Different forms of assessment and documentation in Swedish preschools

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Abstract: The aim is to describe and discuss documentation and assessment practices in Swedish preschools from a *didaktik* perspective. What different forms of documentation and assessment are found in the preschools? Preschools in both urban and rural municipalities are included in the selection. Document and textual analysis are used. A varied *multi-documentation* emerge. The multi-documentation at each preschool expose that preschool teachers seem to switch between different forms of documentation and assessment, including summative, formative and other assessments. The concept of *transformative assessment* may capture the different assessments interwoven in the multi-documentation. Transformative assessment is a concept focusing on reshaping and interplaying assessments that are intertwined in the registration and complex documentation at different levels and directions.
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In recent years, a growing number of OECD countries have encouraged quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). A growing body of research recognizes that ECEC brings a wide range of benefits, including social and economic benefits (Heckman & Masterov, 2004; OECD, 2012). In this globalised context, documentation requirements have increased for both adults and children in the Swedish education. Even though the regulation of parents and children's influence on education have been strengthened, it is no longer possible to politely refuse to provide systematic documentation for each preschool child to track their development and learning.

> *Is documentation a choice? (Interviewer)*
> *No, it is not, especially not now, with the arrival of the new curriculum. It is not a matter of choice. It is a requirement. (Preschool teacher Amanda in Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 17)*

This article focuses on the assessment and documentation of children in several preschools in Sweden and the changes to which they are being subjected to. We note a trend toward an increased interest in learning and knowledge on an individual assessment and documentation level (cf. von Greiff, Sjogren & Wieselgren, 2012:2) and the need for research in the field is great (Vallberg-Roth, 2010; Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). The basic concepts of documentation and assessment are ambiguous. Studies are needed to further develop, elaborate upon and relate these concepts to each other, especially in relation to practice in and regulation of preschool. When it comes to studies on documentation, current research on preschool documentation is typically seen as having a positive, democratic and emancipatory potential (Vallberg-Roth, 2010). Studies on assessment in Swedish preschools are quite rare (Forsberg & Lindberg, 2010) and often focused on *one* specific documentation and assessment form (Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). This article focuses on differ-

ent forms of assessment and documentation that may appear in a number of preschools. The documentation and assessment practices are studied through a crucial lens – viewing assessment as inevitably interwoven with documentation.

The purpose of this article is to describe and tentatively discuss various forms of documentation found in Swedish preschools and the forms of assessment incorporated into the design of documentation from a *didaktik* approach. The didaktik approach can be described as a reflective, continental didaktik (cf. Gundem & Hopmann, 1998). The letter K in didaktik, instead of C in didactics, represents the continental approach. The didaktik question *how* is central to this article, as the how question refers to different *forms* of documentation and assessment. What different forms of documentation and assessment are found in the preschools? The study is theoretically based on resources connected to assessment and documentation concepts. The basic concept is *summative* and *formative* assessment and the concept of *documentality* (see the section below on *Theoretical resources and basic concepts*).

A new section on assessment, monitoring and development was added to the revised curriculum for Swedish preschools which took effect in July 2011 (Utbildningsdepartementet [Ministry of Education], 2010). The responsibility of preschool teachers for documentation is governed by several points. In addition to being responsible for continually and systematically documenting, monitoring and analyzing development and learning among children, preschool teachers will also be responsible for critically analyzing documentation and evaluation methods. This article may contribute to the basis of critical reflection on various forms of documentation and assessment, while tentatively developing concepts. Summative and formative assessments are concepts developed in accordance with goals to achieve, knowledge requirements and learning outcomes with the focus on both the individual and the classroom level. These concepts are not developed with a focus on preschool activity, in a policy design with goals to strive for, without specified objects of achievement and learning outcomes on an individual level. However, in the material used in this article, there are tracks of both summative and formative assessments together with signs of other assessment forms. The concept of *transformative assessment* is developed and tentatively dis-

cussed in a *zone* based on theoretical resources in *between* the concepts of summative-formative assessment and documentality. Transformative assessment (cf. Vallberg-Roth, 2011b; Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2008) is a concept that may describe and capture the complex assessment and documentation practices that appear in the empirical material.

METHOD

The article describes and synthesizes the results of earlier and current studies related to systematic documentation and assessment of Swedish preschools (Vallberg-Roth, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b; Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2006, 2008, 2011). The material was gathered on four occasions – in 2002, 2006, 2008 and 2010–2011). On the first two occasions, the material was collected in four municipalities in southern Sweden, three urban municipalities and one rural municipality (Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2006, 2008). In 2008, collection focused on the variation of Individual Development Plan (IDP) structures in all preschools in an urban municipality in southern Sweden. Material was gathered most recently in two municipalities in connection with the revision of the preschool curriculum, between November 2010 and September 2011. This article focuses on the most recent material from 2010–2011, but it also includes examples from earlier studies when it comes to assessments in IDPs.

The material collected most recently consists of both document analysis and interviews. The article primarily presents the document analysis. Statements from the interviews are mainly presented in the final discussion.

To obtain a variety of assessment and documentation forms, I selected three preschools: one of which was located in a suburban municipality while the other two were situated in an urban municipality. Further, I included neighbourhoods with either a relatively high or a relatively low percentage of residents with an immigrant background. The number of interviewees was based on an interest in participation. A total of 14 people, 11 of whom were preschool teachers, were included. In total, I conducted six interviews, that is, two at each preschool. The interviewees decided how many of the staff that could take part at the same time. Three individual interviews and three group interviews (2–6 persons) were conducted. The interviews were

conducted in the preschool staff rooms and each took about one hour.

When selecting the preschools, I inventoried preschool websites in different areas of urban and suburban municipalities in southern Sweden. I looked for a variety of documentation forms. After contacting preschool principals/directors, I received a positive response from three preschools. The first preschool, inspired by Reggio Emilia, was located in an urban municipality (ca 45% migration), and it had a strong focus on documentation (these interviewed preschool teachers have fictitious names beginning with A). The second preschool was also located in the urban municipality (ca 15% migration). According to its website, it focused on children as unique individuals and it worked with IDPs (these interviewed preschool teachers have fictitious names beginning with B). The third preschool was located in a suburban municipality, but was close to nature and a rural environment (ca 10% migration). It had a health profile and had worked with portfolios (these interviewed preschool teachers have fictitious names beginning with C).

