

Early assessments in the Swedish preschool class

Coexisting logics

In this paper, teachers' work with the newly introduced assessment of six-year-old children in Sweden is illustrated using the neoinstitutional theory. The results show how teachers are guided by coexisting mix of logics, which are based on different values and lead to different assessment practices. The results show that more assessment implies less teaching, and the policy reform vision, to better support children in continuing education, is at risk of being lost when transformed to pedagogical practice. The formative focus on the assessments is reduced to a technical practice with focus on delivering results. Thus, the neoliberal focus and performativity is prominent.

Nøgleord: Preschool class, assessment, logics, neoinstitutional theory, schoolarization, standardization.

Introduction

The Swedish preschool class is currently undergoing a watershed. Since introduced in 1998, it has been a voluntary school form for six-year-old children – between preschool and compulsory school – with a social, child-centered and play-based pedagogy. However, in 2016 the preschool class got its own specific chapter in the the national curriculum for compulsory school with clarifications of its objectives. The preschool class was also made compulsory for all six-year-old children in 2018. In addition, mandatory assessments of six-year-old children's linguistic awareness and mathematical thinking was introduced in 2019. All these changes create new conditions for children, teachers, and education in the preschool class (Ackesjö and Persson 2019).

The political motivation for these reforms is based on Swedish students' generally declining results in international knowledge measurements such as TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA. In addition, the national tests also show that a relatively large proportion of students do not reach the required levels in Swedish and mathematics in grade 3 (Committee Directive 2015:65, p. 65). The state authorities emphasize that more efforts are needed in order to improve the level of knowledge in Swedish schools. Thus, the preschool class' school preparatory assignments are more and more emphasized. These reforms implies that the preschool class' former social, child centered, and play based position has shifted towards a narrower focus on knowledge and learning (Ackesjö and Persson 2019). This paper aims to illustrate one of these reforms, teachers' work with the newly introduced standardized assessments, using the neoinstitutional theoretical framework.

The Swedish guarantee of action

The state's rationalities of introducing compulsory assessments of each child's linguistic awareness and mathematical thinking in preschool class, what came to be termed a guarantee of action (SOU 2016, p. 59), are that early assessments should give all pupils better conditions to achieve the knowledge requirements set in Swedish, Swedish as a second language, or mathematics in grade 3. If the results of the assessments in the preschool class indicate that any pupil risks not reaching the requirements in the lower grades, extra support must be implemented promptly.

"The core stated is that early interventions are both cheaper and more effective than later."

(Government Bill 2017/18, p. 18).



Hence, the aim is not to guarantee that all students learn basic mathematics or to read and write. Instead, the reform ensures that all students in need of support are identified early and are offered the support they are guaranteed (SOU 2016, p. 59, Government Bill 2017/18, p. 18). Early interventions are highlighted as a universal solution to identify all students' needs and provide protection against school failures regardless of background. In sum, the reform is expected to reduce the connection between students' results and their parents' educational level.

”In the long term, this will benefit the social economy, contribute to welfare, and promote the future labor market.”

(Government Bill 2017/18, p. 18).

The assessments in preschool class focuses on two domains, children's linguistic awareness and mathematical thinking. Each domain is divided into four modules with different focuses, and each module is to be assessed – based on three or four aspects. This sums up to 15 aspects to assess that are related to linguistic awareness, and 15 aspects to assess that are related to mathematical thinking – a total of 30 aspects to assess individually. The assessments are nationally standardized in order to guarantee equivalence.

The reform is launched during a period when teachers are experiencing a heavy workload of teaching and documentation requirements (Government Bill 2017/18, p. 18). In its second revised bill (Government Bill 2017/18, p. 195), the government therefore emphasized that the assessment program should be integrated in the regular teaching, thus not adding any significant new educational activities. The state calculates that the assessments only should take a few hours per pupil to conduct (Government Bill 2017/18, p. 18).

The global perspective

The extension of compulsory schooling in Sweden, the lowering of the school start age, the enhanced professional assignment in terms of goal-direct-

ed teaching, and assessments of knowledge can be regarded as educational policy changes that contribute to a shift in the preschool class's position in the Swedish educational system.

