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1 Introduction

During the last twenty years, Swedish demographics have been changing rapidly due to increased migration into the country. In 2016, 23% of the inhabitants of Sweden were from a foreign background¹ (Statistic Sweden, 2016). As Swedish society increasingly becomes more ethnically and linguistically diverse, we need to consider the implications for the education system. With this increase in cultural diversity, Swedish preschools are also becoming more and more culturally diverse.

For many immigrant children and families, preschool is one of the places where they first encounter Swedish social institutions. Swedish preschools have a responsibility to promote children's social development and make them feel a part of the society. The Swedish preschool curriculum (Skolverket, 2010) requires teachers to take into account the implications of the increase in cultural diversity of their preschools, and makes general pronouncements about the need to value this cultural diversity; however, the Curriculum does not provide concrete guidelines or suggestions for how to work with the goals and values related to diversity. Teachers are asked to promote national values and at the same time mediating these values through a framework of cultural diversity, which research has shown leads teachers to react with confusion and uncertainty regarding how to enact these values (Runfors, 2013).

International, monolingual preschools in Sweden represent a kind of contradiction when it comes to cultural diversity and assessment and evaluation of those children in the preschool. As schools that use a language other than Swedish (usually English) as their "medium language" they address the mission of valuing multiple cultural perspectives, but they do so in a way that potentially undermines the other missions in the curriculum concerning children's participation in Swedish society, particularly the development of Swedish language proficiency, which is not only critical for participating in the society in general, but for participation in compulsory schooling in particular. Preschools are open for all the children, regardless of their cultural background, be they Swedish or from any other country. The curriculum stresses preparation for more formal education later in school, while encouraging and supporting children's social development and desire to learn (Skolverket, 2010).

¹ Inhabitants with foreign background – The term describes people born abroad or born in Sweden to two parents who themselves had both been born abroad.

This thesis examines the tensions, and their implications, stemming from the apparent contradictions of “international” preschool provision in the national context of Swedish preschool education. In other words, what does it mean to be an international English language school in Sweden, which has to negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and at the same time develop/maintain common heritage with a respect to Swedish language and culture? Specifically, this project examines the issue of early childhood education in an international English-medium preschool by way of a case study of how staff at a Swedish international preschool interpret the Curriculum when it based on semi-structured interviews with staff members that have different responsibilities and work experiences in the preschool. In addition, 2-day observations were made, to support the findings.

2 Background

In what follows, I briefly review relevant debates and literature on international education in relation to the study of language profile schools in Sweden and issues of cultural inclusion as laid out in the Swedish preschool curriculum. Furthermore, I briefly describe ecological systems theory and apply this framework as a means of mapping out important relations between preschool examined in the current case study and how it is situated in Swedish policy questions related to culture.

2.1 International Education in a globalized world

The UNESCO World Report (UNESCO, 2009) states that globalization has brought continued increases of international migration. One consequence of this has been that community links are forming between people across the world and creating the feeling of belonging to multiple cultures and societies at once. Given this accelerated process of globalization, cultural diversity and its implications for how societies are organized has become a key concern, particularly with respect to its role in sustainable development and education.

Statistic Sweden (2016) reported that around 23% of the inhabitants of Sweden were from foreign background, meaning that each such person had either been born abroad, or had been born in Sweden to two parents who themselves had both been born abroad. If we take into account people with only one parent born abroad, this percentage increases to 30% (Statistic Sweden, 2017). That is why multicultural and intercultural education in Sweden is important.

In this context of globalization, there has been a related increase in the number of “international schools” around the world, especially schools with English-medium instruction². According to ISC Research (International School Consultancy) there were approximately 2500 schools offering English as main language of instruction outside of English-speaking countries in 2002 (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). In 2012 this number increased to 6000 and it continues to rise. English-medium schools are popular for different reasons. In the past the demand for international schools came mostly from expatriate parents who needed such schools because of their typically nomadic, professional life (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). Currently, English-medium schools represent an active choice for parents and students and can be seen as a means

² English-medium instruction (EMI) is defined by Dearden and Macaro (2016) as providing instruction in English in contexts where English is not the language commonly spoken.

for middle to upper class families to provide their children with access to the kinds of cultural capital (particularly the English language) that will allow children to better negotiate life in a globalized world or it can be seen as alternative for everyone. A Japanese study found that parents, teachers and directors from international preschools in Japan strive to common goal of producing the “international” child (Imoto, 2011). Parents desire that their children gain English language skills for future success and survival. Similarly, Skolverket (2010) investigated the reasons why parents in Sweden choose an English-medium school. The study included six primary schools, municipal and private. They found that most parents argued that English is essential in a globalized world and that English proficiency is needed for future opportunities to live and work abroad. Furthermore, this study showed that students who attend English-medium education are more likely to have foreign background.

2.2 Language profile preschools in Sweden

Preschool attendance in Sweden is voluntary; however, municipalities are responsible for ensuring any child requiring a placement in a preschool be given a placement within four months. Parents have a right to choose the preschool for their children. Municipalities are responsible for ensuring that every preschool, private and public, fulfill the requirements for good quality and safety (Om svenska skolan, 2018). The schools cannot have any criteria for children to be accepted in the school concerning the language they speak or their cultural background. Elementary schools in Sweden can arrange the main part of teaching in English for students who are staying in Sweden for limited period of time, but no more than half of the instruction may be given in English (Skolförordning, 2011:185). Interestingly, this the law does not apply to the preschools.

A reform of the Swedish school system in 1992, made it possible for schools who were not run by state or municipality to receive public financing. Therefore, it was made easier for schools providing education in languages other than Swedish to access public support. Currently in Sweden, it is possible to find Swedish language preschools, bi-lingual or language profile preschools. The latter are the preschools which have permission to carry out instruction in a language other than Swedish (Boyd et. al, 2017). Children enrolled in those schools may not necessarily speak Swedish, nor may they be learning Swedish at home, however, they are living in the society where Swedish is the main, national language. The language profile preschools

are needed to support all the immigrant families and Swedish families that want their children to learn other languages (e.g. English, Spanish, German), but it might be more difficult for those schools to carry out the mission to promote national values and at the same time mediating these values through a framework of cultural diversity, like the Curriculum ask them to do (Runfors. 2013).

A number of UNESCO case studies suggest that the implementation of mother-tongue bilingual education programs can increase learners' outcomes and raise academic achievements when compared to monolingual second-language systems (Bühmann & Trudell, 2008). Bilingual education programs may be directed at children whose languages differ from the language of public education and are trying to preserve their mother language. However, many parents decide to school their children in vehicular languages³ at the expense of mastery of their mother tongue (UNESCO World Report, 2009). *But what if the vehicular language is one that is not the dominant language of the society in which the child is being schooled?* English is the prototypical example. English is an important language internationally and in Sweden. It is used for international business, popular culture and education on all levels. English is also one of the three required subjects in compulsory school along with Swedish and Mathematic. Sweden is ranked second in the world, with a very high proficiency in English (EF English Proficiency Index, 2017).

Research on international, profile language preschools in Sweden is scarce. The research that is available focuses primarily on issues of language policy. For example, Boyd & Ottesjö (2016) conducted research about how a twofold institutional language policy plays out in practice among staff and children in an English-medium preschool in Sweden. They found out that staff in the preschool primarily talked English by rarely deviating in their talk from monolingual English, but the children in the preschool showed variety of bilingual practices. The authors concluded that these code alternation practices either arise spontaneously from children's linguistic competence or have been learned from other children or other adults outside the preschool. A similar study (Boyd, Huss and Ottesjö, 2017) concluded that children in the preschools tend to follow the lead of the preceding speaker's language choice. Even though the staff gives priority to the profile language (English or Finnish), the children show

³ Vehicular language/ lingua franca, is used as a "contact language between persons who share neither a common native language nor a common culture..." (Firth, 1996, p. 240). And for them, for example English is the chosen foreign language of communication.

through their interaction that skills in both the preschool's profile language and in Swedish are valuable.