I wrote a letter to the people listed as contacts on each preschool website; these were preschool principals or directors. The letter informed of issues such as ethical aspects, consent, confidentiality and use. When the interviews were carried, out this information was repeated, and everyone gave their consent to participate. The interviews were recorded by Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews revealed significantly more extensive documentation than that which emerged from the preschool websites. Each preschool worked with about 6 to 10 different documentation forms (see results).

The analysis and approach can be described in terms of a document and textual analysis in an extended hermeneutic approach (e.g., Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008; Silverman, 2011). Documentation is perceived to have a central position in an ontology of social reality (Ferraris, 2009, 2012). Analytically, I applied abductive reasoning; that is, analysis and interpretation occurred in the complex interplay between research questions, empirically informed theory and theoretically informed empirics. The reflection in use allows movement between reference frames and versions of reality. My interview method was influenced by so-called reflexive interview practice (Alvesson, 2011), in which the empirical materi-

al is seen as a source for informed inspiration for thinking and conceptual development rather than exaggerated well-founded and objective data.

THEORETICAL RESOURCES AND BASIC CONCEPTS

Documentation and assessment practice may be reflected by didaktik issues like *what*, *how* and *why* (Gundem, 1997; Lindberg, 2011; Uljens, 1997). Why should we actually assess and document? Relevant questions are oriented to the function, purpose and legitimacy of assessments and documentation. What is the purpose of documentation and assessment? It may be justified as the basis for qualification, socialization or subjectification (Biesta, 2011).

Another didaktik issue is *what* is assessed – the object. Are the punctual results, the products or the process in focus, or is the spotlight on personal characteristics, developmental psychological stages, knowledge, values or imagination and critical skills? In relation to *how*, we may ask how the assessment is performed. What forms of documentation and assessment are used? Various types of documentation emerge such as questionnaires, IDP, testing and portfolios.

Who, *when* and *where* are other questions that may be incorporated in the assessment didaktik. Who should assess whom and for whom? Should children assess themselves, each other, or should they be assessed by teachers, managers, inspectors or parents? Or should the teachers assess themselves? Should they be assessed by children, parents and inspectors? Where and when will the assessment take place? Should it be implemented in different ages and at different places, at the preschool or at home, inside, outside, before, during or after activities? In this article, I will focus on *how* and the other questions, including what (content), who (actors) and why (function) will be more in the background. I will begin with a description on the concept of documentation, documentality and assessment.

Documentation and documentality
In a broad sense, the word *documentation* means to collect and compile information. Documentation can be both electronic and non-electronic and include video, photos, notes, observations, interviews, sound recordings, etc. Documents are, in other words, a form of regis-

tered objects. Examples of documentation in early childhood education are, among others, individual development plans (IDPs), portfolios, pedagogical documentation, and standardized assessments and questionnaires.

The Italian philosopher Maurizio Ferraris (2006, 2009) provides documentation a central position in an ontology of social reality which he calls *Documentality*. Ferraris argues that social objects are social acts that have been registered by some form of support on paper, electronic documents, or as impressions and memories, that is, so-called *inscribed acts*. Social objects are intimately tied to registration. When the physical documents are stored, they are also maintained in our collective memory, which is necessary for creating and maintaining a social order that a complex society requires. These collective memories can be viewed as mentalities. Documents are, in other words, fundamental elements of society.

The concept of documentality is associated with *governmentality* (cf. Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth 2012; Ferraris, 2009; Steyerl, 2003). Documentation can be *viewed* as socio-material acts and actors – documentation is then seen as an actor in itself (e.g. Lentz-Taguchi, 2012; Prior, 2011), which means that documents are not seen as passive instruments and tools. Rather, they are seen as active participants and co-actors in educational processes. They take part and shape our focus, our assessments, our beginnings and our meaning making. Documentation is therefore a co-actor in what can be called socio-material (or material-discursive) living conditions (Lenz-Taguchi 2012). Using a documentality approach brings the actual *registration* into the foreground: different ways to register, whether it is written or in the form of pictures, videos or symbols, design different versions of reality as an expression of power. Registration may be regarded as a socio-material act, in which I emphasize the "socio" side of the relationship. All assessments in documentation are formed from certain positions, interests and perspectives, and take part in how the reality will be constructed and enacted. Systematic registration and documentation are thus the foundation for the regulation of the lives of children, parents and teacher. I assume that documentation and assessment practices, on the one hand, can empower, support, and strengthen and, on the other hand, can weaken, mislead and restrict

children, parents, and professionals (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b).

Assessment
The term assessment is ambiguous. It may mean to evaluate or analyze something, to estimate, to give a review, assess or rate someone or something. The article describes a variety of assessment forms in preschool practice. The term assessment in this article focuses on the individual, the group and activity level, while the term evaluation, which is not the focus of this article, focuses more on the institutional, system and programme level (cf. Sheridan, 2009). The documentation on the individual, group and activity level may be seen as a part of a systematic documentation work in an extended sense. (For a critical discussion of *quality*, systematic quality work and various forms of evaluation, such as internal, external and evaluations on different levels including international, national, municipality and institutional, see Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012; Østergaard-Andersen, Hjort & Skytthe-Kaarsberg-Schmidt, 2008).

