policy is based on a Nordic tradition and ideology that emphasises democracy, equality, freedom and solidarity (see e.g. Einarsdóttir & Wagner, 2006). In the following discussion, some of these ‘homogeneous’ traces and Nordic ‘signal words’ will be examined for nuances and shades of meaning and sometimes emerge in more heterogeneous guise based on close readings of Nordic ECE guidelines (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) in 2013. First, a few lines about what is meant by content and quality.

Content refers to the construction of goal areas and themes or subject orientations, as they are manifest in the guidelines’ tables of contents and goal and content constructions.

Quality is an ambiguous and contextual concept that is difficult to pin down in one clear and singular definition. Quality may refer to the value of the characteristics of an object, subject, or actions/activities. In this report, the analysis was oriented towards how quality is operationalised in policy documents based on a division according to structure, process and outcomes. There are no unequivocal correlations between these concepts in the ECE context, but structural agents may be interpreted as creating conditions and scope for both processes and outcomes. The structure also includes the policy documents themselves: laws, curricula and non-binding guidance and support materials. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research report on the best interests of the child (NOU 2012:1) quotes the factors that the European Commission (2009) considers central to assuring ECEC quality, as follows:

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

The underlying assumptions about quality associated with the ‘Quality Turn’ regard education as a goal-rational process whose chief aim is to facilitate economic growth. Essentially all materials included in the study were based on linear management by goals, that is, on education as a goal-rational process with predetermined goals. One set of material (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012) was based on non-linear and rhizomatic ideals, which will be discussed below. While linear management by goals emphasises qualification and socialisation in the form of lifelong learning, the non-linear may aim more at keeping avenues open for departure from the daily arrangement, with creativity and innovation as important content and with emphasis on subjectification, where children’s becoming break through and children are treated as unique (irreplaceable) individuals (cf Biesta, 2011; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2001; Dahlberg & Bloch, 2006; Elfström, 2013). Quality will also be discussed in relation to the balance between human

responsibility and accountability (reporting and documentation). First, a few lines about Nordic ministries and terminology.

Nordic ministries

In Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, ECE matters are assigned to ministries that manage national issues concerning the entire education system, that is, ministries responsible for education. In Denmark, responsibility for ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the (then) Ministry of Children and Education in 2011 (was changed to Ministry of Education in August 2013 and Children was moved to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and Integration). In Finland, the responsibility was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture effective January 2013. Finland was thus the last Nordic country to transfer responsibility for ECEC to the ministry responsible for education. The Swedish Ministry of Education took over responsibility for ECEC from the Ministry of Social Affairs much earlier, in 1996. The transfers can be related to the degree of greater orientation towards education than care.

Nordic terminology, years and scope

The Nordic guidelines use various terms for institutional activities and professional work with children aged 1-5, which may reflect partially divergent orientations. Dagtilbud [roughly day-care; tilbud means 'offer' or loosely 'provision'] and Dagtilbudsloven [the Day-Care Facilities Act] in Denmark can be interpreted as being oriented towards the offer of day-care institutions and emphasises parents in allowing for the possibility of parent boards with a parent majority, which in the Nordic comparison may be interpreted as a relatively market-oriented law. Barndagvård [Children's Day-Care] and Barndagvårdslagen [the Children's Day-Care Act] that regulate ECEC staff in Finland may be interpreted as oriented towards care and early childhood education. The terms lekskola [playschool/preschool] and lekskolelärare [playschool/preschool teachers] are used in Iceland in the Lekscolelag [Playschool/Preschool Act]. The Norwegian Barnehageloven [Kindergarten Act] and the terms Barnehage [kindergarten] and barnehagelärare [kindergarten teachers] can be interpreted as among those more clearly rooted in the Fröbel Kindergarten legacy (cf Haug, 2013). Förskola [preschool] as a voluntary form of schooling in Sweden and integrated in Skollag [the Education Act] and a system of licensed preschool teachers may be interpreted as the most school-oriented system in the Nordics. Overall, the guidelines date from the period of 1972-2013, but all binding guidelines have been updated and were valid of 2013. The law enacted in 1973 is Finnish and a new law is currently being drafted. The scope of the Nordic guidelines varies between 8 and 254 pages.

Word frequency analysis

Examples of frequently used words are learning (lifelong), development and parents. Play is more connected to learning than to care. As well, when the entirety with respect to care, play and learning is addressed in the guidelines, overall content is more closely linked to learning than to care, security and closeness with no required performance. Responsibility is emphasised more than influence, which is interesting in light of democratic values. Evaluation is more frequent than planning. Quality consistently emerges as a concept more closely linked to learning (lifelong), responsibility, evaluation, documentation and assessment than to care, security and influence.

The nature of goals and management systems

Decentralised management by goals, but also re-centralisation (cf Hjort, 2008; Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000) are operational in all Nordic management systems. I have studied legal (laws) and ideological management systems (curricula and non-binding guidance). With respect to controlling ECE

management in the Nordics, I have analysed elements related to evaluation and quality in laws, curricula and non-binding guidance. Evaluation in the form of external inspection combined with internal self-assessment is one way of controlling and managing education that emerges in the documents, although the emphasis on external inspection or internal evaluation varies. Management through documentation and assessment is found consistently in the material. In respect of the nature of goals, goals in Sweden are explicitly formulated as goals to work towards for pre-primary institutions,⁷ not goals to be achieved at the individual level. For some Nordic countries, it is more difficult to determine whether the goals are formulated as goals to work towards or goals that must be achieved. With regard to language assessment in Denmark,⁸ I interpret the matter as involving an assessment of goals to be achieved at the individual level. The overall impression, however, is that the goals are more broad than detailed and that Nordic national goals are more oriented towards goals to work towards than goals to be achieved. But the uncertainty about the nature of the goals makes it more likely that national goals for preschools to work towards may, at the municipal and local levels, be interpreted and transformed into goals that must be achieved by individuals. This is something that can also be manifest in municipal standards, as shown in various studies (cf Hjort, 2008; Jensen, Broström & Hansen, 2010; Johansson, 2010; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012; Vallberg Roth, 2012). In Sweden, for example, age-normed language screening of individual children (assessment of what individual children may achieve in language development related to a predetermined and age-related norm) may be interpreted as incompatible with national goals to work towards for the institution, wherein children should not be compared to a norm or to anyone other than themselves. But there are also Swedish researchers working from the economic perspective who have determined that there is a need to ‘clarify the preschool curriculum with regard to the opportunities and duties of preschool personnel to assess children’s development and learning at the individual level’ (von Greiff, Sjögren & Wieselgren, 2012:2, p. 114).