2.3 The Swedish preschool curriculum

According to Swedish preschool steering documents, preschools should organize activities which meet the needs and interest of all children. Some of these needs are framed in the preschool Curriculum in terms the need to value the different cultural backgrounds that children bring to the preschool. In promoting respect for human rights, the Swedish preschool curriculum (Skolverket, 2010) seeks to create environments to help children learn to respect and value each other's abilities, to be patient, tolerant and understanding.

The Swedish curriculum states that the preschool should "strive to ensure that each child feel a sense of participation in their own culture and develop a feeling and respect for other cultures" (Skolverket, 2010, p. 10). The environment has to make sure that there is no intentional or unintentional discrimination and prejudice in Curriculum and learning materials, especially with regard to children from diverse cultural backgrounds. It has been shown that children are aware of ethnic and cultural differences at a very young age (Aboud 1988, Flavell, Miller & Miller, 1993) and preschool is one of the social and cultural meeting place which should prepare children for life in culturally diverse community. The Curriculum states that the work team should "make children aware that people may have different attitudes and values that determine their views and actions" (Skolverket, 2010, p. 9). It is particularly important that the environment be arranged to ensure that prejudice and discrimination are not reflected, even unintentionally, in curriculum and learning materials, especially with regard to children from diverse cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2010). The Curriculum has to be designed to ensure equity and to allow teachers to adapt teaching methods, that's the key to inclusive classroom (ibid.).

Furthermore, the Swedish preschool curriculum (Skolverket, 2010) states that one of the important tasks of the preschool is to "...impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based (p.3). In all the preschools, care and respect for other people, equity and equality and the rights of every individual should be emphasized and expressed. The activities of the preschool should be carried out democratically and therefore provide a basis for a growing responsibility and interest for

children to be active participants in society (ibid.). The preschool should be a cultural and social meeting place which can prepare children to live in internationalized community. The preschool should also help children with a foreign background to receive support in developing a multicultural sense of identity (ibid.).

Although it is clear that in principle Swedish preschool provision aims to provide a culturally inclusive environment for children in the early years, in practice the situation is less than ideal. The teacher education reform in Sweden in 2001 emphasized that future teachers must be trained to work in multicultural environment (Rabo, 2007). Intercultural education has become a subject in the general part of the teacher training, but the approaches of intercultural and multicultural education vary from one program to another (Taguma et al., 2010). Statens Offentliga Utredningar (2005:56) reported that Swedish preschool teacher training programs do not provide enough instructions for preschool teachers to work with intercultural issues common in every day practice.

Preschool teachers in Sweden are asked to take into account that children have different home living environments and try to create context and meaning out of their experiences, but at the same time teachers should strive to pass on cultural heritage, values, traditions, history, language and knowledge to the next generations (Skolverket, 2010). However, as with any values-based curricula, the Swedish Preschool Curriculum is written in such a way that leaves aspects of its implementation open to interpretation. Runfors (2013) argues that the Curriculum leaves words like culture and diversity vaguely defined. For example, Runfors notes that the Curriculum states that preschool's mission is "to impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values which Swedish society is based on" (Skolverket, 2010, p. 3). Runfors argues that the mission of the curriculum regarding cultural issues is unclear because we can interpret the goals in many different ways. The Curriculum does not clarify whose cultural heritage or how teachers should mediate national values and the values of children from foreign background, which can be challenging for the teachers.

Of particular interest with respect of the question of culture and Swedish preschool provision are questions of children's language acquisition in Swedish preschools. The curriculum states that the preschool should stimulate each child's language development not just for reasons of the child's communicative development, but also for reasons related to the development of the child's identity: "Language and learning are inseparably linked together, as are language and

the development of a personal identity” (Skolverket, 2010, p.6). Children with a well-developed mother tongue other than Swedish, have better opportunities to learn Swedish, than children who didn’t develop their mother tongue. It is written in the Curriculum (Skolverket, 2010) that the preschool should strive to ensure that each child “with a mother tongue other than Swedish develop their cultural identity and the ability to communicate in both Swedish and their mother tongue" (p.10). Preschools need to give children with foreign background opportunity to develop both their Swedish language and their mother tongue. However, the Curriculum does not talk about children whose mother tongue is Swedish and the importance of learning the Swedish language for all. It can be interpreted that teachers are not required to promote Swedish language if children’s mother tongue is Swedish.

2.4. Ecological systems theory

The aim of this study is to examine how international preschools in Sweden negotiate tensions related to Swedish preschool curricular requirements related to the twin missions of creating a culturally inclusive environment and preparing children for participation in Swedish society. Broadly speaking - what does it mean to be an English-medium preschool in the context of Swedish Preschool provision? In the background presented here, it is clear that in order to understand how this negotiation takes place, we need to understand how the day to day work of preschools is arranged in terms of local organizational expectations, as well as by larger scale institutional demands implemented through steering documents and oversight from the Ministry of Education and the School Inspectorate. For this reason, an Ecological Systems Theory approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) has been adopted as a conceptual framework for interpreting the data collected.

In Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory the socio-cultural environment is viewed as an essential component in human development. Bronfenbrenner identified interconnected layers within this environment, each playing various roles in the growth of a person (See Figure 1). Each layer, or structure, may affect a person in different ways, and the interactions between the structures have the potential to steer the person’s development, thus creating a unique experience for each individual (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). Bronfenbrenner identified that a change/conflict in any one layer has the potential to make changes on the other layers within the system (Paquette & Ryan, 2001).



Teachers and other professionals in education can take a lot from Bronfenbrenner's work, especially when we consider how society is evolving and changing. In this increasingly global society it is important that teachers have an awareness of the cultures and values which may be dictating the child's lifestyle, as well as understanding how wider issues affecting family life may have an unwanted effect on a child's development (Sheridan et al., 2011).

Ecological Systems Theory can help us understand how social policy issues potentially affect how education and care are organized in preschool, as well as the organization of the profession of preschool teaching. Looking at the model, it can be seen how changes in one strata of the environment, policy requirements related to e.g. child-teacher ratios impact on local requirements regarding classroom organization (Sheridan et al., 2011). In the present study, factors influencing the teachers and the preschool itself were examined through the lens of the various strata in the ecological systems model, namely macro-, exo-, meso-, micro- and chrono-system levels (See Figure 1). The Exosystem is the environment that indirectly affects teacher's work, e.g. national educational policies. Looking at Exosystem of the English-medium preschool, we can see that it follows the same laws as Swedish public preschools, but also the policies of the second, Western curriculum they use to organize activities in the preschool. The macro level provides knowledge of the overall goals for the preschool and indicates how these goals should be implemented through practice as values, content and activities (Sheridan et al., 2011). The influence of the macrosystem in this school is mediated both by the outside Western Curriculum, its values and contents, and the Swedish curriculum which lays down what are the fundamental values and principals in the Swedish society.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's work we can say that ecological factors influence how preschool staff interact with their environment, including relationships with others, events, and objects. Teachers working in an international preschool are included in the complex sociocultural world that impact their development. The School's microsystem consists of multidirectional relationships between teachers, students, and parents. The parents, the children, the teachers and the principal/owner have their own cultural and educational background, values and beliefs, that will indirectly influence how the preschool is organized, how preschool staff work with children and families from different backgrounds. In addition, the school developed the Equality Treatment Act and Systematic quality assurance documents, based on the policies and laws in Sweden and according to the foreign Curriculum. The preschool staff works in a specific idioculture environment, where they developed and appropriated their ways of how to

negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and in the same time develop/maintain common heritage, using both Curriculums.

