



Brief

Work integrated learning through learning conversations with Parents: A Platform for developing Preschool Teachers' Learning at Work

Camilla Seidl* & Lisbeth Eriksson

University West, Sweden

*Contact corresponding author: Camilla Seidl, e-mail: camilla.seidl@hv.se

The following study examines how preschool teachers describe their own learning and their own identity development concerning the introduction of a new type of parent-teacher conference. The conversation that has been conducted has taken place with groups of parents instead of the traditional individual conversations between parents and preschool teachers. In the conversations, the preschool teachers focus on interaction and collective learning among children, and our material for this study consists of texts that the preschool teachers have written to stimulate reflection concerning the new conversation model. The purpose of the study is to understand the conversations as an activity through which a preschool teacher's learning and identity at work can be developed. Using content analysis, the study highlights how preschool teachers are challenged in terms of knowledge in the context of parents and colleagues.

For example, the preschool teachers felt uncomfortable to be put in the new situation and unable to manage it in a professional way without any type of preparation. Since the teachers did not want to expose their lack of experience, they choose to prepare by study policies and regulations before every parent-teacher conference, even theoretical learning was added into their learning. As a result of the new way to handle parent-teacher conferences, anxiety had become an issue among the preschool-teachers and based on their descriptions, this was the outcome from the new situation that they had not learn to cope with.

The result show that three categories emerge: *uncertainty, performance, and experience*, which are found to be factors contributing to learning at work. The uncertainty that appears

results in that the preschool teachers prepare the conferences very meticulous. In addition, the performance factor leads to good conversations and post-work, where reflection has a central role and helps them build new experience for upcoming new conversations. The conversation process repeat itself and the preschool teachers develop their work as well as themselves and their methods in work by learning new ways of working. In addition, the results show how these group conversations contribute to the preschool teacher's professional identity and learning at work.

Keywords: *work integrated learning; preschool; learning conversation; professional identity; parent-teacher conference*