Fundamental values

Earlier studies (see e.g. Einsdottir & Wagner, 2006) which point out that policy is based on a Nordic tradition and ideology that emphasise democracy, equality, freedom and solidarity can be given greater clarity and nuance. Icelandic and Norwegian policy documents emphasise that ECE should be based on Christian and humanist traditions. A Christian tradition is not something that is manifest in Danish, Finnish or Swedish policy documents and according to the Swedish Education Act, teaching should be non-confessional. Democratic values are accentuated in Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish policy documents and are mentioned in Danish binding guidelines. Democracy is not mentioned in Finnish binding guidelines or non-binding guidance, but peace and warm interpersonal relationships are discussed in the Day-Care Act. Equality/gender equality emerge in Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish binding guidelines and in Finnish non-binding guidance. The Nordic model is characterised by relative equality (ibid) and gender is mentioned in the majority of binding guidelines. Freedom and solidarity are most prominent in Norwegian guidelines and are also mentioned in Swedish guidelines. Solidarity also occurs in the Icelandic curriculum and freedom is mentioned in Danish guidelines. Overall, democracy can be interpreted as appearing in a somewhat stronger light of freedom than of solidarity.

⁷ The Norwegian curriculum makes it clear that the goals are goals for what children should experience (so-called process goals).

⁸ The introduction of language mapping for children who are assessed as having special needs for language intervention has been recommended as obligatory in the Norwegian parliamentary report (Report 24, 2012-2013): *Framtidens barnehage* [The Kindergarten of the Future], see note 9.

Theoretical traces

In the policy documents, we find first and foremost traces of sociocultural perspectives along with those of the child and childhood perspectives. The sociocultural perspective may be expressed as that the curriculum is based on the notion that child development and learning are relational and take place in interaction with others. Signs of both humanism, which puts human concerns at the centre, and posthumanism and neuroscience emerge in the guidelines (see posthumanism below). Theories of developmental psychology may possibly also be discerned; perhaps primarily in the Finnish Day-Care Act concerning the balanced development of the child's personality and orientation towards the child's physical, social and emotional development (cf Karila & Alasuutari, 2012). Developmental psychology and linguistics can also be traced in the age-normed language development goals that are manifest in Danish and Norwegian guidelines. Overall, there is an emphasis on parents and learning, which may be interpreted as traces of a market-economic perspective and advanced liberal management (cf e.g. Rose, 1999). This has to do with individual lifelong learning and how the customer should be informed and be satisfied with their choices – with emphasis on freedom of choice (cf Biesta, 2011). Quality in the guidelines may primarily be interpreted as based on goal-rational, economic and future-oriented perspectives. The economic perspective is very apparent in the report to the Norwegian Storting [parliament] on the Kindergarten of the Future (see note 9), which argues that research shows that kindergarten/pre-primary education produces national economic gains, among else due to positive effects on the children's subsequent level of education and labour market status as adults. At the same time, public expenditures connected to special education, crime and health care are reduced. Investments in kindergartens are an important and cost-effective measure that must be put right in order to increase the employment rate and wages among the population as a whole (ibid). Investments in a good education system with good kindergartens yield high returns for both children and society and are thus one of the most important investments that can be made for the future (ibid).

Anthropocentric and linear or non-anthropocentric and rhizomatic traces in policy documents

The majority of the Nordic policy documents may be regarded as anthropocentric and linear policy documents that focus on humanist values and people (children, parents and professionals) and goals are formulated as predetermined (linear) goals and directions to be followed. Respect for nature and/or sustainability emerge as important values. There is however one document that shows non-anthropocentric traces and which prescribes rhizomatic ideals (non-linear directions in movement) for ECE: the Swedish non-binding guidance document Follow-up, Evaluation and Development in Preschools: Pedagogical Documentation (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012). This support material from the National Agency for Education presents pedagogical documentation and its theoretical bases as a relational working tool. 'Learning is no longer considered an individual, isolated and independent activity, but rather something which is linked to the setting and to other people' (p. 10). In this context, the theoretical bases for pedagogical documentation may be linked to posthumanist scholars like physicist Barad (2012). Pedagogical documentation is based on a rhizome-like ideal described as follows:

The term 'rhizome' is taken from biology and denotes the root systems of certain plants. The system may grow and spread in various directions, unlike a tree root, for instance, which always branches out at the ends. Rhizomatic thought makes it possible to describe how learning, like rhizomes, moves along unpredictable paths and is in no way linear or progressive. Learning thus does not follow a linear and predetermined path, but rather moves this way and that along unpredictable paths. (National Agency for Education, 2012, p. 27).

So, rhizomes symbolise non-linear growth in unpredictable directions, while the tree may be interpreted as symbolising a linear and goal-directed process and development with fixed branching out at the ends (cf e.g. Norwegian non-binding guidance on language, 2013). Based on the rhizomatic ideal, the language skills of different children may grow along unpredictable paths and may involve creating meaning in the moment – creating the conditions for a becoming and a potential in the ongoing present; an unpredictable and relational field of potentiality can be denoted. The processes can then be described as driven by curiosity and oriented towards the potentially possible and unexpected creation of meaning through intertwined creative forms of expression in various settings. Linear management by goals is instead oriented towards children’s language development formulated through set goals, norms, criteria and levels (which are found in Nordic policy documents and with particular focus in Danish binding guidelines and Norwegian non-binding guidance).

The pedagogical documentation recommended by the state in Sweden (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012) can be related to fixed goal-rational systems. This begs the question of how well linear, binding systems of management by goals, including predetermined directions in the form of goals to work towards found in policy documents, align with the recommended pedagogical documentation based on non-linear, rhizome-like ideals. Ideologically, conflicting elements can be discerned between democratic claims in curricula and binding policy documents and the recommended rhizomatic ideal in the guidance on pedagogical documentation (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012) in the sense that rhizomes may be described as both the best and the worst (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012, p. 95) and fascism (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012, p. 99) can be mentioned in the context. If we imagine that the goals to work towards found in the Swedish curriculum move in a democratic direction, then all forms of growth in the opposite direction, a non-democratic and, for example, fascist direction, can be interpreted as unacceptable. But with the rhizomatic ideal, both the democratic and the non-democratic direction may be potentially possible, since the rhizome can grow and spread in all possible directions. The rhizomatic ideal is thus one of the ideals recommended by the state which may also be interpreted as having a built-in non-democratic potential and direction that contradicts democratic claims in curricula and binding policy documents (Vallberg Roth, 2013). Moreover, the system of management by goals regulates anthropocentric and centred subjects, which may be interpreted to refer to focus on the child, while the rhizomatic ideal is based upon non-anthropocentric, de-centred subjects where focus is not on the child.