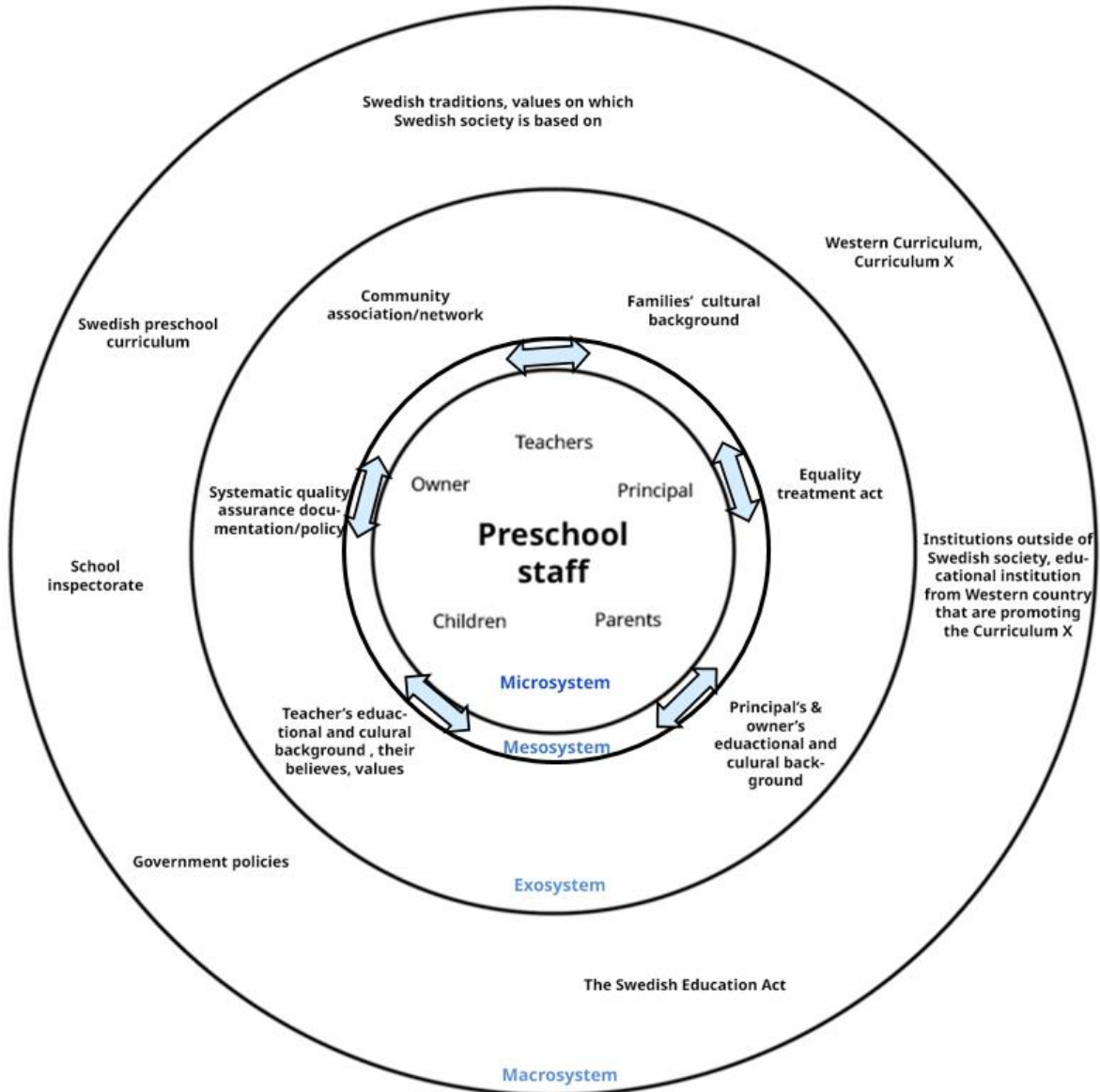


Figure 1: Ecological systems theory diagram of the English-medium preschool in Sweden

2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this study, broadly speaking, is to explore what it means to be an international English language school in Sweden, which has to negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and in the same time develop/maintain common heritage with a respect to the Swedish preschool curriculum.

The negotiation notion in this study refers to the teachers' coping with tensions produced by the need to simultaneously have the children participating in a shared culture and at the same time trying to create a culture that it brings in diversity of cultures while having English as their medium language. In other words, the staff members have to promote cultural values, believes, practices that the children bring to the school and at the same time try to enculturate children into the society and the culture in which they are presumably going to be participating in, which is the Swedish culture. But that is the presumption of the Swedish curriculum. In fact, a significant portion of children in the preschool, do not fit that profile of children who are going to be living in Sweden. These children are currently living in Sweden, but they are not going to be living in Sweden in a sort of a sustain long way as it seems to be presumed by the Swedish curriculum. This can be understood and seen as a dilemma, as the staff members, according to the Swedish curriculum, have to strive to promote children's diverse culture and at the same time, promote participation in a shared society, with shared set of values and believes. In Sweden, there are these schools which are trying to follow the Swedish curriculum, which has an implicit assumption about children's participation in the Swedish culture. It can be understood that teachers are challenged to prepare inclusive environment for everyone, while taking into account different laws, guidelines from the curriculums and different cultures while using English as their medium language. Therefore, it is important to investigate how the teachers negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum.

This research is guided by the following research questions:

- How do the staff in English-medium preschool in Sweden interpret and implement the Curriculum when it comes to questions of cultural diversity in their day to day work?
- How does the preschool's monolingual language policy affect everyday life in the preschool?

3 Methods

This qualitative case study was conducted in an English-medium preschool in Sweden. The study combines semi-structured interviews and observations to investigate how is the preschool, its pedagogy and English language policy is situated with respect to what the Swedish preschool curriculum says about internationalization and diversity.

3.1 Participants

Five staff members from the international preschool were recruited as participants in the study. The participants were recruited in person or via email with the help of a teacher who works at the school and who is a personal acquaintance of the author. Furthermore, the school principal assisted in the recruitment effort. Prior to giving their voluntary consent to participate in the study and signing a consent form, all participants were informed about the purposes and procedures of the study, as well as of their rights as study participants, including the right to withdraw their participation from the study at any time, for any reason, without consequence.

The interviews were made with five participants⁴.

Interview number & duration	Number of participants	Pseudonym	Position in the preschool	Years working in the preschool	Family background
Interview 1 1h 25 min	1	Jessica	Principal	15 + years	American/Swedish
	2	Johanna	Owner	15 + years	British
Interview 2 55 min	3	Chloe	Preschool teacher	11 years	American
Interview 3 50 min	4	Emma	Preschool teacher	15 + years	Brazilian
Interview 4 51 min	5	Amy	Preschool teacher	1 year	Greek

Figure 2: Interview and participant information

Jessica is the principal of the preschool. She grew up in dual-cultural family. She lived in America, then moved to Sweden, where she worked as a preschool teacher, until she helped to establish the preschool.

⁴ Pseudonyms are used, instead of the real names of the participants, in order to protect identities of the teachers/principals/owners and the school.

Johanna is the preschool owner. She is British and moved to Sweden approximately thirty years ago. She met Jessica in Sweden, firstly their relationship was as a parent-teacher, Johanna was a parent at that time. Jessica and Johanna decided to establish the preschool more than fifteen years ago.

Chloe is a preschool teacher from United States. She worked as a kindergarten teacher and first grade teacher in the United States. In 2000 she moved to Sweden, where she worked as an English language teacher for adults, including immigrants. She has been working in the English-medium preschool for eleven years.

Emma is a preschool teacher from Brazil. She worked there as a primary teacher and a math teacher from 1st to 8th grade. In addition, she taught children English as a second language in a private English language school. She moved to Sweden eighteen years ago. She has worked for more than fifteen years in the English-medium preschool.

Amy is a preschool teacher from Greece. She moved to Sweden two years ago to study in a master's program focused on research in childhood interventions. Before moving to Sweden, she worked 1 year as an English language teacher for children from six to twelve years old. She has worked in the English-medium preschool for 9 months.

Each participant pursued their undergraduate education in their home countries.

3.2 Field site

The study was conducted in an urban, private preschool in Sweden. The preschool is an English-medium school. The teachers in the preschool as well as the families represent a large cross section of the international community. The preschool has Swedish children and children from all over the world that live in Sweden. Many families who send their children to the preschool are living in Sweden temporarily (two to four years), as one or both parents have come from abroad on temporary work contracts with different companies (e.g. Volvo), hospitals and universities.