Research focusing on professional assessment of knowledge and education uses the terms formative and summative (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 2009, Buldu, 2010; Harrison & Howard, 2009; Lindström, Lindberg & Pettersson, 2011; Taras, 2009; Sjogren, 2010). Formative assessment can be described as a valuation of what happens during the learning process that is forward-looking, and it will support the student's continued learning and development. Formative assessment is communicated to the students and underscores feedback and active student participation in the assessment process. According to the National Agency for Education in Sweden, assessments in IDPs must *have a formative function, which means that they will support the student's continued learning and emphasize the students' developmental opportunities* (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2008, p. 14). Formative assessment may also be related to pedagogical documentation and portfolios (e.g. Buldu, 2010; Lindström, Lindberg & Pettersson, 2011). Summative assessment can be described as backward looking: a valuation of what children ultimately learned at the end of the activity, instruction or theme/project. Grades are an example of summative assessment, *i.e.,* *"an assessment in which the various assessment data are considered together and measured retrospectively with the purpose of making a state-*

ment about a student's level of knowledge ..." (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2008, p. 15). Grade-like assessments of knowledge have also appeared in the preschool's systematic documentation (see below under *Different forms of assessment*). Sometimes summative assessment is described as an assessment *of* learning, as opposed to formative assessment, which is described in terms of assessment *for* learning.

Other studies suggest that formative assessment helps shape how children perceive what is considered to be valuable, and what is considered to be knowledge in various subjects. Their views of themselves and their skills are also shaped (Lindberg, 2005). On the one hand, summative and formative assessment may be viewed as complements (Giota, 2006). Earlier research has shown that summative and formative assessment can coexist in documentation on the individual level (IDP) (Vallberg-Roth, 2009). On the other hand, all assessment can be viewed as essentially summative; there is no purely formative assessment (see Taras, 2009), or the definition of formative assessment is too broad and imprecise (Bennet, 2011). The concepts may be perceived quite simply as being too weakly defined and difficult to separate. Critical research on formative assessment further notes that in practice it involves both the ability to collect material about students' knowledge, and to draw conclusions about their knowledge from these collected materials. Based on these conclusions, the teacher then needs to formulate what needs to be done for students to develop their learning skills. If any part of the assessment process results in error and is inadequate, the student's knowledge is restricted (Bennett, 2011):

> *The idea is to identify student progress and difficulties and provide advice to equip them to develop their learning of specific content, while revealing what the teacher needs to do, as a consequence of the assessment, to improve their teaching. (Lindberg, 2011, p. 244)*

There is a great need of research to further develop this pair of concepts, summative and formative assessment, in relation to the youngest children in preschool or in relation to the objective of the national management system (SFS: 2010:800; Skolverket, [National Agency for Education], 2010). In this article, I focus on assess-

ments in documentation from preschools that use a curriculum with goals to strive for the preschool activity (no goals to achieve for the children). The proposed new Education Act (Ds 2009:25) states that preschoolers should not be assessed based on established standards, nor should they be compared to anyone but themselves. The reasons are that children aged between 1 and 5 years develop at different rates, preschool is a voluntary activity, children begin preschool at different ages, and they stay in the preschool for varied lengths of time during the day. This article focuses on assessment related to documentation in preschool for children aged 1–5 years.

MULTI-DOCUMENTATION: DESCRIPTIVE DISCUSSION

I begin with a section about different forms of documentation that concentrate on the individual, group and activity level. On an activity level, the focus turns to what the child needs to be offered in terms of content, materials, space, time, groups, relations and actions in preschool.

The preschools in the material from 2011 show a varied *multi-documentation*. The interviews revealed that teachers worked with significantly more extensive documentation than what emerged from the preschool websites. I found examples of everything from pedagogical documentation and portfolios to individual development plans, evidence-related and standardised documents such as TRAS (Early Registration of Language Development), and programmes for social and emotional development such as SET, START and Second Step. Electronic documentation is also found. Below is a description of the variation in multi-documentation found at each preschool:

Preschool with profile inspired by Reggio Emilia:
Pedagogical documentation, SET (Social and Emotional Training), Second Step (see below), parent questionnaires, IDP, electronic documentation

Preschool with children seen as unique individuals:
Teacher's binder: IDP, RUS (Relationship Development Scheme), Step sheets for different fields of knowledge (including Swedish, mathematics, science and motor skills), pedagogical documen-

tation, parental form and electronic photo frames. Child's binder: the child's portfolio with description of the child as a person, the child's theme and project materials and self-assessments

Preschool with health profile
Portfolio, diary, documentation for health and environmental council, START, Second Step, TRAS, Child Health Services records, BRUK (curriculum-driven material focused on Assessment, Reflection, Evaluation, Quality), parent questionnaires and electronic photo frames

Overall, the documentation in the three preschools may focus on the children, parents and teachers. The majority of the material is designed for teachers with an eye on the child. Some preschool teachers stated, however, that they are not interested in individual children; rather, they document small groups of children. Documentation of the entire group of children in the department is not evident. A few cases describe how older children document each other. The concept of children documenting one another or themselves is otherwise less striking. The documentation does not focus on the teachers. *Filming adults is a much more sensitive approach* (Preschool teacher Alina in Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 24). Reflection about documentation of children, however, can focus on teachers and their choice of focus and approach. Questions that arise for teachers are as follows: *Why did you choose to observe this? How did you do it? How did you prepare for the situation? How will we use the documentation with the children? What difference do we allow the documentation to make in our work?* (Preschool teacher Britt in Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 24).

I will address a few of the above examples of documentation that focus on children and the activity. Preschool education research may describe types of documentation in terms of three different approaches: *observation, analysis* (mapping, monitoring) and *tests* (Gjems, 2010). Preschool observations can be carried out by teachers who observe one child or several children in a familiar environment during daily activities at the preschool. Preschool teachers choose the situations they would like to observe, such as when children participate in themes or when they eat. Preschool teachers can observe by writing down what the child does and/or says, supplemented by photos, audio and video

recordings of the children in their daily and familiar contexts. When observing children, the preschool teacher defines what they want to observe, viewing the entire being of the child in context. Analysis (mapping, monitoring) uses a diagram with predefined categories focusing on special sub-skills. In analysis, documentation is limited to these predefined sub-skills, for example, what the child masters in various linguistic areas for development, such as vocabulary comprehension and pronunciation. Testing, according to the author, is an even more specific and detailed analytical diagram. Tests specifically address subareas, such as checking the child's vocabulary (e.g., 380 words for three-year olds). Most tests require the test leader to have completed a certified course in how to administer the test. The test is mainly administered in a separate room outside the child's daily environment. The test leader strives to provide the same information and treat all children equally in the test setting. During the test the child must answer questions and also carry out various assignments that have been prepared in advance (Gjems, 2010). This article presents documentation forms that primarily serve as examples of observation and analysis on an individual, group and activity level. It is difficult to draw any absolute limits between the forms. TRAS is an example of material that can be described in terms of observation, used as analysis and described as falling between analysis and testing. Moreover, observation and observation protocols can be found in what is referred to as pedagogical documentation. Observation protocols can be designed based on four points: *What do the children say? What do the children do? What do the adults say?* and *Reflection* (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 18).