Ackesjö and Persson (2019) use the concept scholarization to understand this ongoing shift at the policy level. This process is global and focuses on an approach towards more teaching, knowledge, measurability, accountability, control, and standardization. Assessment of young children's educational performance, using standardized measures of outcomes, is part of this process, and becomes more prominent all over the world (Diaz-Diaz, Semenec, and Moss 2019). Thus, the function of the preschool class throughout its short history, as a bridge between preschool and school, is challenged as the qualifying function of the preschool class is emphasized (Lago, Persson, and Ackesjö 2020), and similar trends are also indicated in the other Scandinavian countries.

Assessment can be conceptualised in different ways depending on the ideas regarding how to use assessment to support further teaching and learning. Assessment can be formative or summative (Black and William 1998, Sadler 1989), and it can be conceptualised as assessment for learning (William 2011) or assessment as learning (Dann 2014). The assessments included in the Swedish guarantee of action has a clear formative focus (cf. Broadfoot et al. 2002): The assessments aim to be used by teachers “to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (Broadfoot et al. 2002, p. 2f.). However, this is a process related to the global shift towards learnification of education, which contributes to a global testing culture.

One of the major change agents at the global level is the OECD. Nearly 20 years ago, the OECD implemented a major international project: Starting Strong. The project became a landmark when it comes to comparative studies of early childhood education and care (ECEC), and the first two reports (OECD 2001, 2006) presented important policy recommendations based on case studies in 20 different OECD countries. The reports highlighted the importance of diversity regarding perceptions

of children, knowledge, learning, and development (Moss 2016).

The two following reports have a different tone and focus. Starting Strong III (OECD 2011) was named *Quality Toolbox*, and Starting Strong IV (OECD 2015a) was named *Monitoring Quality*. Since then, discourses on results, knowledge efficiency, and investments have been in focus even in the ECEC (Moss et al. 2016). Starting in 2012, the OECD initiated a new, international comparative study, *The International Early Learning and well-being Study* (IELS), a large-scale assessment of 5-year-olds aiming at comparing young children's educational and social performance in different countries (OECD 2015b). There is a clear link between the IELS and the PISA tests of all 15-year-olds. It is argued that early and comprehensive assessment of young children is a good tool for improving results later on, both educational and societal ones (OECD 2015b). However, this development highlights a significant shift from the importance of educational diversity to standardization regarding young children's learning.

However, many researchers are critical to the OECD's stance. They believe that early assessments are an overly blunt tool to capture and create conditions for younger children's learning (cf. Moss et al. 2016). In addition, Moss (2016) states that global testing regimes strive to apply a universal framework based on believes that everything can be reduced to a common measure, standard, and outcome. Such an approach cannot accommodate diversity in provision, pedagogy, culture, childhood, or different conditions regarding children's upbringing.

A contested issue

Assessment during preschool age constitutes one of the most contested educational issues, and it has been so for a long period of time. The resistance stems from the idea that the standards for assessment in school, including its traditional techniques, are going to be introduced in the preschool contexts (Sakellariou and Mitsi 2019). Preschool teachers' resistance to use standardized assessments in young children's education has often been based on ideas that these assessments do not acknowledge a holistic view on

children's development (Moss 2016, Sakellariou, and Mitsi 2019), or on diversity in pedagogy, provision, childhood, or culture (Moss et al. 2016). Even though early assessments are contested, they are in general also said to be essential to the educational process. In addition, formative assessments including feedback to children have been promoted globally (Hattie and Timperley 2007).

Research has also shown that children's future learning is influenced by how accurately teachers perceive their academic abilities during the assessments. By using a sample of almost 14000 children Ready and Chu (2015) found that children whose literacy skills are overestimated by their teachers typically gain more literacy skills during their time in preschool. One explanation is that teachers tend to dedicate more time to children that they experience as academically stronger. Conversely, children whose skills are underestimated learn less. It is mainly the skills of socioeconomically disadvantaged children that are generally underestimated. This imply that inequalities in preschool children's development may partly stem from links between teachers' misperceptions and students' background. Teachers' misperceptions in assessments are therefore at risk of increasing socioeconomic inequality in literacy ability.

Assessments as neoliberal governing

Standardized assessments add to a further understanding of neoliberal governing as they increase the possibilities of controlling both teachers and children by providing evidence of performance (Roberts-Holmes 2019). Governments all over the world are engaged in building a web of measurements to govern their educational systems. At the same time, the OECD has developed similar constructions at a global level (Roberts-Holmes 2019, Moss and Urban 2018).