The preschool has approx. 20 teachers/assistants and over 100 children. There are seven children's groups organized into four departments. Each department is organized in terms of the children's ages.

Like all preschools in Sweden, the preschool must follow the Swedish national Curriculum (Skolverket, 2010), which is a general framework or set of guidelines for guiding educational activities. Additionally, the school implements a specific Western curriculum model (hereafter *Curriculum X*) that advocates an active participatory learning and is research-validated. This curriculum can be seen as structured, sequenced set of prescriptions for the organization of educational activities. Curriculum X is designed to help children learn by being involved in direct experiences with people, objects, ideas and events. This curriculum draws on the constructivist theories of Piaget, Dewey, Erikson, Vygotsky and others. Content areas of the Curriculum are organized in eight main categories: Approaches to Learning (e.g. planning, problem solving) Social and Emotional Development (e.g. emotions, conflict resolution), Physical Development and Health (e.g. motor skills, healthy behavior), Language, Literacy, and Communication (e.g. vocabulary, reading), Mathematics (e.g. shapes, measuring), Creative Arts (e.g. music, pretend play), Science and Technology (e.g. predicting, observing) and Social Studies (e.g. diversity, history).

The school uses DAT (Developmental Assessment Tool)⁵ to assess children's development. DAT is an early childhood assessment instrument that was designed to meet the needs of early childhood programs for developmentally and culturally appropriate assessment methods. Teachers regularly write anecdotes about children behaviors, experiences and interests. Teachers observe children and review those anecdotes two to three times a year to see on which level of the development each child is. Teachers rate them in 8 categories and 58 areas known as developmental indicators (e.g. communicating ideas, diversity). There is developmental sequence of seven levels of competency (i.e., from least to most developed), which teachers mark for the purpose to see how much did children advance from their own development.

3.3 Documentation Methods

One group and four individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect the data about the staff interpretations of and work with the Swedish Preschool Curriculum, concerning the language, assessment, internationalization, and cultural diversity and their mission of inclusion in the Swedish society with English as a main language of engagement. Semi-structured interviews allow highest flexibility of coverage small-scale case studies, and capture the richness of the themes articulated by respondents (Drever, 1995), and participants

⁵ The name of the tool was anonymized. See section 3.5 *Ethical Considerations* for more information.

have a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about, how much to say or how to express it (Bryman, 2008). The group interview was done, because the Jessica and Johanna preferred to be interview together. Group interviews have some advantages and complexities. Group interviews can help participants to share and exchange ideas and stimulate new thoughts which may never occur in individual interviewing. The group provide support for all the members to feel comfortable and this way otherwise shy people share their thoughts with the interviewer (Goldman, 1962). It is important that all participants in the group interview have a chance to speak and express their opinion, because it can happen that more talkative participants takes the lead and the others don't get a chance to talk. One of the participants in the study was more talkative then the other, but both participants got a chance to express their opinion. The group interviews seem to gather all the data we want relatively shorter time compared to individual interviews (Lederman, 1990), but the process of writing transcripts takes longer, compared to individual interviews.

An interview guide was developed prior to the interviews as a means of orienting to topics and posing questions relevant for addressing the study aims. The preschool staff was interviewed once, in person or via Skype/phone. The interviews were conducted in English, audio recorded and transcribed. Interview with the principal Jessica and the owner Johanna lasted for 1:25h and it was conducted in person. Interviews with Emma and Amy were conducted via Skype, each interview was long approx. 50 minutes. The interview with Chloe was done through the phone call and it was 55 minutes long. Skype/phone interviews are cost-effective, alternative to in-person interviews (Sedgwick & Spiers 2009), they can be done on distance and save time and troubles of traveling to interviewees. Skype has a few advantages compared to phone interviews. Through the video, the interviewer and the interviewee can see each other and therefore the contact is of a more personal manner than by phone (Weinmann et al., 2012). Chloe's interview was done by phone, because of her request. All the Skype/phone interviews went without any major interruptions because of the signal or the internet connection.

Three paragraphs from the Swedish curriculum were provided to the interviewees as prompts to prepare them for a discussion about culture, diversity and language (see Appendix A).

In addition, Amy's class was observed for two days. She gave the permission to observe her class. The class had 13 children of the age of three. The consent forms were distributed to the parents by the teacher. Observations of daily activities in one group (greeting time, lunch, group activities, rest time...) were conducted. One observation was conducted prior to the participant

interviews. The purpose of the unstructured observation was to gain a general sense of the day-to-day activities of the preschool, and thus characterize the setting with respect to question of issues of language, culture and assessment, relevant to my research aims and questions.

The remaining observation was conducted after preliminary review of the interview transcripts. With the information gained from these reviews, the second observation was conducted to triangulate with the interview findings. The initial review of the transcript was used as an interpretive lens for the second round of observations.

3.4 Analysis Methods

A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the texts. Through thematic analysis patterns were identified concerning the ways that the preschool interprets Curriculum when it comes to question of cultural diversity, language policy and assessment. Four transcripts and two field notes were analyzed. When gathered all the text, the coding and searching for meanings that are relevant to the research questions were done. According to Saldaña (2013), a code is a word, phrase or sentence that represent aspect(s) of a data or capture the essence of features of data. After the coding process, the codes were organized into sub-categories. The next step was to find the categories in which we can place sub-categories, and get even bigger unit. Our interpretation of data, organizing and connecting codes, sub-categorizes and categorizes to get the bigger picture was important.

Small number of participants and data will create a limitation in transferability of the results since more categories or sub-categories might have appeared if there had been more conducted interviews. The results of the research shouldn't be generalized, because of the specific context and the limited sample size.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Any information gathered from the participants was anonymized to ensure that they cannot be identified. Additionally, all information gathered was stored securely to prevent loss or theft and the interview transcripts/audio recordings were deleted upon completion of the study. All persons, organizations and institutions involved in the study remain anonymous in all respects.

All the participants gave their voluntary consent to participate in the study, including reading and signing the consent forms (see Appendix B). All participants agreed to be interviewed, and one participant agreed to let her class to be observed.

The parents of the children signed the consent forms (see Appendix B) before the observations started. Children whose parents didn't agree to participate in the study, were removed from the classroom.

The name of the approach and the name of the assessment tool that the school is using were changed, in order to ensure that the school could not be identified given the specific profile and limited numbers of English-medium preschools in Sweden. For the same reason some references were not added and some words in the interview extracts were changed to protect identity of the participants and the school.

At the request from the school leaders, the principal and the owner, their answers from the interview are not quoted in this thesis.

3.6 Limitations

The study included only a small number of participants due to the time limit we had. Because of the small sample and the unique preschool profile, the results cannot be generalized. Due to limited time of the participants, some interviews were limited in length and thus some topics were not covered in depth. The participants were not asked about their intercultural and multicultural education they received prior working in the English-medium preschool.

4 Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the data revealed that the staff described various tensions related to their negotiating the demands of the curriculum together with approaches that, I argue, were used to balance or resolve these tensions. Two main themes related to this process of negotiation and resolution were identified in the analysis: Tools and practices used to negotiate the constraints of the Swedish curriculum and The politics and practicalities of being an English-medium school.

4.1 Tools and practices used to negotiate Dilemmas of the Swedish curriculum

As noted earlier, in addition to working with the Swedish Preschool Curriculum, the school appropriated and began implementing Curriculum X a few years after the school was established. This was done in conjunction with the use of the DAT developmental measurement tool which teachers used on daily basis. Analyses revealed that the implementation of these pedagogical and assessment tools by staff at the school mediated various tensions and dilemmas related to questions of cultural inclusion and pedagogical quality and accountability.

4.1.1 Curriculum X:

When the preschool was established, it worked only with the Swedish national Curriculum. Furthermore, there was no central pedagogical philosophy that was followed by the entire school. When the preschool was established, the pool of employees included teachers with varying pedagogical philosophies. For example, according to the principal one class was Montessori and the other one was using more socio-cultural approach. According to the principal Jessica and the owner Johanna, they initially adopted Curriculum X as a means of trying to bring the school under one unified approach, one which they believed fit with the Swedish. To be clear, this was a curriculum appropriated for use alongside the Swedish preschool curriculum. When comparing the two curricula, the Swedish curriculum is understood as a general, values-based framework or set of guidelines for guiding educational activities, while the Curriculum X is a structured, sequenced set of prescriptions and guidelines for the organization of educational activities.