Goal and content construction

Variation and uniformity in content construction both emerge in the comparative analysis. Four countries have curricula as binding documents – in Finland, the curriculum is only non-binding guidance. In general, cognitively oriented content areas may be interpreted as having been reinforced, while there are signs that culture and creativity have been weakened to a certain extent (cf e.g. Holmberg, 2013; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012).

The Nordic curriculum model is characterised by being input-oriented and institution-focused with goals to work towards and content constructed as objects and thematic orientations. Non-Nordic western models are characterised more as outcome-oriented with learning outcomes at the individual level and goals to be achieved, wherein assessment of children’s knowledge and skills is prominent (cf Bennett, 2010, 2013). Goal and content constructions emerge in the comparative analysis which may be interpreted as oriented towards both the object and the individual (skills). The clearest examples of orientation towards individuals and skills are found in the language skills goal calling for language testing of three-year-olds in Denmark and language skills mapping and continuing observation and assessment of children in Norway. Finland’s individual plans, Iceland’s child development

assessments and Sweden's systematic documentation of every child's development and learning are other examples of the individual orientation (see the overview 1 below).

In the majority of the curricula, the content construction includes six or seven content-specific or thematic orientations (see overview 1 below). All of the Nordic curricula may be interpreted as including language, culture and nature as content. Sweden differs with a construction in goal areas where the corresponding content, as in the aforementioned content-specific orientations, is found primarily in integrated bullet lists under the goal area of 'Development and learning'. Moreover, large parts of the Swedish curriculum (section 2) are constructed in both goals and guidelines. The goals indicate the direction of the ECE institution's work, while guidelines indicate the responsibility of ECE teachers for ensuring that work is carried out in accordance with curriculum goals and the responsibilities of staff on the preschool's working teams. In respect of differences in content construction, mathematics is included in the Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish curricula. The Norwegian and Swedish curricula can also be interpreted as emphasising technology. It is interesting that religion and philosophy and community and society, which are included in the Norwegian curriculum and to a great extent in the Finnish curriculum, which also has a history orientation, do not emerge as clearly in the Danish and Swedish curricula. The Icelandic curricula are distinguished by a general orientation towards themes of common values for all forms of schooling in the education system. Language (Nordic languages) may be interpreted overall as the most strongly emphasised content in the analysed guidelines.

According to the OECD report (2012), Anglo-Saxon countries tend to take an outcome-based and academic approach, while Nordic countries specify what is expected from staff in an input-based and multifaceted approach. 'Nordic countries tend to avoid using the term "child outcomes", while Anglo-Saxon countries favour the approach' (OECD, 2012, p. 1). Both of these traditions seem to co-exist to a certain extent in current Nordic ECE guidelines along with a growing interest in documenting and assessing the development, knowledge and abilities of individual children, including in academic, cognitively oriented goal areas (see overview 1 below).

| Content-specific orientations* | | Documentation-individual assessment** |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Denmark | General personal development Social skills Language development Physical development and movement Nature and natural phenomena Cultural forms of expression and values | Language screening of three-year-olds |
| Finland | Mathematics orientation Science orientation History and civics orientation Arts orientation Ethics orientation Religion and outlook orientation (Language is embedded in all orientations) | Individual plans |
| Iceland | Literacy Sustainability Health and well-being Democracy and human rights Equality Creativity | Assessment of every child's development |
| Norway | Communication, language and text Physical development, movement and health Art, culture and creativity Nature, environment and technology Ethics, religion and philosophy Community and society Quantity, space and shape | Continuous observation and assessment of every child's development and happiness Language assessment (see note 10) |
| Sweden | Goal area Development and learning: Whole child development (5 bullets) Language/communication (5 bullets) Mathematics (4 bullets) Science (3 bullets) Technology and building (2 bullets) Motor skills, body perception, health and well-being (1 bullet) Creativity - play, art, movement, singing and music, dance and drama (1 bullet) Cultural identity, communication in Swedish and native language (1 bullet) | Systematic documentation of every child's learning and development |

*The following presents only part of the content constructions (as themes, orientations, pillars, subject areas and the goal area of development and learning).

** Content, documentation and individual assessment are based on both binding guidelines and non-binding guidance.

Overview 1: Examples of content-specific orientations and documentation at the individual level in Nordic guidelines

The curricula point out specific content towards which children's learning should be aimed. Based on the overview, quality can be interpreted as being linked to both a comprehensive and cognitive approach, but with an intensified cognitive (academic) orientation at the individual level. Earlier

studies point out that the combination of the Nordic and Anglo-Saxon curriculum models may be beneficial in the short and long terms (cf OECD, 2012; Sheridan, Pramling Samuelsson & Johansson, 2009). According to the OECD (2012), the comprehensive, multifaceted and input-oriented model may be most likely to improve the child's long-term learning, including creativity, independence, self-esteem, initiative and motivation to learn. The academic model may instead be most likely to improve the child's short-term learning outcomes including reading and writing ability and mathematical, scientific and specific knowledge (ibid).

Distinctive features of the guidelines of each Nordic country

Taken as a whole, the Nordic guidelines yield stronger manifestations of qualification and socialisation than subjectification. According to Biesta (2011), subjectification refers to how an individual initiates an action, a becoming, but is also subject to its consequences and how others receive and assess our becomings and actions. Biesta also argues that education should facilitate subjectification processes that make it possible for the educated person to become more independent in thought and action. Although subjectifying functions emerge, 'Bildung' in the critical sense, as a support for developing critical and independent thinking and action, cannot be interpreted as being in the foreground. The process of 'Bildung' refers to human beings constructing themselves as something which is not predetermined (cf Dahlberg, 2013). A critical stance may refer to 'making use of the intellect without guidance from anyone else' (Gundenäs, Hylmö & Lindgren, 2011, p. 19) with the intention of creating the conditions for alternative ways of acting, thinking and speaking.

Denmark

Danish binding guidelines are distinguished by the emphasis on parents in allowing for parental boards with a parent majority. It is also interesting that there is no explicit regulation of mathematics in the thematic content constructions of the guidelines. 'Native language' is not mentioned in the Danish guidelines. Examples of subjects that may be interpreted as exclusionary in the Day-Care Facilities Act are, firstly children in need of support for a native language other than Danish and, secondly, teachers (not mentioned in the Act).