Education professor Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2000) argues that observations and documentation of children have been used in Sweden throughout the 20th century for various purposes. The medically focused form of documentation, health records and an overview of childhood diseases, was adopted in the preschool in the early 20th century. In the 1930s, Elsa Köhler introduced observation of children using "the theories of the new developmental psychology" as a point of departure (Lenz Taguchi, 2000, p. 76). In the 1970, observation was dominated by a social and personal psychological and psychodynamic interpretive framework. Interaction and communication were considered to be more

important than, for example, pincer grip. A common form of documentation implemented in the 1980s was a binder for each child that could be called "My Book" or "The Book about Me". Taguchi argues that as a consequence of far-reaching decentralization, an increased interest in different forms of observation and documentation became the basis for assessment in the 1990s. For example, the mosaic approach, which included an array of different documentation techniques that involved children, parents and teachers, became popular. Examples of the mosaic approach could include interviews with children, parents and teachers, observations, diary entries, learning stories, walking talks, and the child's drawings and photos (Clark & Moss, 2001).

The proposal of the new Education Act (Ds 2009:25) recommends pedagogical documentation and portfolios as assessment methods. In earlier studies these were mainly represented with democratic expectations, as follows:

The portfolio method is a democratic approach that provides students with both actual influence and an opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning – by setting goals, planning, documenting, reflecting and assessing. (Jungkvist & Sandell, 2002, p. 7)

We have presented pedagogical documentation as a vital tool for the creation of a reflective and democratic pedagogical practice./…/ Pedagogical documentation also contributes to the democratic project of the early childhood institution/…/Through making pedagogical work both visible and a subject for democratic and open debate, pedagogical documentation provides the possibility of early childhood institutions gaining a new legitimacy in society. (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999, p. 145)

Pedagogical documentation can be one tool for showcasing the actual practice and opening it up for review. This collective tool is based on common reflection, in which teachers, children, parents and others can participate (Åsén & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). A focused function of pedagogical documentation is that it forms a basis for reflection among teachers. Documentation can only be considered to be pedagogical if someone reflects upon it. Pedagogical documentation can be presented as documentation for emancipation

and resistance (Lenz Taguchi, 2000), but also written as a risky method. Risks can emerge through the classifications and categories that teachers' use and exercise power and control through their influence over the child's identity construction (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). Pedagogical documentation is described as a social construction where teachers, through their choices of what is worth documenting, are co-builders in a selective and biased process. The descriptions we make and the categories we apply, just like the interpretations we use to understand what is happening, are permeated by silent conventions, classifications and categories (Collander, Stråhle & Wehner-Godée, 2010, p. 13).

Pedagogical documentation is also prescribed in guidelines from the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2012). In the guidelines the pedagogical documentation, with its theoretical base, is presented as a relational tool. *Learning is no longer seen as an individual, isolated and independent activity, but rather as something that is interconnected with the surrounding environment and with other people* (p. 10). The pedagogical documentation is linked to the concept of *rhizome* and a theoretical base of post humanist scholars, like the physicist Karen Barad (2012):

The concept of rhizome is borrowed from biology and refers to a plant-root system. The system can grow and spread in different directions, unlike, for example, a tree root that always branching at the ends. A rhizomatically thinking makes it possible to describe how learning, like rhizomes, goes in unpredictable paths, and in no way is a linear or progressive. The learning does not follow a linear, premapped route, but go a little back and forth in unpredictable paths. (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2012, p. 27)

The post-humanistic base and rhizome as an ideal raise questions about how linear management system with predetermined directions in the form of curriculum with goals to strive for go together with the required pedagogical documentation based on nonlinear ideals like rhizomes. Diverse directions may be seen between democratic claims and the prescribed rhizomatic ideal in the agency's guidelines (Skolverket, 2012). This in the sense that the rhizomes can be described as both *the best and the worst* (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012, p. 95) and *fascism* (De-

leuze & Guattari, 2012, p. 99) can be mentioned in this context (cf. Fredriksson, 2012). Likewise, it raises questions about how the goals in the curriculum, when put the human in the centre, go together with post-human and non-anthropocentric ideals of pedagogical documentation prescribed in the agency's guidelines. This is being studied further in ongoing research (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b).

According to Lars Lindström (2011), professor emeritus of education, *portfolios* can describe a compilation of student work intended to show an individual student's efforts, progress and results achieved in one or more areas. Examples of arguments for portfolios in preschool can be metacognitively focused on getting the children to see and influence their own development: children should be viewed as individuals, strengthen their self-esteem, assume greater responsibility, and stimulate lifelong learning, as follows:

My Book (Portfolio)
The portfolio approach to documentation clearly gets children to:
- See their own performance
- Take greater responsibility for their own learning
- See and influence their own development
- Be viewed as individuals
- Strengthen their self-esteem
- Stimulate the desire for lifelong learning
(Electronically available, Dec. 5, 2011: http://www.forskolan-glantan.se/PORTFO-LIO.htm)

From a critical approach, the portfolio is also seen as part of a hidden curriculum interwoven in the discussion about and reflection on their own learning. In this self-regulatory technology, children learn to be generous with their inner beings (Gustafsson, 2004). With the introduction of logbooks, portfolios, individual assessment methods etc., the individual child is governed to actively take responsibility for his or her own learning and for assessing his or her own efforts (e.g., Kampmann, 2005). It requires a high degree of self-reflection in which children are expected to inform their deliberations, internal sensations, feelings and what they can do better next time.