This expanding web of standardized assessments becomes part of neoliberal governing and competition in the global market (Roberts-Holmes 2019). The main story, which is promoted via the globalized and neoliberal discourses of early childhood education, is one of quality and high returns (Moss 2017); (early) investments in education will bring high economic and social returns (Heckman 2000). However, Moss (2017) argues that

this reasoning is dangerous. Standardized assessments must be seen as a part of a bigger picture. Sahlberg (2016) has labeled the bigger picture as the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM), a neoliberal process that transfers the strategies of market economy into public education – in order to improve the quality of students' learning. GERM fosters competition and accountability, but minimizes autonomy (Diaz-Diaz, Semenc, and Moss 2019). Standardized assessments is central to this pursuit by stimulating competition between schools. The OECD plays an important role in the spread of GERM, not the least by stimulating competition between countries and introducing a performativity agenda (Ball 2003, Diaz-Diaz, Semenc, and Moss 2019) by using the IELTS and PISA. The preoccupation with standardization of education, predetermined results, and test-based policies run the risk of reducing education to a technical practice that prioritizes the search for effective methods while meaning, purpose, and values of education fade away (Diaz-Diaz, Semenc, and Moss 2019).

The emerging risk, when national curricula are adapted to global instruments for measurement, is that teaching becomes more aligned with national and international policy frameworks than with the children's needs. Thus, teachers' pedagogical visions, aspirations, and autonomy in the local classroom might be left behind – in favor of a standardized teaching based on assessments.

Theoretical perspectives

In this paper, teachers' work with the newly introduced standardized assessments is illustrated by using institutional theory. The concept of *logics* has become central to this theory, and it has been defined as a guiding principle (Friedland and Alford 1991). Logics are about rules of action, interpretation, and interaction (Thornton and Ocasio 1999), and logics emphasize the importance of social context. Attention to the societal level of institutional orders is necessary in order to understand individual and organizational behaviour. Logics shape the behaviours of social actors (Friedland and Alford 1991) and provide conventions for deciding which issues that may be important and worth solving. This theory provides tools for analysing how individuals and organizations are affected in an inter-institutional system such as

the institutional order of family, state, market, and profession (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012).

Institutions are built by normative and regulatory systems. They are produced and reproduced in various ways by those working within the institutions – according to the norms, values, and rules on which the institutions are based (Friedland and Alford 1991, Thornton 2004). Previous research (Lago, Persson, and Ackesjö 2020) of preschool class teachers' narratives has shown that the institutional logic is the foundation of expectations, conceptions, as well as normative ideas and cultures that the preschool class is based on. The logic is maintained by the teachers through locally anchored stories of the values and views that form a common culture.

This logic is created in a field of tension between surrounding, institutional cultures as teachers link their stories about the preschool class to characteristics of preschool and school. The teachers do also maintain and stress the differences between preschool and school. This amplifies the need for teachers to understand the preschool class as a specific school form. The rationalities, following the institutional logic, forms an important soil for the illustration of other logics that teachers are guided by while working with the newly introduced standardized assessments. Of particular interest in this paper is *the professional logic, the state logic, the market logic, and the bureaucratic logic*. All these logics are parts of the institutional logic.

Within *the professional logic*, professionals, such as teachers, rely on abstract knowledge in order to conduct their practice solely, or in partnership with peers within the same profession. The professional logic gives them control of the content of their work and how this work is being organized (Goodrick and Reay 2011). The control is based on the teachers' knowledge, judgment, independence, and pursuit of a certain autonomy based on their own jurisdiction. Professionals work within a framework – with a specific scope as well as specific norms and values in their field of work (Brante 2014). Norms and values are often expressed in professional codes and ethical guidelines that guide actions and trust building between the individual, the professional, and society (Evetts 2013).

Within *the state logic*, the government takes responsibility for professional work. Professionals are regarded as state employees, and the state controls the professional practice credentials and the organization of employees' work (Goodrick and Reay 2011). The state logic includes values such as democratic principles, political ideology, welfare, and power (Thornton 2004), and these values are guidelines for teachers' work.

Within *the bureaucratic logic*, teachers' work is political steered through regulations and instructions. The bureaucratic logic is centralized and formalized in order to ensure standardization within an institution (Friedson 2001). Government managers determine the appropriate quality standards (Goodrick and Reay 2011).

The bureaucratic and the state logics are closely connected to the market logic. Within *the market logic* there is free and unregulated competition with consumer preferences and choice determining success (Friedson 2001). This logic has competition and individualization as means and goals, and schools are seen as parts of a market that competes for students, teacher resources, and results. The idea is to view school and education through a "market lens".