A curriculum process categorised by age (0-2 and 3+) is regulated in Danish law, but not in the other Nordic national policy documents, where the goals can often be interpreted as characteristic of an orientation towards older ECE children. While age diversification emerges in the Danish Day-Care Facilities Act, an emphasis on the very youngest children may be observed. The regulation of food and mealtimes is also treated relatively extensively compared to other Nordic laws. Finally, day-care is obligatory for all bilingual three-year-olds in Denmark. The most concretised examples are found in non-binding guidance on the child setting and language screening for three-year-olds. Parents are meant to participate in the language assessment and the pedagogical aspect, for which the day-care facility is responsible, includes a graded skills assessment wherein the linguistic section is translated into a score that makes it possible to place children into one of three linguistic profiles leading to general, focused or special interventions.

Function – Danish guidelines

In general, the Danish law may be interpreted as more oriented towards socialisation and qualification than subjectification. The Danish guidelines may be interpreted as oriented towards socialisation (e.g. personal and social development), qualification (e.g. learning and themes and language assessment) and, to a certain extent, subjectification. Examples of subjectification are engaged adults who are viewed as 'birth coaches' for the dreams and wishes of their children. In respect of the qualifying

function, it is interesting that subjects such as mathematics and technology are not emphasised in the content.

Finland

Finnish guidelines are distinguished by their orientation towards upbringing. Children's rights, well-being, play and development are also emphasised. Distinctive elements include the idea of child-rearing in partnership and that children should be offered stable, secure and warm human relationships. The content construction that includes a history (civics) orientation is distinctive, as is the embedding of language in all orientations, rather than as a separate track. Terms like peace and equality – but not democracy – are found in the Finnish guidelines for early childhood education.

Parents are meant to work in consultation with staff in a child-rearing community where partnership is a goal. Within the child-rearing community, the knowledge and experience of the two key partners should be melded. The Finnish curriculum is distinctive in that parents of children whose native language is not Finnish are diversified and expected to assume responsibility for the child's development of native language skills. Another distinctive element is found in instructions that investments in improving staff knowledge about the Romany people are necessary.

Function – Finnish guidelines

In general, the Finnish law may be interpreted as oriented more towards socialisation than qualification and subjectification. The non-binding Finnish curriculum may be interpreted as being oriented primarily towards socialisation (e.g. upbringing) and qualification (e.g., various subject-specific orientations), but also subjectification to a certain extent. One example of a subjectifying element is the notion that improving the child's well-being on the personal level will create a foundation for every child to develop and succeed according to their individual circumstances.

Iceland

That which is particularly distinctive of Icelandic law is the orientation towards play that we find in the terminology, where the Icelandic words for preschool, the preschool act, preschool teachers etc. are based on the root word meaning 'play', and that the law points out that the national curriculum should emphasise the value of play in all ECE activities. Also distinctive are the regulation of fundamental values and the principle that ECE practices should be based on the Christian heritage and tradition. Solidarity and well-being also emerge. The themed content-specific and values pillars are common for the entire education system. The content areas for pre-primary learning are Literacy and Communication, Health and Well-being, Sustainability and Science and Creativity and Culture. Content such as mathematics and technology is not emphasised, but are incorporated into the Sustainability and Science area. Evaluation and assessment are accentuated in terms of both internal and external evaluation.

Subjects that may be interpreted as excluded from the curriculum are children whose native language is other than Icelandic. Other excluded subjects may be children and parents whose heritage is other than the Christian, Icelandic heritage.

The material on frameworks applicable to qualifications for lifelong learning shows that Iceland's new law on education from preschool to university and adult education is based on 'the policy of lifelong learning.'

Function – Icelandic guidelines

Taken as a whole, the Icelandic law may be interpreted as oriented mainly towards socialisation and, to a certain extent, qualification and subjectification. The Icelandic curriculum can be interpreted as

oriented towards socialising (e.g. equality, solidarity and Christian heritage), qualifying (e.g. literacy and science) and subjectifying functions; 'self-image by respecting the uniqueness and views of each individual' (p. 33) is one example of subjectification. With respect to the qualifying function, it is interesting that content such as mathematics and technology is emphasised on equal terms with creativity, sustainability and well-being. The non-binding guidance material may be interpreted as oriented towards qualification.

Norway

As with Iceland, Norway is distinguished by the emphasis on Christian and humanist tradition in the values stated in the guidelines. Freedom and solidarity also emerge. What separates the Norwegian Barnehagelov [Kindergarten Act] from the Icelandic Lekscolelag [Playschools/Preschools Act] is that under Norwegian law private kindergarten facilities may choose not to base their programmes on the Christian and humanist tradition. The Norwegian guidelines emphasise learning and play, but the distinctive characteristic in the Nordic comparison is that the term *danning* (*Bildung*) also occurs. In respect of native language, my interpretation is that Sami as a native language enjoys special status in the guidelines. The preschool curriculum emphasises that it is important children are able to experience warmth and love. Children and parents whose heritage is other than Christian may be interpreted as being excluded from the binding guidelines.

Language skills mapping and cooperation between preschools and the schools are in focus in the selected non-binding guidance material. The language materials state that all children benefit from being in a multilingual setting. The descriptions of settings in the material provide guidance for facilitating multilingualism and the setting should be arranged so that multiple languages become apparent. Parents and staff can be important resources in this effort. In respect of documentation and assessment of multilingual children, however, they emerge overall as more diversified children with problems and needs for support than as potentially resource-rich children. The mapping instruments discussed generally have the majority language of Norwegian as the norm and goal of learning. Guidance for parents of children assessed as having difficulties with language development are both more comprehensive and more intrusive (e.g. documentation of whether others in the family have or have had similar challenges) than for other parents.

The document on cooperation between ECE institutions and schools is based on the notion of lifelong learning. When it comes to goals and content, the document states that the preschool curriculum has process goals without knowledge requirements while the school curriculum has competence goals. The focused content is made up primarily of the progression between subject areas in the preschool curriculum and the subjects in the school curriculum.

Function – Norwegian guidelines

In general, the Norwegian law may be interpreted as oriented towards qualification and socialisation as well as subjectification to a certain extent. The Norwegian curriculum may be interpreted as oriented towards socialising (e.g. fundamental values, Christian and humanist tradition), qualifying (e.g. subject areas) and subjectifying functions. With regard to the subjectifying function, it is a primary task to provide care and closeness and to ensure that children are treated with respect, empathy and willingness to interact based upon their age and individual circumstances. The qualifying function is even more strongly emphasised in the non-binding materials.