One example of standardised documents is the Norwegian TRAS observational material. TRAS is based on a theoretical foundation taken from developmental psychology and linguistics. It builds on assumptions that children's skills are age-dependent. Schedules for recording language development in children are formulated as standardised statements about children's knowledge at different ages. Examples for children aged 4–5 years include:

Can the child tell riddles/jokes?
Can the child write his/her name?
Can the child pronounce the "s" sound correctly?
Does the child use because sentences? (Espenakk, et al, 2003, p. 2f)

The teacher will then assess and record the degree to which the child masters the skill, formulated above, based on the categories: has not mastered, partially mastered, or mastered. *Check that the children understood and systematically search for areas where the child lacks words or has little understanding* (Wagner, 2004, p. 109). The material addresses three main areas with different colours. Blue stands for interaction and attention, red for language comprehension and language awareness, and green for pronunciation, word production and sentence structure. TRAS, which was created by speech therapists, psychologists, special education teachers, linguists, and preschool teachers (who are hearing teacher instructors), can be described as an interprofessional co-production.

A special issue of the journal *Nordisk barnehageforskning* (*Nordic Early Childhood Education Research*) presents a number of conference papers concerning the content and consequences of analysis in the preschool. In this context, speech therapist Nella Bugge (2010) and college lecturer Else Johansen-Lyngseth (2010) address the benefits of TRAS observations in preschools. Bugge focuses on implementation of TRAS in preschool. She holds that systematic analysis with TRAS clarifies children's linguistic development. Furthermore, the need for support, if any, becomes apparent and provides teachers with an opportunity for reflection and a basis for conversations with parents.

Solveig Østrem (2010), associate professor at Vestfold University College, also sheds light on the TRAS observation material; however, she addresses how detailed objectives formulated in the material can steer the activity. Østrem argues that preschool is based on fundamental democratic values based on which the school con-

ducts its work with children and provides for their needs for care, play and versatile learning. She underscores that the approach to learning expressed through detailed objectives and analysis of children's language development is not completely compatible with the core standards and values of the Norwegian national curriculum.

Another standardised material is Second Step (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010a), an American life skills programme for preschool and school that claims to be evidence-based. Second Step has three main areas: 1) empathy training; 2) impulse control and problem solving; and 3) self-control. The answer to the programme's "why" question (Why Second Step?) is the importance of raising children to become socially and emotionally skilled individuals in the developed world. Documentation and assessment is prescribed in forms of logbooks, evaluations and information letters, and they can focus on children and educators and be addressed to parents. The teaching programme is based on developmental psychological age norming. The objectives are formulated as objectives children should know and goals to achieve, as follows:

> *The objectives for learning in Second Step with respect to empathy are that children will have the ability to: Read emotions by perceiving signs (facial expression, body language) and situation-specific signals (context)/.../ Understand that people may have different feelings for the same thing/.../. Anticipate feelings/.../ Distinguish between intentional acts and accidents/.../* (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010a, p. 35f)

START: Livskunskap för de minsta [Life Skills for the Youngest" (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b) is a social and emotional learning programme aimed at people who work with children aged 1–3 years. START is equivalent to Second Step (4–6 year olds) for the youngest children. The authors link the programme to the preschool curriculum (values) and argue that a good start in life can prevent many forms of vicious circles based on a lack of social skills relating to connection, empathize and name six basic emotions, such as joy, sadness, anger, fear, surprise/amazement and problem-solving. START focuses on three main areas. The first is to be able to recognize, and distaste/disgust. The second area is connection and affinity. The third

area involves training and an understanding of some basic skills in interactions with other, such as taking turns and waiting. The intervention programme is theoretically grounded in psychological references and structured around the themes of exercises that are introduced to groups of children and which then serve as a basis for intervention in all everyday situations at preschool. The work is documented using a standardised log consisting of six pages with 18 different categories. *The log section is an aid for teachers to know what was addressed, how much progress was made, follow-up to ensure that all children were involved and evaluating follow-up in everyday life* (p. 5). Like Second Step, the programme also involves parents as partners so that the various skills can be reinforced both at preschool and at home. *Parents can also get the material themselves if they should wish to do so* (p. 19). The creators of the published programme are both psychologists.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF ASSESSMENT: DESCRIPTIVE AND CHALLENGING DISCUSSION
A variety of assessment forms are used in preschool that cannot be completely reduced to formative or summative assessments. The documentation provides a sample of (i) developmental-psychological assessments, (ii) knowledge assessments, (iii) personal assessments, (iv) self-assessments, and (v) centre-performance-focused assessments. These five types of assessment are addressed below.

I. *Developmental-psychological assessments* are based on assumptions that a child's skills in areas such as language, motor skills and social-emotional development are age-specific (see e.g., TRAS, Second Step, START).

> *1–3 years: Children notice that other children are larger or smaller than themselves. Children begin to respond empathically – for example, by giving a doll to someone who is sad.* (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b, p. 34)

> *2–3 years: Children begin to name different phenomena and talk to themselves about what they are doing.* (Löwenborg & Gislason, 2010b, p. 43)

> *2–3 years: Can the child pronounce words with m, n, and p, b, t, d? (For example man,*

nose, papa, car, tent, damp?) (TRAS schedule for pronunciation, Espenakk, 2003, p. 3)

The tradition of observing children in preschool and assessing and categorising psychological development is evident in the documents (Alasuutari & Karila, 2009; Elfström, 2004; Lentz Taguchi, 2000; Lutz, 2009; Nordin Hultman, 2004; Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2006, 2008). These assessments of psychological development can merge with knowledge assessments.

II. With regard to knowledge and graded assessments, in some examples preschool teachers record when the child reaches different stages or learning outcomes according to predetermined categories such as "N: Never, S: Sometimes or F: for the most part":

> *Speaks clearly with all speech sounds and correct word order*
> *Names at least fifteen letters*
> *Writes name in correct writing direction*
> *Recites numbers by rote* (Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2008, p. 31f)

In the above example, *knowledge assessments* similar to grades can be deduced: the degree to which knowledge objectives in Swedish/language and mathematics are achieved for young children. This approach can be interpreted as a form of summative assessment and is incompatible with the Nordic tradition and the Swedish national curriculum (Vallberg-Roth, 2009, 2010; Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2011).