Logics can create contradictions and/or be competitive, and when guided by logics one often is forced to prioritize. Professionals are likely to identify strongly with one or more logics in their field of work. Actors can also be guided by several different logics in order to maintain the legitimacy of their actions – and to challenge the institutional order (Scott 2008). Contradictions within an institution, and the different bases of values regarding these logics, will contribute to the predomination of different logics in various ways – depending on situations and actions, as this paper will show.

Datasets

In order to illustrate teachers' work with the newly introduced standardized assessments, data is retrieved from a research project called *The Preschool Class in Transition. Consequences of Positional Shifts in a Reformed Educational Landscape*. The participants in this project are preschool class teachers from six schools in six

municipalities. In addition to informal conversations with the teachers, the datasets being used in this paper include classroom observations of 44 assessment situations in 12 preschool classes in 6 different municipalities during the time of assessment.

The observations focused on studying how the assessment situations were introduced, conducted, and completed, and how the teachers and children acted in these different situations. Conversations with 12 teachers were conducted during the classroom observations, and during in-between moments. They were not based on predetermined questions, but rather flexible, and based on what happened during, before and/or after the assessment situations.

The analysis of the datasets was inspired by Reay and Jones (2016). A commuting between inductive and deductive analysis was carried out. The empirical data were carefully read through, and thereafter deductively traced and matched to each logic described in the theoretical section. Through the inductive technique, bottom-up logics were traced in the stories and compared with the predefined logics. Through the deductive technique, the abovementioned logics were traced to the stories.

Results: Coexisting logics

In the following, traces of the different institutional logics will be illustrated.

Bureaucratic and professional logics

The datasets illustrate that the bureaucratic and the professional logics coexist as the teachers conduct the assessments. These different logics leads to different consequences for the practice. In some preschool classes, the teachers read from the manual to make sure that the exercise is presented "by the book" to the children:

Now, I will read from the instructions, the teacher says, and picks up the manuals with the instructions for the exercise. You shall roll the dice and find the digit card for the same number as the dice shows.

Then put that card in the right box in front of you. If you want, you can say what number it illustrates. Then pick as many objects as the dice shows.

The manual and the assessment matrices are usually placed on the table in front of the teacher – and visible to the children. The children perform the exercises according to the instructions. Some children can easily carry out the exercises, others have major problems. Some teachers neither correct the children who make mistakes, nor do they help them in finding the correct answer:

A child puts the numbers in reverse, which is directly noted by another child. Look, he put the numbers from the wrong direction! The teacher does neither respond, nor correct the child, but begins reading from the teacher's manual instead.

The fact that the teachers neither support, nor challenge the children's guesses can be explained by the fact that they just want to get the assessment done in "the right way". The children who pass the assessment, and the ones who do not, are simply marked in the matrices on the table in front of the children. The situation is similar to a test, based on a pattern of questions and answers.

The abovementioned approaches illustrate how some teachers are guided by the bureaucratic logic when conducting the assessments. It is shown how the teachers' work becomes steered through regulations and instructions to ensure standardization when conducting the assessments (Friedson 2001), like the centralized and formalized manual of the assessments, when this logic dominates. The professionals' focus is on controlling children's knowledge, and not on the children's learning outcome from the exercise. In accordance with the bureaucratic logic, the manual is put in the foreground, and the assessments are carried out in accordance with the standardized manual given to the teachers. It may be assumed that situations like these do not become part of everyday education, but rather something

occurring separate from – or alongside regular teaching.

However, in other cases the professional logic dominates the bureaucratic. As an example, other teachers had learned the manual by heart and presented the exercise as a problem that the children should solve together:

This is a new game! The teacher points at a picture of a park. What kind of environment do you think this is? The children discuss and conclude that it is a park. Now, you should play this game together. You have to listen to each other, discuss, and let everyone talk. We have a joint mission!

By presenting the exercise in an inviting and playful way, the children become engaged in solving the problem together:

The group of children work energetically together. The teacher poses supportive questions, e.g. Tell me how you think? At the end, some children begin instructing one another by asking supportive and challenging questions.

With this approach, the teacher chooses another way to act – within the same framework of norms and values (Brante 2014) in the field of work. Here, the assessment situation becomes a joint mission, and the pupils are allowed to try and fail, and try again with support from each other and their teacher. The exercise is conducted in an inviting way, and the teacher makes use of professional skills to assess the children. By asking supportive questions during the exercise, the teacher ensures that all the children feel that they have succeeded in performing the task, although some children did not pass the assessment. All the children are invited to respond – to give it a try. When the children have left the room, the teacher makes short notes about each child's performance in the matrices.