Sweden

Sweden is distinctive among the Nordic countries in that it does not have a separate law governing early childhood education. Teaching, learning and knowledge are emphasised more than play, care

and security, whose presence is weak or non-existent. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child expresses that children have a right to play. Play is not mentioned in the Swedish Education Act, but does occur in the binding curriculum. Education and teaching are also prominent and defined in the Education Act. Teaching refers to goal-directed processes under the leadership of preschool teachers, which are aimed at facilitating development and learning through the acquisition and development of knowledge and values (cf Doverborg, Pramling & Pramling Samuelsson, 2013). Teaching is however not mentioned in the curriculum. Care [vård] is not mentioned in the Education Act and there are no particular remarks on the very youngest children in the text (cf the Danish law that includes plans for children age 0-2). On the other hand, there is more emphasis on both responsibility and influence compared to other Nordic laws. Democracy and influence are relatively emphasised and freedom and solidarity are also mentioned.

Sweden is alone in having preschool as a voluntary form of schooling [skolform]. Native language support as well as non-confessional teaching also distinguish the Swedish Education Act in the Nordic comparison. Sweden's explicit policy oriented towards goals to work towards rather than goals for the child to achieve are also characteristic. Guardians whose native language is other than Swedish and who need support in their interactions with the preschool may be interpreted as excluded subjects in the guidelines.

The non-binding guidance materials emphasises systematic quality improvement and pedagogical documentation. Systematic quality improvement concerns structure, processes and outcomes (see the discussion of quality below). The material on pedagogical documentation is distinguished in the Nordic comparison by its grounding in a post-constructionist/post-humanist theory of rhizomatic ideals, de-centred subjects and materials with agency. Unlike other policy documents, quality in this material may be interpreted as being more closely linked to non-linear processes than to linear processes.

Function – Swedish guidelines

Qualifying, socialising and subjectifying functions are all manifest in the Education Act, but with perhaps a stronger emphasis on qualification in the Nordic comparison. In respect of the subjectifying function, the activities should be based upon and pay particular attention to the best interests of the child and the child's opportunity to freely express their opinions on matters that concern them. Qualifying (e.g. language, mathematics, science and technology), socialising (e.g. norms and values) and subjectifying functions all emerge in the Swedish curriculum. The subjectifying function may be interpreted as reinforced in the guidelines on pedagogical documentation through the openness to unpredictable breakthroughs and becomings that are oriented towards the potentially possible and unexpected creation of meaning.

Quality

Quality is expressed and may be interpreted as being operationalised both as structure and process in the Nordic guidelines, although with some variation and mutable distinctive features (see above). Structure concerns factors that create frameworks for the processes that children experience in preschool activities. These include staff/child ratio and size of child groups, institutional, premises and environmental conditions. Other structural factors include governance and management, professional skills development and frameworks provided through curricula and guidelines. Quality linked to processes concerns pedagogical activities and the processes that take place in the preschool. Child-adult and child-child interaction is central. This may apply to children's development and learning, fundamental values, staff work organisation, cooperation with parents, children in need of special

support and native language. Quality linked to outcomes in the Nordic guidelines may be interpreted as oriented towards both the organisation, activities and the individual (e.g. language screening and language mapping in which children's language skills are assessed). Generally speaking, outcomes may be something that 'comes out' of an activity or intervention. Within the education system, this has to do primarily with what staff have carried out and what their actions in their turn have led to, that is, effects in the form of children's learning and development. An outcome may thus be performance or effects or performance and effects. In respect of outcomes it is interesting that according to the Swedish National Agency for Education's advice concerning quality improvement, the process should reflect the institution's outcomes and not individual outcomes. At the same time, the degree of goal attainment should be assessed both on the basis of the measures taken by the preschool and on how well children's abilities are developed. Individual outcomes in the form of assessment of goals to achieve and knowledge requirements at the individual level may be interpreted as incompatible with goals towards which the institution is meant to work.

Quality is consistently linked to learning (lifelong learning) and is more linear and goal-rational than non-linear in the Nordic guidelines. It has more to do with predetermined and future-oriented learning (according to goals) than with unpredictable creation of meaning in the present. Moreover, the quality orientation brings responsibility for evaluation, assessment and registration to the fore. Quality is operationalised through documentation and registration.

Quality through registration and documentation

In the broad sense, one of the meanings of the word document is to collect and compile information. Documentation may be both digital and analogue and encompass videos, photographs, notes, observations, interviews, audio recordings, etc. In other words, a document is some form of recorded object (Vallberg Roth, 2012). The Italian philosopher Ferraris (2013) gives documentation a central position in an ontology on social reality that he calls 'Documentality.' He argues that documentation is fundamental in a sphere of social objects (such as graduations, marriage, ceremonies). Unlike social objects, natural and physical objects (such as rocks, trees and coconuts) exist more independently of all registration and representation. If we imagine graduations or weddings without proof or record, it is difficult to claim that a husband and wife or a graduate have been produced. The social objects are intimately linked with registration. Ferraris argues that social objects are social acts that have been inscribed on some kind of support, be it a paper document, a magnetic support or even physical substrate (as neurons in the brain) as memory in people's heads: '...we are in a society of registration' (Ferraris, 2013, p. 179). When the physical documents are stored, they are retained in our collective 'memory'. This is necessary to create and uphold the social order that a complex society requires (cf Asp Onsjö, 2011). These collective memories and traces may be regarded as mentalities, a kind of overarching thought complex that shapes the social conditions of society (cf Vallberg-Roth, 2013). And so, social objects are the result of the registration of acts - 'inscribed acts' according to Ferraris (2013). Social objects concern at least two persons and collective intentionality is placed in the document. In this sense, documents are also of high institutional and professional value. So, policies, education and professions cannot, as social objects, exist without documents. Documentation may further be seen as co-agents in what may be called socio-material (or material-discursive) life conditions (cf Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Prior, 2011). Material and things are not passive instruments, but rather active co-agents that interact with us (cf Lenz Taguchi, 2012). This is the theoretical basis of the Swedish material on pedagogical documentation.

Based on the documentality perspective, the act of registration itself comes to the fore. Systematic registration and documentation thus constitute the basis for regulating the lives of children, parents and teachers. This puts focus on the significance of registration to how the world is perceived

and arranged. The import of documentality or documentarism may then be that of a politics of truth (cf Foucault, 2011; Steyerl, 2003). Documents can then be used by various parties to temporarily show or prove something and often have the nature of being the triggers of action. Quality can be linked to documentality in the sense that registration and documentation are seen as the basis of all quality improvement work and that which is registered may be interpreted as constituting a politics of truth. That which is not registered is at risk of not being valued in systematic quality improvement. The Quality Turn pushes registered activities and actions to the fore. The duty of documentation is emphasised in the Nordic guidelines. Making things visible through documentation may also entail obscuring care and work with more complex pedagogical and social situations in day-to-day operations (Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2010). ‘The teaching profession is changing and a new way of being professional is to be good at displaying yourself and your activities in a way that is easy to describe and assess’ (Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2010, p. 82). Accounts and documentation are constructed and become fabrications. They may be understood as versions of ECE realities that are created to satisfy external assessors. In such cases, positive documentation and persuasive narratives are responses to performance requirements, to constantly put yourself on display (Ball, 2006; Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2010). Taken as a whole, professional liability has moved from responsibility through trust to accountability – responsibility through the reporting of activities (cf Andersen Østergaard, et al, 2008)