Education professors Ingrid Pramling-Samuelsson and Niklas Pramling (2009) discuss assessment included in learning situations involving early reading, mathematics, science, and music. They believe that development in young children should not be assessed using traditional school-inspired tests. The authors argue that it is not possible to assess and determine the level the preschool child achieved in mathematics, science, music, and literacy. Instead, it is possible to comment on individual tasks, circumstances and relationships with different teachers, in which each child expresses and produces specific solutions.

III. The documentation may also include *personal assessments* that can be based on psychological personality. Personal assessment may appear in child portfolios and in individual development plans. These judgments are usually positive, but they can also be negative and critical:

> *Charming, intelligent, fun*
> *Alert, resourceful, plays well*
> *She can be scattered and distracted*
> *Can easily flip out and not care.* (Vallberg-Roth, 2009, p. 206)

> *He is peaceful and harmonious. (Vallberg,-Roth, 2012b, p. 21)*

Personal assessment in systematic documentation is an important issue to address and discuss. For example the Swedish National Agency (Skolverket, 2008) states that the individual development plan should not include scores of students' personal qualities and the teacher should use an objective language. Weaving individuals into an ever tighter assessment practice influences their self-image and identity perception. Ethically, it is also important to note that IDP is a public document in Sweden (Vallberg-Roth & Månsson, 2011). However, there are proposals to implement a separate confidentiality provision for information about the personal circumstances of the individual in written individual development plans (SOU 2011:58). When considering the integrity of sensitive data, the starting point should be the views of the child, parents and relatives, not the personnel's. What is perceived as violation of the privacy of one individual need not be so for someone else. The plan or document can only be released with the consent of the guardian.

Personal assessments may also occur in individual development conferences, for example, where parents are encouraged to assess their children from so-called Strength cards (Markström, 2010, 2011). The cards are the same size and shape as a pack of cards and consist of 44 cards with adjectives – such as Determined, Energetic, Adaptable, Independent – labels that can be perceived both positively and negatively (Markström, 2011). According to the teachers, these cards are a method of engaging parents in the conferences. Markström believes that this procedure and guidance in the conference can serve as a method for teachers to distance themselves and leave the categorization to the parents in the first stage of the conversation (Markström, 2011). Personal assessments can be interpreted as unfounded in the national curriculum.

IV. *Self-assessments* can be related to formative assessments and meta-cognitive theory, which is the ability of the individual to think about and assess his or her own learning. This approach can be used as an argument in relation to the portfolio (see above). Systematically documenting and learning to assess strengths and weaknesses are also underscored in the goal for life-long learning in one of the EU's eight key skills relating to entrepreneurship, as follows:

> *Skills relate to proactive project management (involving, for example the ability to plan, organise, manage, lead and delegate, analyse, communicate, de-brief, evaluate and record), effective representation and negotiation, and the ability to work both as an individual and collaboratively in teams. The ability to judge and identify one's strengths and weaknesses, and to assess and take risks as and when warranted, is essential. (Europeiska gemenskapen [European Community], 2007, p. 11)*

Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning comprise market-oriented content that can be interpreted as strengthening a goal- and result-oriented management system (cf. Østergaard-Andersen, Hjort & Skytthe-Kaarsberg-Schmidt, 2008). The background to the EU's key competences is said to be *that as globalisation continues to confront the European Union with new challenges, each citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world* (Europeiska gemenskapen [European Community], 2007, p. 2). The individual-oriented target structure in the form of key competences is also driving assessment and evaluation to focus on the individual, which can be interpreted as problematic in relation to the objective structure for preschool in Sweden with the focus of goals to strive for the activity. Similarly, intensified self-assessment, self-reflection and self-regulation can be interpreted as manifestations of a global society and reflexive modernity risk (e.g., Beck, 1992; Foucault, 2008; Giddens, 1997). Current research further addresses this concept construct (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b).

Systematic documentation and children's self-assessments can also be analysed with the support of neuroscience research. Research suggests that the area in the frontal lobe, the decision-making centre of the brain, develops late and is not mature until after age 20 (Giedd, 2007).

Consequently, children and young people may not yet have developed abilities such as impulse control, gaining an overview, future plans, sifting through impressions, and assessing risk. Children can be interpreted as experiencing documentation and (self-) assessment long before they develop the ability to maintain an overview, plan for the future, sift through impressions, and assess risk. Based on this research, the question is whether it would be desirable to work with self-assessment and standardised programmes on impulse control for 4–5 year olds in preschool (see e.g., Second Step).

Self-assessments may also relate to teacher-oriented and institution-oriented evaluations (self-evaluations) and thus merge with activity-oriented assessments.

V. There are examples of *centre-focused assessments* with a socio-cultural and context-oriented theoretical basis. The assessments are then focused on how the activity affects the child and how the centre activity or environment can be changed to support the children. One instance is a Reggio Emilia inspired individual development plan:

> *Describe, explain and SHOW, supported by the documentation, what the child is doing and is interested in right now: Here we take out documentation, images, video, audio, that demonstrate the interests we see in the child. We look at situations where children are creative, amazed, where they will find their place and are able to express themselves.*

> *Describe how the above can be deepened, challenged and developed: We reflect on how we could develop these situations and challenges for the children. What would we wish that the child could encounter, what we would like to offer and how can we challenge the child? How will the children have the opportunity to grow?*

> *Based on the above, describe concrete changes to the activity: We reflect on how we can change the activity for the child to find those opportunities. What can we specifically offer children, what situations can we invite them to explore? What does the child need in terms of materials, time, situation, group, etc.? (Vallberg-Roth, 2011a, p. 155f)*

The assessment in the above example focuses on the child's interests and issues, as well as the challenges, teacher support and learning environment that the child needs. The focus then turns to what the child needs to be offered in terms of content, materials, space, time, groups, relations, actions, and communication opportunities (Vallberg-Roth, 2011a, 2011b).