Critically, the principal Jessica and the owner Johanna described the relationship between the two curricula in terms of means and ends: The Swedish curriculum was described as “What” and Curriculum X was described as “How”. They see the Swedish curriculum as a kind of a framework of what is expected and the Curriculum X as how are they going to reach the goals. Jessica elaborated on this point noting that the requirement in Sweden is that teaching at all levels should be based on Vetenskaplig grund (Science) and Beprövad erfarenhet (proven experience). Curriculum X, according to the principal Jessica and the owner Johanna, met these criteria as it is based on a research with good results in practice.

There was agreement among all staff that Curriculum X worked as a complement to the Swedish preschool curriculum. According to the principal and owner the Swedish curriculum is similar to Curriculum X because they both focus on intrinsic motivation, on the children finding their strengths from within, on the process rather than the product, acknowledgment vs praise, problem solving, and democracy. According to some staff, one reason why they viewed Curriculum X as a complement to the Swedish Curriculum had to do with the highly structured quality of Curriculum X. The owner argued that once the teacher became familiar with the structure, they were free to be more creative and engage more with the children. Emma, making a related argument, described Curriculum X’s structure as a means of accomplishing goals contained within the Swedish curriculum, namely those related to following the children’s interests. She argued that their school placed much focus on children’s interests compared to some other Swedish preschools:

“My three kids went to the Swedish preschool. I can see a clear difference in terms of planning, in terms of activities, in terms of really preparing activities based on kid’s interests, in the Swedish school it was more free play without focusing in the child’s interests. In Sweden it is more like free thing. I am not saying that it is bad. I am saying how we do it, I am 100% more in what we do. We see that Curriculum X, I bet that the Swedish curriculum would pay off as well, if all those teachers were aware of how important it is to follow the kids interest and not your own personal and comfortable interest.” – Emma

The owner and Emma are arguing that the structure provided by Curriculum X has the effect of freeing the teachers to pay more attention to the children, and thus allowing them to focus on identifying and working more with the children’s interests. From this perspective, this

outside curriculum, Curriculum X, is seen as helping the teachers accomplish the Swedish Curriculum's goals of having the teachers make children's interests the leading factor in preschool activities. The Swedish preschool curriculum (Skolverket, 2010) states that preschool teachers are responsible for all children having influence over working methods and contents, moreover "the child's curiosity, initiative and interests should be encouraged" (p. 5). According to the Swedish preschool curriculum "the needs and interests which children themselves express in different ways should provide the foundation for shaping the environment and planning activities" (p. 9).

Seen through an Ecological Systems perspective there are varying macrosystem effects on the international preschool that become consequential to how Swedish preschool education is organized. The school is working with tools from a macrosystem that is defined more broadly: Not only from institutions within Swedish society but also institutions outside of Swedish society (educational institution from Western country that are promoting the Curriculum X).

Following children's interests is a critical practice when trying to create a more culturally inclusive environment (Gay, 2010; Kidsmatter, n.d.). By being mindful of children's interests, teachers create the potential of being mindful of children's cultural background since this background may be part of what informs their interests.

When talking with the participants about the interpretation of the Swedish curriculum regarding culture, language and diversity, the participants gave their examples which would cover both curriculums. Amy talked about different activities they do regarding diversity and celebrating Easter and other Swedish holidays. She described that for her it's a bit "tricky" because they have to follow both curricula. She said: "we have to meet the regulations in both and have the multiculturalism in mind." Amy said that the Swedish curriculum asks them to work in accordance to the Swedish traditions and culture, but their school put an emphasis on the multiculturalism and diversity (as in Curriculum X), on different cultures and traditions that are represented in the school. She said that sometimes they need to keep a little bit of distance from the Swedish traditions, since they have to respect every culture. She pointed out that they also present to the children the Swedish customs and traditions, because that is important, because they live in Sweden.

Emma explain how she sees curriculum X as a tool for helping her work through cultural issues in the preschool. She said that sometimes you can "say A and parents understand Z, because

the culture is different.” The teachers have to be very open minded and patient. According to her the teachers don’t have any extra training regarding how to work with children from different backgrounds, but she thinks that is when curriculum X comes in.

“Curriculum X teaches us how to do it. Teaches us how to respect their cultures, their past, their actions to respect them as human being. No one is more or less than the other one. We are the same. And we try to develop the kid’s individual qualities and characteristics based on that.” - Emma

Emma explained that Curriculum X and DAT (Developmental Assessment Tool) helps them to “deal with each child individually” but at the same time keep in mind that they are in a group. It can be understood that the school is putting emphasis on all of the cultures that families in their preschool are coming from, with an emphasis on each child individuality. The teachers prepare activities based on children’s individual needs, interests, beliefs and values. In Emma’s opinion Curriculum X taught them to “make the kids think and how to use the right words and the right approach in this case to develop”. Curriculum X emphasizes how important it is for children to make decisions, especially good choices in their lives since they are babies. According to Emma teachers in the preschool prepare activities and talk about whatever children know and talk about. She explained that with an example of how they talk about Easter and Christmas in their preschool.

“We can talk about Easter, and we see what the kids give to you. What do they know about Easter. If they don’t mention God, we don’t mention God. If the child mentions Jesus, you mention Jesus... But we cannot impose, they give as and depends what they give us... But we can say that some people believe that, like Indians, they believe of the god of the sun. But some people, we can never generalize. Do you believe this or that? Then we go from there.” -Emma

Emma said that there is a thin line when talking about diversity and common culture. In her opinion sometimes, it’s not easy to know where the line is. For her the experience is something that helps teachers to work with families from different backgrounds and to know where the “line” is when talking about culture and diversity.

“It comes from years of experiences... like when we say Merry Christmas, and we have parents looking at you, kind of in a different way, and if you feel that they don’t accept Merry Christmas, then you can change to happy holiday. Because you are not going to offend, but on the other hand... they might never say Merry Christmas and when you go to them with a big smile and say it, and they look at you and say Merry Christmas to you too. It’s a dangerous area but you can feel it.” – Emma

From the example it can be understood that the common “Merry Christmas” greeting could be accepted in a Swedish society, because Christmas is a Swedish public holiday, but in this specific cultural diverse preschool, some people could not accept this greeting if they don’t celebrate Christmas. As Sweden has approx. 23% inhabitants from a foreign background (Statistic Sweden, 2016), teachers need to be careful and know each individual family well to know where is the line.

Chloe has similar opinion. She thinks that teachers should become aware of cultural differences so the teachers don’t offend the families. For that it is critical to “get to know families as *genuine* as possible”. In her opinion it is also important that parents, not just teachers, learn why teachers are doing certain things and why are those things important to them, why are they planning activities in a way they do. Han and Thomas (2010) argue that it is important to gain knowledge about cultures, their values and what social norms each culture has. In order to have a successful multicultural classroom people in it needs to learn from one another and understand the connection between social competence and culture identity.

We see the immigration policies reflected in the Swedish preschool curriculum which asks teachers and preschool leaders to create inclusive environments for children from diverse cultural backgrounds; however, as noted, teachers are left to develop their own philosophies, approaches and tools for addressing this task given the perceived lack of specificity in the curriculum regarding intercultural education. It is necessary to design strategies to deal with cultural diversity so that education becomes significant for all children, regardless of their background (Aguado, Ballesteros & Malik, 2010). This school is using the Curriculum X as additional tool, which helps them to work with these children. One teacher finds it a bit challenging to take into account two curriculums, but in general they see it as a tool to help them to look at each child as individual with different culture, language and experience. From

an Ecological system's perspective, we can see that the Curriculum X is mediating the ways in which at the Microsystem level the teachers are working with children with respect to what they understand that the macro system (Ministry of Education and the Swedish preschool Curriculum) is asking them to do. In addition, the Curriculum X represent important factor, which is influencing, how those teachers work in the international preschool. It can be understood that the Curriculum X, as a foreign curriculum, which was developed in another Western country, does not necessary emphasize the Swedish culture, believes and values. It may be understood that the school sees the other cultures equally important. Teachers are trying to take into account every child's interest and plan activities according to their interests.