Quality in relation to learning, development, upbringing or care, security and

The material shows traces of alignment with variation when it comes to quality in relation to EduCare. In respect of variation and relative differences, Danish guidelines can be interpreted as oriented towards welfare and language learning, Finnish guidelines towards upbringing and welfare, Icelandic guidelines towards play and care, Norwegian guidelines towards learning and play and Swedish guidelines towards learning and development. Taken as a whole, however, the material shows traces of a trend moving from care and security to learning, and of evaluation linked to lifelong learning (cf Vallberg Roth, 2011b). Vatne (2012) determined that a combination of care, play and learning still constitutes the distinctive character of Norwegian ECE institutions. Although there are traces of play linked to care, togetherness and play as an end in itself in the Nordic guidelines, play tends to be invaded by more learning and goal-directed activity than by non-linear play. In the introduction, I mentioned that Biesta (2011) had introduced the term *learnification* as an expression of a general trend manifested in the individual’s responsibility for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning and a cohesive education system seems to allow greater latitude for adult-normed content and assessment. Older generations norm the content and goals of the growing-up and younger generations with more frequent documentation and assessment oriented towards the individual. Through things such as the EU key competences (EU, 2007), goals, content and evaluation are becoming more oriented towards subsequent and later school years and working life (Åsén & Vallberg Roth, 2012) than upon, for example, play, care and well-being. The transformation of and harmonisation with the EU key competences seem palpable in Nordic guidelines. Taken as whole, I interpret the Nordic guidelines as an expression of a holistic view on learning-lifelong learning rather than a holistic view of children.

Quality in relation to children and childhood

The child perspective and childhood occur but are mentioned relatively sparingly in the Nordic guidelines. There are examples such as that the child setting should be valued from the child perspective, that all forms of evaluation should be based on a clear child perspective, that day-care in cooperation with parents should help children have a good childhood and to ensure that every individual can enjoy their childhood and that ECE institutions should treat the child with trust and

respect and understand the child's intrinsic value. This is for the most part a childhood with centred children, but there are also traces of childhood with de-centred children (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012).

When it comes to quality in relation to children, desirable children emerge primarily as learning and competent children (cf Emilsson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2012; Palla, 2011) and then especially within predetermined skills areas such as language (the respective Nordic languages), social skills, science and, to a certain extent, mathematics and technology (cf Kampmann, 2004). Moreover, desirable children emerge as individual-normal children and as both inside and outside children. Desirable children are also children who are enthusiastic about documentation.

Trondman argues that 'The child perspective refers to ideas and beliefs about the best interests of the child formulated by adults' (Trondman, 2011, p. 68), while 'The child's perspective is the child's right to their own version of personal experiences, judgements and wishes' (Trondman, 2011, p. 69). Trondman's study shows children's normative expectations for a kind teacher or, in other words, children's expressions of quality in ECE. When children are asked what makes a teacher kind, it proves that the judgement has to do with interactive presence and duty of care. Children do not clamour for documentation. One can thus say that the Nordic guidelines respond poorly to children's expectations when it comes to adult interactive presence and the duty of care. In the majority of the binding guidelines there is for example no regulation of child group size and staff/child ratios that can be interpreted as corresponding to children's expectations. The Norwegian parliamentary report on the Kindergarten of the Future does however include a recommended staff/child ratio and the Finnish day-care ordinance regulates, for example, the number of staff with professional qualifications and training in relation to child groups.

Earlier research also shows that resistance and discontent may be found among children and parents towards standardised material and language assessments such as TRAS, which can reveal challenges in relation to children's rights to their own wishes:

It is apparent that the child perceives the planned language assessment as a frustrating interruption of his day ...

Trine: *Sit up here, so we can play.*

Hamza: *No*

Trine: *You have to sit up here – next to me.*

Hamza: *I don't want to.*

Trine: *Well, you have to. Come here!*

Hamza: *I [yuk]*

Trine: *What did you say, darling? Can you look at me?*

Hamza: *I want a story.*

Trine: *OK, we'll listen to a story afterwards.*

Hamza: *No*

Trine: *You really don't want to? (Holm, 2010, p. 173.)*

Our son's day-care centre has something called TRAS. Totally worthless and they use it to judge children. The worst thing is that all the teachers at the day-care centre judge completely differently, so you NEVER get any overall picture of how the child is doing. My son was forced to go to a speech therapist in spite of my objections. Nobody took me seriously because TRAS showed otherwise. (Familjeliv, 2009 in Vallberg Roth, 2013, p 159)

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

Varying methods of registration, regardless of whether written or in the form of pictures, sound, or symbols, construe and construct different versions of reality as expressions of power, management and support. All assessments are shaped from fixed positions, interests and perspectives and are thus part of the struggle to determine how reality is construed and constructed. The Nordic guidelines present documentation and assessment primarily in an enthusiastic tone and in the name of high quality and the best interests of the child. Documentation is not primarily connected with care, presence and security or conflict and resistance and may thus contribute to obscuring much of that which fills day-to-day life in the preschool (cf Andersen Østergaard, et al, 2008; Plum, 2010). Taken as a whole, documentation and assessment practices may support and reinforce children, parents and teachers on the one hand and weaken and constrain them on the other (cf Vallberg Roth, 2012).

Childhood for children or childhood for adulthood – is childhood being invaded by adulthood?

Overall, the preschool is formulated as a childhood arena. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is included in the Nordic guidelines, which means that children and childhood should be centred. The Norwegian parliamentary report on the 'Kindergarten of the Future'⁹ states that the development of the preschool has changed society and given us a new childhood arena for most children. Alongside the home, the ECE is the most important childhood arena of our time. This is something that applies to all Nordic societies. Although there are examples in the Nordic guidelines stating that children are supposed to enjoy their childhood, the childhood arena can be interpreted as having been invaded by school and lifelong learning as an investment in adulthood (cf Haug, 2013; Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012). The content and goals of the growing-up and younger generations are normed by older generations. With lifelong learning there tends to be less play both for its own sake and in relation to care, security and closeness.