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND TENTATIVE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Systematic documentation in preschool is, as mentioned earlier, government-regulated by the Education Act and curriculum. The arguments in favour of documentation in preschool, according to preschool teachers, can be to highlight and increase awareness and understanding of the development, abilities and skills of the individual child, as well as processes in the group and the learning environment. With the support of documentation, children and adults describe, explain and show the child's actions, interests and questions. Moreover, preschool teachers argue that the portfolio shows children their learning over a longer time horizon, providing them with something to display and be proud of. Metacognitive learning in children, their knowledge of their own learning, is then highlighted (Vallberg Roth, 2012).

The teacher can document to identify and avoid preconceived beliefs about children's knowledge. Documentation can be used to support children in need of special support, as well as children in need of challenges. Moreover, documentation can be used to provide parents with greater insight, improve the quality of pedagogical work, and clearly monitor and have evidence of what is happening. When asked why teachers work with documentation in preschool, Carin explains that it shows what we are doing in black and white. *Confirmation of what we do. That it's important for our development. Otherwise we can never make progress if we can't see* (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 31). It is not professional without documentation. Documentation and assessment as a basis for professionalism is being further addressed in current research (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b). It is interesting that all interviewees perceive documentation to be closely related to professionalism, while there are examples of preschool teachers who believe that assessment is not linked to professionalism:

Is there any relationship between professionalism, documentation and assessment? (A-C)

Not assessment, but I link professionalism and documentation. I believe that the one is necessary for the other to work. I think it's hard to be professional in everything you do if you don't have documentation. (Preschool teacher Alina in Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 26)

Although it is underscored that the children are not being assessed but rather the activity itself, it may in fact be the children's personal qualities, skills and abilities that are observed and assessed, and any measures can be directed at the individual child. However, examples and elements can also be found in which observation focuses more on the process and what the teacher offers in learning situations. These examples can focus on the specific content, concrete situations, challenges, expressions of learning processes, and environments that can provide the child with the opportunity to develop and grow.

Education researcher Lise-Lotte Bjervås (2011) illustrates how assessments of preschool children are designed when teachers in preschool talk about pedagogical documentation. The study shows that children are primarily assessed as competent with many abilities and that teachers view documentation as helpful tools for learning and for the creation of meaning.

In accordance with what the above preschool teachers are expressing, the assessment is interwoven in the documentation practice, without being explicitly noted or problematized. This can also be illustrated by some excerpts taken from the National Agency for Education's guidelines for pedagogical documentation (Skolverket, 2012). While it is the relational and the elements as agents that are highlighted in the agency's guidelines, it is the individuals' skills and knowledge that are assessed. So even if it is the relational that is focused on, it is not the relation that learn and is assessed (cf. Biesta, 2011), it is the child's sign of learning, performance and competence that is valued and assessed in the relation. In the following excerpt, the preschool teacher or *co-researcher* is assessing the character of children's knowledge and exploration mentioned as an ongoing condition of *different becoming in itself* (annorlundablivande i sig själv):

If we compare the first opportunity with the other, we can also in this summary report clearly see that the children were not 'clay-exploring' children in the first sequence, although one of the children says she loves clay, but quickly became different in themselves – became 'clay-explorers'- when the activity changed on the second occasion. (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2012, p 38)

Now he knows he can. Now he owns the technology. (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2012, p 50)

According to the guidelines from National Agency for Education, pedagogical documentation focus on the child as different becoming in itself, mentioned as consistent with the policy. The pedagogical documentation follows the children's development and the child is compared only with itself. However, it is very likely that the desired child, for example, is a child assessed as a clay-exploring child – in other words, a performing and active problem-solving child (cf. Popkewitz, 2008). The children are not only compared with themselves, they are assessed against a norm (non-established norm) for a clay-exploring person, or a person who owns the technology. The question is whether it is primarily the child related to the material and a scientific rational understanding of the world which is enhanced. Then the child as an exploratory co-researcher can be interpreted to be the desirable child through pedagogical documentation.

Cultural-sociological professor Mats Trondman (2011) has conducted what I consider to be a profession study from the perspective of the child that he calls *Snälla fröknar [Nice teachers]*. According to Trondman,

Children's perspectives relate to ideas and beliefs about the best interests of the children as formulated by adults.... The perspective of the children represents their right to their own version of their own experience, assessment and desire. (Trondman, 2011, p. 68f)

Based on conversations with 40 children aged 4–6, Trondman found that children think that preschool teachers are good if they are nice. Being nice can mean caring, empathy, an interactive presence, supporting learning processes, reliable organisation, fairness, and adult

responsibility. These characteristics of the children's normative expectations of a nice teacher together comprise a good preschool teacher. In this context it should be noted that documentation found in preschool does not primarily focus on caring, an interactive presence, and well-being without performance requirements; in other words, part of what Trondman (2011) discusses that preschool children think is important about nice teachers. The children do not seem to call for documentation, nor do they express the opinion that a nice teacher is a teacher who documents what the children are doing.

Education professor Jan-Erik Johansson (2010) discusses the development of systematic assessment and evaluation in light of what he describes as a movement from education to economics (cf. Østergaard-Andersen, Hjort & Skytthe-Kaarsberg-Schmidt, 2008). He argues that historically we find ourselves in a new situation where the preschool is no longer viewed as a threat to child development, while asking whether preschool is worthwhile and whether children learn enough. Does preschool help to reduce crime, integrate immigrant children and improve study success? Johansson believes that the issue of profitability in the strict sense has not previously been discussed, but it is important when considering introducing regular monitoring of child development. He wonders whose interests are actually in control.

Summative, formative or transformative assessment?
Assessment of systematic documentation in preschool has both summative and formative features. Preschool teachers express a stronger focus on supporting rather than controlling, where assessment of and for development and learning is ongoing. The focus is more on processes than on products. Overall, the emphasis is not on right or wrong answers, or the children's flaws and weaknesses, but rather when to pay attention to the development, progress and strengths of the children. In this context teachers say that they are curious, that they listen, see and meet children, as well as that they challenge and provide learning experiences. The main focus is on the child in current and retrospective documentation. Assessment of the direction of what the operation offers, or could offer the child, in relation to goals to strive for, is not as prominent (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b).