4.1.2 DAT Assessment tool

Another tool that the preschool has incorporated into its pedagogical toolkit is the DAT developmental assessment tool. When the Curriculum X was fully implemented, the school started to use DAT tool. As we will discuss in the remaining section, the teachers saw the DAT tool as significant for helping them achieve the two key Swedish curricular goals: (1) Identifying the children interests, and (2) engaging with children's diverse cultural contributions. This is what they saw as contributing to the Curriculum. They are using these tools for interpretation of the Curriculum.

The instructional literature on implementation of the DAT tool describes the tool as designed to measure the developmental trajectories of all children, from birth through kindergarten, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. The participants viewed the tool this way. For example, Amy argued that the goal of the DAT is to "provide each child the well-rounded beginning of the education in order to be prepared for upper steps in the education." Furthermore, she said that the DAT tool does help address cultural issues, but it helps her in general to prepare the activities according to children and their individual interests, regardless of their cultural background. The same way Emma pointed out that by going through all the developmental indicators, it teaches her how to deal with children's individuality and therefore children with different backgrounds. Emma explained that the school uses DAT also to go through the Swedish Curriculum and see if the goals were met.

Diversity is one of the developmental indicators within the Social science category of the DAT, with the goal that children understand that people have diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities.

There might be some contradictions between the Swedish curriculum and the use of the DAT tool. The Swedish curriculum de-emphasize individual assessment of the individual child, while that is the main purpose of the DAT. It can be a source of practical tension that there is much individual assessment compared to collective assessment in this preschool, which is preferred way of assessing the overall quality of the preschool.

The preschool owner explained that the school uses the assessment tool to see how children are progressing, based on anecdotes that teachers write down every day. They use it to assess what can a preschool teacher do next with the child, which areas to work more on. They use scoring, which is not visible to the parents. Chloe explain how the scoring looks like.

“In DAT, it shows as a score of 0 to 7. And then it’s based on what skills 0-3 might be toddler age and 3 to 5 is preschool age kids, that’s the average development, the normal development. Then you might get a kid that scores a 7 and then you go woow, what they were displaying is way beyond the preschooler.” - Chloe

According to all the participants, teachers have to assess children twice a year in all areas. Amy thinks that the scoring system is not the best, but she thinks it is useful to detect if a child has any developmental delays. In her opinion it is also that sometimes it is hard to follow children’s interests, because they have to follow all the categories and she finds it easier to plan the activities according to children’s interests, after each assessment period. Because at that time the teachers are more “free” to do plan, not looking at all those categories and encourage activities that children lack at. This creates a question: To what extend does this tool help teachers to plan activities following the children’s interests while talking into account their culture?

According to the principal and the owner, teachers can use the small (6 children) or big group time, to prepare the activities, based on their interests. Teachers should look and see if some children did not progress during long period of time, and see where they have to go with the child. For example, if a child is bad at math, teacher should try to introduce math into arts,

because that is the area the child really likes. The principal said that with DAT, you never miss a child and you are able to see it at different levels.

“ Some of my kids can recall 5 weeks ago, some can’t recall 5 days ago. So, then that tells me as a teacher; okay, I need to work with this group on recalling and reflecting what they did and telling stories from the past.” -Chloe

In this globalized context, documentation requirements have increased for children in the Swedish education. In a broad sense, the word documentation means to collect and compile information, which can be done differently, e.g. individual development plans (IDPs), portfolios, pedagogical documentation, and standardized assessments and questionnaires (Vallberg-Roth, 2012). According to Skolverket (2008) 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, e.g. portfolios or pedagogical documentation. This English-medium school is using portfolios and in addition, they are using standardized assessment tool (DAT), which focuses on each child individually. They are using anecdotal notes as a starting point for teams to plan daily activities. The teachers plan accordingly to what they observed before about children’s interest and children’s areas that need improvement. The DAT is also used as summative assessment, because the teachers grade each child twice a year and look at educational outcomes of each individual child. But DAT focuses on assessment and evaluation of each individual child, but there is no emphasis on the group evaluation as it should be as the Swedish curriculum states. The overall goal of using documentation to conduct systematic quality work to assess the overall quality of the preschool and not the individual child.

It can be understood that the tool helps them to achieve two Swedish curricular goals concerning engagement with children’s cultural contributions and children’s interests. While this tool helps them to reach the goals, on the other hand, the tool undermines the collective assessment of the preschool.

4.2 The politics and practicalities of being an English-medium school

In this section I will present data concerning politics and practicalities of this English-medium school, from the question why are English-medium schools in Sweden needed, how is the school maintaining the English-language atmosphere while negotiating the mission of cultural diversity and a shared cultural heritage, to the question of what the implications are for

addressing the cultural themes in the Swedish curriculum of having teachers from different cultural backgrounds, languages and pedagogical competencies and commitments.

4.2.1 Contradictions in maintaining an English-language atmosphere

Our discussion regarding tools for negotiating cultural issues centered on ways in which these tools mediate the teacher's approaches to understanding and working with children's interests and by extension, their backgrounds. A more specific cultural concern when it comes to an international school like this one, that is, one that is negotiating the mission of diversity and a shared cultural heritage, is the choice and use of language during the school day. To examine this issue, we must first characterize how the staff understands the value and purpose of having an English medium school, in particular, who attends the school and why.

According to the principal and the owner the preschool was opened as an English language school many years ago, because there was enough Swedish preschools and a need for English language schools. The owner and principal described various categories of attendees to their school:

- Children in Sweden temporarily as a result of their parent's working in Sweden on temporary contracts.
- Children in dual nationality families whose parents want them to learn English because (a) one parent is an English speaker, or (b) the parents use English as the main language of communication between themselves.
- Swedish children whose parents are expecting to be transferred to another country due to their work and so children will go to English-medium schools.
- Children living in Sweden and English is the language of their extended family.
- Swedish children whose parents want them to learn English and live in the neighborhood (according to Chloe).

The number of foreign children in the school differs from class to class and it changes each year. For example, in Amy's class there are 13 children, only 5 of whom speak Swedish. All but one are bilingual or multilingual. Only one child has parents who are both Swedish, the others have one parent that is Swedish and the other one from different country. Her class has children from many different countries including Pakistan, Italy, Mexico, UK, and Taiwan.

According to the Curriculum the preschool should prepare children from the preschool to enter the new context in which they will need to use Swedish language. In other words, the preschool has to prepare children to smoothly transition into the Swedish society, and to be ready to participate in compulsory school. According to the principal and the owner, one of the ways that they have arranged their preschool to try to prepare children for this transition is to organize outings every week as a means of showing all the children the Swedish culture and a way to connect with the community. According to the teachers, the school doesn't cooperate with the other schools, the only exception is when teachers need to cooperate with primary schools, before a child goes to the preschool class. According to Leòn Rosales (2001) the Swedish schools are tasked with the responsibility of promoting children's social development and make them feel as part of the society. He argues that every child must feel like they are full members in the society, not someone that stands outside the community because of their ethnicity, religion or how they look.

According to Chloe "around 75% of the children [in their preschool] go on to Swedish schools." Children from Sweden, children from dual nationality families (one parent Swedish) and children that will stay in Sweden indefinitely usually end up attending Swedish elementary schools. Chloe said that the percentage has increased over the years because she thinks there are less families with contracts from other countries. In the past there was up to 50% of children going to English-medium schools. One reason for this, the staff speculated, is that it is not easy to get a place in an international English language school in the city, because of a big demand and large numbers of children and families applying to English-language schools.