These examples illustrate that the assessments are carried out in different ways locally despite a national, standardized manual.

The examples are not meant to highlight “good” or “bad” practices, but rather the existing variations in everyday practice. The practice will continue to be different depending on which logic teachers are guided by. The differences illustrated are based on the autonomous choices that teachers make when guided by the professional or the bureaucratic logic. Professionals have their freedom to act, control and chose the content and the organization of their work (Goodrick and Reay 2011). Hence, the professional logic and teachers’ autonomy challenge the urge for uniformity and standardization – i.e. the state goals guided by the bureaucratic logic. This does not only apply in assessment situations. Teachers’ choices affect all teaching.

The professional logic is also visible in how teachers are grouping children when conducting the assessments. In some preschool classes, the teacher selects a small group of children to be assessed. When the assessment is done, the teacher picks up a new, small group of children to assess. The other children from the class play alone in the classroom or outdoor, in the yard. In other preschool classes, the teacher conducts the assessments with half of the class. In the meantime, the other half of the class has lessons with another teacher. When the assessment is done, the teachers switch groups. In addition, some preschool class teachers conduct a few exercises with the whole class, e.g. writing letters and names.

When teachers decide how to organize the groups, and the location for the assessments, they are guided by the professional logic. The choices they make are based on their focus, interests, and knowledge. Judgments regarding the assessment practices are made by using their professional independence and autonomy (Brante 2014). Teachers’ professional choices have an impact on how excercises are carried out, and on how children are being responded to.

The datasets show that when teachers are conducting the assessments, and they are grouping the children, they are predominantly guided by the professional logic. However, the datasets also show that they are guided by bureaucratic logic as they are steered through regulations and in-

structions that are centralized and formalized. The teachers seem to make use of their professionalism in order to balance the tension between the two logics.

State and market logics

The results of the assessments are supposed to support teachers and children in further education. However, the dataset above all illustrate the focus on showing results “upwards and outwards”. In most municipalities, the results of the assessments are reported and registered in municipal-wide digital systems, although there are no such requirements at a national level. The municipalities’ administration and principals all want to engage in the results, partly in order to compare results from different schools, partly in order to report the results to the preschools, from which the preschool class children come:

The result is entered into the system, and you can see how many children have passed the different modules. And then you can see which preschool the children previously have attended. The preschools can also enter the system and see the results of their former preschoolers. In addition, we have visited the preschools to present the assessments. The preschools have been analyzing the results and discussed what they should continue to work on.

The presentation of results seems to be highly prioritized in these schools. However, none of the teachers report that the principals have expressed specific interest in improving the preschool class’ education in light of the results:

The principal was only focused on giving feedback to the preschools and the administration at the municipality level. But what should we [the teachers in the preschool classes] do with the results? And what will be the result of all the time we have spent on assessing? What happens next?

Several of the teachers express that the assessments are positive, as they show children’s results “in black and white” and the kind of support that children actually need for their further develop-

ment. This is in line with the guarantee of action (SOU 2016, p. 59). Nevertheless, few teachers testify that they, or the children, have received any extra support from the school's special needs education teachers in their teaching:

Like this child [points at the matrice], who doesn't have any language. This child would really, really need special education, but hasn't been offered any extra support at all.

The teachers' stories testify that only few of the children, who have been identified as needing extra support, have received any support. When there is a lack of resources at schools, the special needs education teachers seems to be retained in the higher grades.

This illustrates how the schools are guided by the market logic. This logic has competition and individualization as means and goals (Friedson 2001), and this is measured by the assessment results. Both principals and administrations seem to be guided by this logic as they collect the results to disseminate and compare them. This has boosted the test culture and the culture of accountability which is illustrated by the results being reported back to the preschools. At an overall level, this process can be likened to a kind of formative approach. The results are reported back to the preschools, so that they may develop their education. This in turn puts pressure on the preschool education to better prepare children for the transition to preschool class and the upcoming assessments.

However, the datasets also illustrate that even though the state logic within the guarantee of action is clear at a policy level, this logic has not changed the local pedagogical practice in terms of giving children the support they are guaranteed. This state logic stress values such as democratic principles, political educational ideology, and welfare (Thornton 2004), which can be translated into giving children the support they need and are entitled to in a democratic way. The rationales behind the reform, and the support that are guaranteed children, do not yet seem to have been fully applied to the preschool class. At the specific classroom level, the assessment seems to support neither teachers, nor children.