The tendency for summative and grade-like assessment may occur, for example, in connection with TRAS, which allows teachers to record the degree to which children master various specified linguistic skills and abilities. The assessment does not primarily take place together with the parents and children, but appears to occur as information to and between parents and teachers (cf. Markström, 2011). Even if the assessment that is built into the documentation process does not directly involve the child or is communicated directly in the situation to the child (see formative assessment), there are elements, for example in portfolios, where children are involved in self-assessment and encouraged to reflect after the end of the theme/project: *I learned the most about this: I thought this was the most fun* (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b, p. 20).

The concepts summative and formative (developed in relation to the management system with goals and knowledge requirements for the individual student to achieve) are not fully viable in the preschool setting. The multi-documentation at each preschool expose that preschool teachers seem to switch between different forms of documentation and assessment, including summative, formative and other assessments. Furthermore, normed assessments relating to developmental psychology, graded knowledge assessments based on normed steps/levels/standards, and personal assessments are interpreted as incompatible with the national policy on preschool. Preschoolers should not be assessed based on established standards nor should they be compared to anyone but themselves (Ds 2009:25).

Transformative assessment is a concept that can be examined in relation to the seemingly transforming interaction of the preschool practices with regard to the object, subject, form, and function of both documentation and assessment. That is assessment in relation to the didaktik questions what, who, how, and why. The concept of transformative assessment can articulate and conceptually capture the transforming interaction between different forms of documentation and assessment. The concept can also be examined in relation to how to transform systematic assessment at the individual level, how children's skills change in target areas, into goals for the preschool-activity and centre performance. The revised preschool curriculum states that documentation and analysis should include how the skills and abilities of the child

continuously change in target areas in relation to the conditions for development and learning that the preschool provides (Skolverket [National Agency of Education], 2010, p. 12).

Furthermore, transformation during communication of assessments between teachers, parents and children may also be involved. In the preschool setting, transformative assessment can move between and be transformed from feedback at the individual level to feedforward at the preschool-activity level. The backward and current looking assessment at the individual level can be transformed into the forward-looking assessment at the preschool-activity level. The assessment then moves from systematic documentation monitoring signs of child development and learning at the individual level to an assessment of the preschool activity, what needs to change for the child to be challenged and to further develop in the direction of curriculum goals to be strived upon. Thus, it is not based on feedback or feedforward in relation to fixed and predetermined knowledge requirements or goals to achieve for the individual, which is the case in summative and formative assessment. Summative and formative assessment also focus on how the student develops understanding, self-assessment and peer-assessment, as well as teaching in the classroom.

Transformative assessment, in addition to involving preschool activities, can also include a community-oriented approach. The concept *transformative* may then capture and express the practice between different levels, a shifting focus between an individual level, group activity and institutional level and a pan-institutional, societal level. Transformative assessment may challenge structures in society. Further, they may support transformative processes and changes of life opportunities and recognition as children grow up (cf. Fraser, 2003).

On a pan-institutional and societal level, the concept *transformative* also may indicate that documentation and assessment are contextual and situated. The assessment may vary depending on where the children grow up and attend preschool. One might speak of a transformative assessment that leads to a diversified normality (cf. Rosales, 2001) and childhood.

The concept can also include a transformative interplay between documentation and assessment offline and online. Here we have, for example, a transformed representation between the electronic presentation on homepages and

the non-electronic multi-documentation such as I have presented in this paper. Other studies show examples where the assessment of children offline is transformed to assessment of parenthood or parents' assessment on teachers online (Vallberg-Roth, 2012a).

Transformative assessment in the societal approach is being further addressed in ongoing studies, as well as the concept of documentality and documentalized childhood (Alasuutari, Markström & Vallberg-Roth, 2012). Interplay between various forms of documentation and assessment may also be the focus of a multidimensional boundary approach involving the state government, science, the market, and the civil sphere (Vallberg-Roth, 2012b). Finally, it may be noted that the concept of transformative assessment does not relate to a prescriptive concept (a prescribed ideal, cf. Mezirow, et al., 1990; Popham, 2008), but rather a descriptive and reflexive concept, which is a concept that can offer support for thinking about a complex documentation and assessment approach.

TRANSFORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN MULTI-DOCUMENTATION: SUMMING UP

The answer to the question *What different forms of documentation and assessment are found in the preschools?* is transformative assessment in varied multi-documentation. In the material generated in 2010-2011, each preschool seemed to work with about 6 to 10 different documentation forms. The multi-documentation included examples of pedagogical documentation; portfolios; individual development plans; parent questionnaires; and evidence-related and standardised documents, such as TRAS, SET, START and Second Step. Electronic documentation was also found.

Transformative assessment is a concept that may capture the different assessments interwoven in the multi-documentation. Transformative assessment is a concept focusing on reshaping and interplaying assessments that are intertwined in the registration and complex documentation in preschools. Varying ways to record, whether it is written or in the form of pictures, videos or symbols, shape and reshape different versions of reality as an expression of power. All assessments in documentation are formed from certain positions, interests and perspectives, and they influence how reality is constructed and enacted. Transformative assess-

ment may interact between different theoretical positions and assemblies, including influences from psychological, socio-cultural, market-economy (goal-result-quality), neuroscience and post-human approaches. Transformative assessment may be seen as reshaping and interplaying assessment in motion between different actors, forms, contents, and functions. The assessment moves between different levels in complex networks and between offline and online. Transformative assessment can be regarded as an interplay between linear (goal-directed) and non-linear (rhizomatic) assessment and between punctual and processual assessment. It is an assessment that is part of an interwoven and constantly ongoing transformation and creation in a multidimensional steering related to the state, science, the market, and the civil sphere (Vallberg-Roth, 2012a). The concept needs to be further studied.

Note
Since the study was carried out in Sweden, all quotations presented in this article were translated into English by the author.

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