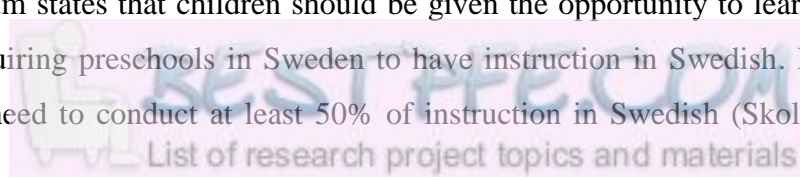
The English-medium school is inspected by their local school inspectorate, that checks only the private schools in the municipality. The school has to follow the same level of demand as any other public Swedish school. From the Ecological system's theory perspective, inspectorate is one of the institutions that has strong influence on how teachers and other staff members engage at the microsystem level. Depending on the demands from the inspectors, which the school has to respect, this will mediate how teachers work in their day to day life in the preschool.

According to Emma and Jessica, the school was asked to use more Swedish language in the preschool. That is an important information to understand the view of the school inspectorate and their view of the importance for children of speaking more Swedish.

The preschool staff has to negotiate the twin missions in the Swedish preschool curriculum of creating a culturally inclusive environment while at the same time assimilating and preparing children for participation in a shared culture. The Swedish curriculum has an implicit assumption about children participation in the Swedish culture. The teachers need to cope with tensions produced by the need to simultaneously have the children participating in a shared culture and at the same time trying to create a culture that it brings in diversity of cultures. This preschool is trying to accomplish that with the monoculture that they are sort of being enculturated into, which is the English language. That has consequences for everyday life in the preschool, because according to the teachers, some parents, for different reasons, send their children to the school *because* they want English to be prioritized as the language of instruction and learning. Teachers need to find the right balance between common culture and diversity. On the one hand, the preschool has children who won't stay in the Swedish society for more than a few years, therefore for them it is not necessary to learn Swedish. But on the other hand, the school has children, who will continue living in Sweden and will attend the Swedish schools.

My analysis concerning the issue of learning Swedish in relation to the focus on the problem of negotiation diversity/shared culture in Swedish preschools highlights a number of implications stemming from the inspectorate's recommendation that more Swedish be spoken in the preschool. Not all the teachers in the preschool speak Swedish and therefore those teachers cannot talk more Swedish in the school, as required by the inspectors. The Curriculum states that the preschool should strive to ensure that each child "with a mother tongue other than Swedish develop their cultural identity and the ability to communicate in both Swedish and their mother tongue" (p.10). The teachers in the school mainly speak English, because that is their main language of instructions. According to Johanna, children still learn a lot of Swedish, because their peers sometimes speak Swedish while interacting with each other.

While the Curriculum states that children should be given the opportunity to learn Swedish, there is no law requiring preschools in Sweden to have instruction in Swedish. Elementary schools, however, need to conduct at least 50% of instruction in Swedish (Skolförordning,



2011:185). This poses a problem for children who attend the English-medium preschool given that many of them will end up in Swedish elementary schools since it is not easy to get a place in an International elementary school in Sweden. The information from some school webpages in the city confirms that there is very limited number of free spaces every year. So, some of the parents might need to enroll their children in the Swedish schools. That might be a problem as a sudden change of the language for the children even if elementary schools offer Hemspråk to children whose mother tongue is not Swedish. According to the research, children can appear to be conversationally fluent in a language quite quickly, it could be in six to eight months. However, it takes five to seven years on average for a child coming into a new system to reach academic levels in the main language of instruction (UNESCO, 2009).

It seems that the Swedish curriculum, inspectorate and the Swedish laws are in conflict. Some parents do not want their children to learn Swedish for different reasons so they enroll their child in an English-medium preschool. At the same time, we see these language issues, where recently there has been controversies in Sweden about the proposal to recruit teachers from other countries to counter the teacher shortage. It was proposed to abandon requirement that teachers need to be fully proficient in Swedish to get teacher's credentials (Jacobsson & Stenkvist, 2017). The concern here is that children in Swedish preschools should be taught and cared for by staff who can expose them to "appropriate" models of Swedish language use.

4.2.2 Tensions concerning Teacher competencies

Our discussion regarding the issue of the responsibilities an English-medium school has for preparing children for entering Swedish society opens a new question about what kind of role foreign-born and foreign trained teachers have in this process. This point is highlighted further when we consider that some teachers begin teaching in international schools relatively soon after arriving from abroad in the country where the international school is located (For example, this was the case for Amy who began teaching at the preschool after one year of living in Sweden.) We can raise the question of what the role is for these teachers regarding the preparation of children to enter the Swedish society. Having the "international" staff, while it may not promote fluency in Swedish language and cultural norms, does contribute to the curricular goals of creating a preschool environment that promotes the valuing cultural diversity.

The preschool has teachers from many different countries including India, Chile, Brazil, America, UK, Ukraine, and Greece. According to the principal and the owner, most of the teachers have their diplomas from their home country. They have only one teacher with the Swedish degree. Every class has at least one fully qualified preschool teacher that has had 4-year degree in early childhood.

In examining the interview transcripts, it became clear that the staff at the school adopted formal and informal means for negotiating the implications of having staff with varied cultural and pedagogical backgrounds. Curriculum X can be seen as a kind of “common ground” tool that helps moderate the problem of having teachers with different educational and competency backgrounds as that was one of the reasons to find an approach that would fit all of them. It can be seen as a cultural inclusion issue as it highlights the need to arrange ways to be culturally (broadly defined) inclusive with the staff in order to make appropriate arrangements for being culturally inclusive with the children. But on the other hand, the teachers are encouraged to bring in their culture to the preschool. From an ecological systems perspective, we can see that there are varying Exosystem effects (teacher’s, parents’ and children’s background, values and beliefs) which are mediating the ways of how the staff members will act in the preschool, taking into account their own culture, culture of the children/parents and culture of their coworkers, while using outside Curriculum, Curriculum X as their guidelines (together with the Swedish curriculum).

According to all the teachers they have gained knowledge about how to work with children and families from different backgrounds through their day to day work in the preschool, in addition to the prior work experience and formal training. They come from different backgrounds and so their culture is different than Swedish, but yet they are working in the preschool in Sweden. All of them think that having teachers from all over the world is a big advantage.

“It’s really fond for us, because we learn much about each other, it gives a great understands between teachers and children. Because we’ve been there. All the difficult things that children experience, we experience ourselves. So, we know how that feels. That ability to relate... it’s difficult for us, so it is super difficult for them. It’s more difficult for them because it’s harder for them to communicate.” –

Emma

“ It’s really nice to have that international feel, so it’s not just American-English or just Swedish. We do get those influences from the other countries just from the teachers and then it trickled that into learning about the kids and what are their countries like. So, the teachers come from everywhere and it changes, because I think just like our kids here that goes back to their country, that’s work is done, so they go back home. For the teachers, some of them are living here for just two years, some are with their Swedish husband and then they go back to their home country. We have a lot of going back to their countries, so there is a lot of movement. Which is, I think, a good thing, because you do bring the other cultures in as well and its cool to see the differences.” – Chloe

According to Chloe and Emma, the advantage is that the teachers understand the situation of the children and their families. They have a lot of teachers staying in Sweden in the preschool for a brief period of time, like the families. Chloe then identifies the issues of being a foreign teacher in a preschool where there are so many different cultures.

“You get to know what is a normal, what is the norm for that country, with the way they raise their children, the way the speak with them, do they kiss goodbye? Some cultures don’t. And that was a surprise for me. You don’t kiss your kid goodbye? Well, some don’t. I had a Japanese dad asking me one time: Why do you hug my son so much? And thought... Oh, that is very American, to hug the kids and say hello to them. And he wondered why I was doing it so much. And he said: It’s okay that you do, I just wondered why you do it. So, I think over the years I’ve learnt the different cultures. Some cultures want their kids here from start to finish from 8 to 5 their kid is here. That is cultural. In Sweden if you can keep the kid home a day from preschool that is a great thing. Asian parents don’t like typically to keep, they believe kids should be at school” – Chloe

Sandström (2010) and Borgström (2004) have argued that preschool teachers in Sweden should strive to develop cultural competence. Sandström (2010) defines it as being able to question your own values as a cultural person, and that is not an easy task. He argues that every teacher needs to be given pedagogical tools to be able to meet every student equally no matter their background or culture. In addition, according to Sandström there is a lack of knowledge in how

to do so. In general, it is easier to talk with people with similar cultural backgrounds, but when people need to talk with people from different backgrounds, insecurities comes up. In that case, people know how to act which can often lead to a negative generalization and misconceptions (Sandström, 2010). This school did adapt the Curriculum X and DAT assessment tool, which could be seen as a tool which helps those teachers to treat every student equally, respecting their cultural backgrounds.