ECE and childrearing may generally be considered an investment in the future. Investments in a good education system with good ECE programmes are thought to yield high returns for both children and society and are thus one of the most important investments in the future that can be made (see e.g. the Norwegian parliamentary report on the Kindergarten of the Future, see note 9). This perspective is valuable in certain respects: it draws attention to previously marginalised groups, such as children. The investment idea also helps channel more resources to improving the quality of educational institutions for children – but there are also related challenges. The investment concept is future-oriented and what is considered important is that children gain skills that will be useful later in life while they are at school or in the workplace. Children can thus be interpreted as being constructed more as 'becomings' than 'beings' who are living meaningful lives in the present (Kjørholt & Qvortrup, 2012). Secondly, harmonisation can lead to the construction of normal and universal laws of practice and thus weaken diversity. The message conveyed is that what Europe needs is more effective initiatives to ensure that every Member State defines a clear policy for lifelong learning. The qualification framework for lifelong learning (Iceland) may be interpreted as an instrument for

⁹ See <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/38272872/PDFS/STM201220130024000DDDPDFS.pdf>

transparency and harmonisation of education policy in Europe. And so, even as individualism and diversity are applauded, documentation and assessment may be oriented towards normality – lifelong normality.

The ongoing process of documenting development over the course of lifelong learning may be interpreted as imbuing every aspect of life in a transparent society. Transparency may refer both to the state of being transparent and to opening things up to view. Documentation and auditing of ongoing processes become different ways of exerting power. In this context, transparency may be connected to the ‘benevolence argument’ or, if you will, with so-called ‘benevolent power’ (Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012). Examples of the benevolence argument may be that documentation and assessment of children’s development and knowledge are necessary in order to identify children who need special support while there is still time to intervene. Lack of transparency may in turn be seen as the root cause of problems and crises. Documenting both offline and online as a whole can then be understood as corresponding to a desirable subject in a transparent society. Today, there is information about much of our lives on the internet – a phenomenon that can be termed Internetification (Alverén, 2012). User data and personal information are extremely valuable in a transnational market where traces of our lives can be sold to the highest bidder. National laws do not apply in a transnational market. ‘Personal information is going to be the new oil – a precious commodity for the 21st century. It is going to grow into an entirely new type of asset and affect all aspects of society’ (Alverén, 2012, p. 15).

Parents are generally more regulated and more frequently mentioned in the guidelines than are teachers, and parental involvement is strongly linked to the quality concept and to the countries’ economic success. No parent is permitted to say ‘no, thanks’ to systematic documentation of preschool children. Quality as an undemocratic force and as benevolent power can thus be interpreted as emerging (cf Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012). Parents appear as a relatively homogeneous group, other than parents of multilingual children and children with needs for special support. Diversified parents and children are more intensively and intrusively regulated, documented and assessed than other parents. Danish parents, for example, are expected to work with educators to assess their children’s language skills and provide information to the educators and then, as needed, allow their children to be given language stimulation. Norwegian parents (with children in need of special support) are supposed to give their consent to more thorough and systematic mapping and assessment. In conversations about arranged language stimulation in Norway, educators are recommended to ask parents whether others in the family have or have had similar challenges and about any concerns the parents might have. Broström (2006) raises ethical questions in relation to the study of children in such an intrusive way that we invade their privacy and control their lives through interpretation from the only perspective to which we have access – an adult perspective (cf Pettersvold & Østrem, 2012). Parents seem also to be studied and assessed on the basis of an institutional discourse.

Concluding thoughts about current guidelines reflected in Nordic and non-Nordic western tradition

In this concluding section, the contribution from the comparative analysis of Nordic ECEC guidelines in 2013 will be related to a study of the Nordic model published in 2010. John Bennett (2010) has written an interesting overview of the distinctive characteristics of Nordic and non-Nordic western curriculum and assessment traditions. The overview illustrates a systematic comparison of a number of aspects that touch upon understandings of children and childhood, ECE programmes, curriculum development, focus on the organisational programme, pedagogical strategies, goals for children, outdoor and indoor areas and assessment and quality control.

This comparative analysis of Nordic guidelines shows traces of breakthroughs of non-Nordic western traditions and co-existence of both the Nordic and school-preparatory tradition compared to Bennett's overview. The change can with benefit be described as an on-going (contradictory) process. Contemporary and current Nordic guidelines are thus no longer really in step and in harmony with the Nordic tradition. Harmonisation may instead be interpreted as occurring through transnational and globalised, 'knowledge economic' influences. A few elements that serve as examples of the co-existence of these traditions in the Nordic guidelines are: the presence of school-preparatory content; orientation towards individual development, autonomy and self-control; fundamental literacy and cognitive development; occurrence of graded knowledge assessment and control based on predetermined and age-normed learning outcomes (e.g. language screening).

With respect to assessment, Bennett (2010) argues that the Nordic tradition favours multiple assessment procedures. This is consistent with material collected from preschools in Sweden and generated in 2011, which showed that each preschool works with a wide variety of documentation and assessment procedures (Vallberg Roth, 2012). The study shows there is a need for professional skills development in the areas of documentation and assessment. One challenge has to do with being able to translate and transform action in practice to symbolic reporting (Andersen Østergaard et al, 2008). The intensified duty of documentation requires an expanded symbolic competence that includes the ability to express, communicate and report actions. Professionals need to be able to justify their assessments and choices of documentation procedures and critically reflect over the knowledge base of the assessments.

In conclusion

Researchers are seeking theoretical and practical approaches that unite the concepts of care, upbringing and education in relation to the globalised challenge (Jensen, Broström & Hansen, 2010). The analysis of the guidelines indicates that the Nordic countries, to various degrees, are struggling with this and have not really managed to unite these concepts; instead, they are choosing paths in some way. Overall, there are more traces of 'Edu' than 'Care'; and more of a holistic view on learning, lifelong learning, than a holistic view on children.

The following are examples of quite similar results to be found amongst the Nordic guidelines:

- Children from 0/1-5/6 years of age are included in the Nordic ECE guidelines
- Both public and private institutions are regulated
- Responsibility is more frequently mentioned than influence in the guidelines
- Inadequate or no support for children in need of assistance regarding a native language other than a Nordic language – Swedish guidelines excluded
- Age of children is mentioned more than their sex/gender
- Growing regulation of documentation and assessment at an individual level
- Quality can be interpreted as being linked to both a comprehensive and a cognitive content approach, but with an intensified cognitive (academic) orientation at the individual level
- Quality is consistently related to learning (lifelong learning) and is more linear and oriented towards goal-rationality than non-linear

From a time perspective, the material shows more extensive references to quality in the later guidelines compared to the earlier ones (time span between 1973 and 2013). The quality concept is both a result and also a part of the contemporary discourse (cf Haug, 2013). Quality is operationalised primarily as predetermined goals related to democracy. There are few traces of open and non-

predetermined goals, that is, of quality and democracy as non-linear processes. A non-linear process can be expressed as follows:

We should not try to judge what emerges before it has taken place or specify what should arrive before it arrives. We should let it arrive first, and then engage in judgement so as not to foreclose the possibilities of anything worthwhile to emerge that could not have been foreseen. (Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p 603)

Broström (2012) argues that there is need for a critical ECEC pedagogy and didaktik that is both knowledge and Bildung-oriented, one that is both a preparation for school and which contributes to critical-democratic education. Although reflection and critical thinking occur, the notion of a critical-democratic Bildung is not palpably present in the Nordic policy documents and quality is not primarily connected to critical reflection. In concrete terms, there are no traces for example that children's inquisitive questioning of and critical reflection over documentation should be supported, although there are traces of support for the notion that children should be inquisitive and critical about what is communicated through media images (Norwegian curriculum). Critical reflection about online and offline documentation may be supported and further developed in relation to both children, parents and professionals.