Guided by the state and market logics, the focus is on collecting evidence of conducted assessments and spread the results "upwards and outwards", rather than supporting the children, who are identified as being in need of extra support, or developing the quality of teaching.

In addition, the datasets illustrate the time spent on assessing children. Regardless of how the assessments are conducted, all teachers explain that the assessments of the two domains and all the modules (8 modules to be assessed on 3-4 aspects each, in total 30 exercises) have occupied more or less the entire autumn term. A common point among the teachers is that they have taught less. One teacher says:

I haven't got to teach the children, I've been pretty passive in the classroom. I felt that I had to drop my teaching in favor of the assessments where I focused all my time. I haven't been present, as I usually am. So now, after the Christmas holidays, I felt that I had to find out where about all children are, in terms of levels of knowledge.

The datasets imply that working with the assessments has created a passive, or absent, teacher. In addition, ordinary teaching can only start during the spring term. Hereby, another contradiction to the state logic is illustrated: The state's political ideology of more individual based teaching seems to collide with the practical feasibility. First of all, the assessments of all modules are perceived to take too much time from regular teaching. Secondly, there is a risk that children who do not participate in the assessment practice are left alone, to play on their own, for long periods of time. Thirdly, the assessment exercises seem to be separated and not integrated in the ordinary teaching. Thus, half of the year in preschool class seems to be more focused on assessment than on teaching and learning. This was not the intention of the state.

Conclusions

Even if this study is conducted during the first year of the introduction of compulsory assessments, the tendencies are clear: An increased test culture and accountability regime has been created in

the Swedish preschool class. The teachers are supposed to carry out the assessments, and the variations in how this is done has already been shown above. The examples are not illustrations of “good” or “bad” practice. They are rather illustrations of how different professional choices lead to different local practices.

These practises depend on if the teachers are guided by the professional, bureaucratic, state, or market logic. The assessments also seem to take different forms depending on the teachers’ autonomy and professional independence.

Some teachers work “by the manual”, while others shape their own assessment practices, learn the manual by heart, and adjust the exercises to the group of children in front of them. Some teachers seem to put the children and teaching in the foreground, others focus solely on the assessment. Some teachers leave the remaining children to play on their own for longer periods of time, while they carry out intense assessment with smaller groups of children. Others partly integrate the assessments in the regular teaching, and they make sure that all children are engaged in educational activities in different groups. Some teachers integrate the assessment for all children at the same time. All this depends on which logic the teachers are guided by. In most of the observed preschool classes, all logics coexist.

However, the educational policy vision to assess children for the purpose of supporting them better in further education is at risk of “getting lost” in the transition into the pedagogical practice. The datasets indicate that the educational goals of the reform are at risk of being reduced to assessments by a manual. This partly indicates that the Swedish preschool class is being “infected” with the process of GERM (Sahlberg 2016) and with the enhanced neoliberal governing – with a focus on delivering results according to an agenda of performativity (Ball 2003). The formative focus on creating evidence of how to support children’s further learning (e.g. Black and William 1998) seems to be replaced by a summative focus – in addition to a deliverology of results. But the results also show that the teachers’ everyday choices contribute to

the shaping of an internal “infection” of neoliberal practice.

In line with research from Moss (2016) and Sakellariou and Mitsi (2019), there is a risk that diversity in education is to be replaced with standardised uniformity, and focus will only be on selected parts of children’s skills.

This development indicates teaching to the test, i.e. focusing mainly on aspects that are to be assessed, and hereby failing to develop aspects such as socio-emotional skills and selfregulation that have proved important for young children’s learning (OECD 2020). The reform may reduce education in the preschool class to a technical practice with a focus on delivering and showing results. More assessments imply less teaching. One question arises: Is this time well spent?

The state’s ambitions with the reform seem to become even more complicated by the fact that different logics coexist, and some logics dominate others. This paper has shown that teachers are guided by a coexisting mix of logics which are based on different values. The logics can be perceived as contradictory; collaboration - competition, individualization – collective, professional judgment - control and standardization are all combined as this paper shows. Logics express and manifest themselves differently and leave various traces in the institution. Teachers’ actions are responses to the state’s demands, and at the same time these “answers” produce new conditions. In other words, teachers are institutional actors, and they contribute to creating institutional logics while at the same time being formed by them.



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