The school has so many teachers speaking different languages and in that way teachers can communicate more easily with children who don't speak any English and who came to Sweden from all over the world. The teachers also know different cultures and they know how it is to be in a new country, where everything can seem new. But not all the teachers speak Swedish, most of them do, but the ones that don't, they cannot meet the demand of the school inspectorate to speak more Swedish in the school if the teachers cannot speak Swedish. In Sweden it is up to the employer if they want to hire a teacher that is not fully proficient in Swedish. According to the staff in this preschool, it is not illegal to hire someone without the Swedish teaching certification. It is required in the most preschools, but not everywhere. That depends on the needs of the school. Some schools might prioritize teacher's competences, skills, experience and educational background over the Swedish language proficiency as it seems to be the case in this English-medium preschool.

Teachers in Sweden, at both the preschool and compulsory levels, must be trained to work in multicultural environments (Rabo, 2007). Approaches to intercultural and multicultural education in Sweden vary from one teacher training program to another (Taguma et al., 2010). In this respect, when we consider the teachers in the preschool we need to take into account the possibility that in their own teacher training there was wide variety in their intercultural and multicultural education, if they had that training at all. Furthermore, we also need to take into consideration how the teachers' differing cultural backgrounds and experiences shape the decision they make in the school. Arndt (2016), in her study looking at the immigrant teachers' story, found out that immigrant preschool teachers in New Zealand are coming with totally different ideals for children which of course differ from the locals' ones. To what extend are they going to express their values is their choice, but there are number of cases where immigrant teachers are unable or afraid to reveal parts of their identities and experiences. Instead of showing who they really are, they try to mask their cultural differences and in the same time manage to work with culturally diverse class (Arndt, 2015). The school appropriated

the Curriculum X to “unify the school” and to have a common ground for all the teachers with different backgrounds to follow the same approach and address the cultural issues in a similar way.

5 Conclusion

This study explored what it means to be an international English language school in Sweden, which has to promote cultural values, believes practices that the children bring to the school and at the same time try to enculturate children into the society and the culture in which they are presumably going to be participating in- Swedish culture. Ecological Systems Theory was used to theorize the various societal factors shaping how the preschool negotiated issues of cultural inclusion. Analysis of the data, revealed that the staff described various tensions related to their negotiating the demands of the curriculum together with approaches that, were used to balance or resolve these tensions. Two main themes related to this process of negotiation and resolution were identified in the analysis: (1) Tools and practices used to negotiate the constraints of the Swedish curriculum and (2) The politics and practicalities of being an English-medium school, concerning language and teacher competencies. The findings suggest that the English-medium preschool appropriated Curriculum X and DAT assessment tool, as means for adopting and adapting the Swedish curriculum’s goals and having them make children’s interests the leading factor in preschool activities. This opens the question of how these interests are shaped by the curriculum in the first place, and how exposure to a structured, prescriptive curriculum like Curriculum X does or does not complement the objectives of the Swedish curriculum having to do with children pursuing a wider variety of interests.

Furthermore, the results indicate that there are contradictions in maintaining an English-language atmosphere when it comes to an international school that is negotiating the mission of diversity, while preparing children for participation in a shared culture, while choosing their main language of instruction is English and having teacher with different cultural backgrounds. To what extent should the English-language school use Swedish language? Should the Swedish language be seen in the same way as any other language that children speak in that preschool, or it should be used more often as some of those children might stay in Sweden, visiting Swedish schools in the Swedish society?

Given the lack of relevant research, future research is needed to address a better understanding of what it means to be a language profile preschool in Sweden. The research should include a larger sample, from different language-profile schools in Sweden to see how those kinds of preschools deal with dual expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and in the same time develop/maintain common heritage.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Three paragraphs from the Curriculum

“The preschool should take account of the fact that children have different living environments and that they try to create context and meaning out of their own experiences... The task of the preschool involves not only developing the child’s ability and cultural creativity, but also passing on a cultural heritage– its values, traditions and history, language and knowledge – from one generation to the next” (p. 5).

“The preschool should strive to ensure that each child feel a sense of participation in their own culture and develop a feeling and respect for other cultures” (p. 9).

“Language and learning are inseparably linked together, as are language and the development of a personal identity. The preschool should put great emphasis on stimulating each child’s language development . . . Children with a foreign background who develop their mother tongue create better opportunities for learning Swedish “(p.6).

- Could you give me an example of the activities you did in the past month that would reflect on the text above?

Appendix B

**Adult Consent to Participate in Student Research
International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education (Educare)
Spring 2018**

Manca Lojk is conducting a study as part of her requirements for successful completion of the Thesis Project course in the International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education (Educare) at Jönköping University. The general focus of the study is to examine pedagogical and didactic questions concerning preschool policy and practice. More specifically, this research study examines how does an international English language school in Sweden negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and in the same time develop/maintain common heritage with a respect to the Swedish preschool curriculum.

Manca Lojk is conducting this study in order to (a) contribute knowledge to our overall understanding of preschool education; (b) gain experience conducting empirical research in education; and (c) fulfill requirements needed to graduate with a master of science degree (60 credits) from the International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education in the School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do one or more of the following

- Participate in an interview or interviews related to the research topic.
- Grant your permission to be observed engaging in daily school activities.

Any information that is gathered will be anonymized to ensure that you cannot be identified. Additionally, all information gathered will be stored securely to prevent loss or theft.

All persons, organizations and institutions involved in the study will remain anonymous in all respects.

You have the right to withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any time, for whatever reason, without any consequences.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study and/or your participation, please contact Manca Lojk (manca.lojk@gmail.com) and/or the course leader and master's program director, Robert Lecusay (robert.lecusay@ju.se).

If you agree to participate, please print and sign your name below. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant's contact number and/or email: _____

Date: _____

Participant Name (printed)

Participant Signature

Student Researcher Name (printed)

Student Researcher Signature

Child Consent to Participate in Student Research
International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education (Educare)
Spring 2018

Manca Lojk is conducting a study as part of her requirements for successful completion of the Thesis Project course in the International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education (Educare) at Jönköping University. The general focus of the study is to examine pedagogical and didactic questions concerning preschool policy and practice. More specifically, this research study examines how does an international English language school in Sweden negotiate the twin expectations of the Swedish curriculum to value cultural diversity and in the same time develop/maintain common heritage with a respect to the Swedish preschool curriculum.

Manca Lojk is conducting this study in order to (a) contribute knowledge to our overall understanding of preschool education; (b) gain experience conducting empirical research in education; and (c) fulfill requirements needed to graduate with a master of science degree (60 credits) from International Master's Program in Swedish Preschool Education in the School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, your child will be involved in one or more of the following research activities on preschool premises:

- Being observed by the student researchers engaging in daily preschool activities.
- Interacting with the student researchers in daily preschool activities.

Any information that is gathered about you or your child will be anonymized to ensure that you or your child cannot be identified. Additionally, all information gathered will be stored securely to prevent loss or theft.

You have the right to withdraw your consent for your child to participate in the study at any time, for whatever reason, without any consequences.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study and/or your participation, please contact Manca Lojk [manca.lojk@gmail.com] and/or the course leader and master's program director, Robert Lecusay (robert.lecusay@ju.se).

If you agree to allow your child to participate, please print your child's name, and print and sign your name below. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Parent/Caretaker's contact number and/or email: _____

Date: _____

Child Participant's Name (printed): _____

Parent/Caretaker's Name (printed)

Parent/Caretaker's Signature

Student Researcher's Name (printed)

Student Researcher's Signature