Further studies

In respect of differences between the Nordic guidelines, the heterogeneous traces, the somewhat varied traditions and policies in the Nordic countries may be interpreted in various ways as having been mediated and interwoven in transnational influences (cf Ball, 2008). In the contemporary guidelines, this has resulted in varying homogeneous and heterogeneous traces and a Nordic-historical comparative analysis would also be needed to gain deeper understanding of these patterns. The three self-governing territories of the Faeroe Islands, Greenland and Åland could also be included in a similar study. There is also need for a Nordic comparative analysis of documentation and assessment at the municipal, local and institutional levels. In a system of decentralised management by goals, the transformation of national goals at the municipal and local levels is highly interesting.

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Appendix
Nordic ECE guidelines

Denmark
Ministry of Education

Binding guidelines

Day-Care Facilities Act:
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/r0710.aspx?id=137202>

Announcement for day care, after school centers and club services:
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=137865>

Guidance for day care, after school centers and club services in 2009:
<http://www.ldd.dk/dls/653753685520.pdf>

Non-binding guidance and support material

Play and learn: National curriculum instructions <http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-og-dagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet/Fakta-om-dagtilbud/~media/UVM/Filer/Udd/Dagtilbud/111102%20Leg%20og%20laer.ashx>

Working with children in day care environment - the requirements and opportunities 2010:
http://dcum.dk/webfm_send/647

Language Assessment of children - 2013:
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-og-dagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet/Fakta-om-dagtilbud/Sprogvrdering-af-boern>

There are several other guidance and inspirational materials accessible on the ministry's website, including the following on pedagogical curricula:
<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelser-og-dagtilbud/Dagtilbudsomraadet/Fakta-om-dagtilbud/Paedagogiske-laereplaner-for-dagtilbud>

Reference person: Professor Stig Broström, Aarhus University and the Nordic ECEC Network.¹⁰

Finland

Formerly the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and effective January 2013, responsibility for children's day-care and early childhood education has been transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture. New legislation is currently in the drafting process.

Binding guidelines

Children's Daycare Act :
<http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/ajantasa/1973/19730036?search%5Btype%5D=pika&search%5Bpika%5D=19.1.1973%2F36>

The Decree on Day Care:

¹⁰ See note 4



Förordningen om
barndagvård1973023

The Act on Staff Qualifications on Social Services:



Lag om
behörighetsvillkoren 2

Non-binding guidance and support materials

The Curriculum for ECEC in Finland:

<http://www.thl.fi/thl-client/pdfs/2e130087-8320-4be7-b07d-218aa17e6873>

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publications 2002:10

Governmental Resolution on National Policy for ECEC:

http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=39503&name=DLFE-9839.pdf

Reference person: Professor Maarit Alasuutari, Tampere/Jyväskylä University and Nordic ECEC Network.¹¹

The national curriculum (Grunderna för planen...) is the main document guiding the quality and content of early childhood education (for children under 6 years). Then there is the governmental resolution that was published before the curriculum in 2002 (see above).

Iceland

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

Binding guidelines

The Preschool Act:

http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_Annad/Preschool_Act.pdf

The Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Preschools: 2012 [Aðalnámskrá leikskóla á ensku]:

<http://brunnur.stjr.is/mrn/utgafuskra/utgafa.nsf/RSSPage.xsp?documentId=CA2C880C51C8CE0D00257A230058FCA5&action=openDocument>

Act on the Education and Recruitment of Teachers and Head Teachers in Preschool, Compulsory School and Upper Secondary School:

http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_Annad/Log_um_kennaramenntun_ENSKA.pdf

Non-binding guidance and support material

Referencing the Icelandic National Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning: draft:

<http://brunnur.stjr.is/mrn/utgafuskra/utgafa.nsf/RSSPage.xsp?documentId=A2127FCE8ADA7E3600257B7B004AA6F5&action=openDocument>

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

¹¹ See note 4

Norway

Ministry of Education and Research

Binding guidelines

The Kindergarten Act:

http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dok/lover_regler/lover/barnehageloven.html?id=115281

<http://www.lovdatabasen.no/all/hl-20050617-064.html>

The Curriculum for Kindergarten in Norway:

<http://www.lovdatabasen.no/ltavd1/filer/sf-20110110-0051.html>

http://www.udir.no/Upload/barnehage/Rammeplan/rammeplan_bokmal_2011nett.pdf?epslanguage=no

Non-binding guidance and support materials

Language in the preschool - much more than just talk:

<http://www.udir.no/Barnehage/Pedagogikk/Veiledere/Sprak-i-barnehagen--mye-mer-enn-bare-prat/>

From the oldest to the youngest: Collaboration and coherence between preschool and school:

http://www.udir.no/Upload/Brosjyrer/5/fra_eldst_til_yngst_veileder_fra_kd.pdf

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

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

See also more on the website of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training:

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

Reference person: Professor Jan-Erik Johansson, University of Oslo and Nordic ECEC Network.¹²

Sweden

Ministry of Education and Research

Binding guidelines

The Education Act SFS 2010:800:

<http://www.skolverket.se/lagar-och-regler/skollagen-och-andralagar>

http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800/?bet=2010:800

The Curriculum for Preschool in Sweden, Lpfö 98: Revised 2010:

http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publicerat/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2442

Non-binding guidance and support materials

Systematic Quality Work - Education System:

http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2901

¹² See note 4

Follow-up, Evaluation and Development in Preschool - Pedagogical documentation.:http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publicerat/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2808

There is a range of guidance material available on www.skolverket.se, search Allmänna råd and among 44 publications.

Reference person: Professor Ingegerd Tallberg Broman, Malmö University and the Nordic ECEC Network.¹³

¹³ See note 4