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Geiss, Michael; Westberg, Johannes

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# Why do training regimes for early childhood professionals differ? Sweden and Switzerland compared

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[journals.sagepub.com/home/eer](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/eer)**Michael Geiss** 

Institute of Education, University of Zurich, Switzerland

**Johannes Westberg**

University of Groningen, Netherlands

## Abstract

In Europe, there are many different ways in which early childhood education and care professionals are trained. This article investigates how these different forms came into being. Comparing two small, prosperous European countries, Sweden and Switzerland, we analyse the developments in training regimes for early childhood professionals since the 19th century using a historical institutionalism approach. We focus on corporate actors and the institutionalization of educational structures and identify critical junctures and path dependencies. Although both countries developed a comparable diversity of training opportunities in the 19th century and early 20th century, developments since the 1950s have diverged widely. While Sweden is developing a uniform, fully academicized training structure, the Swiss case exhibits no such uniformity but is characterized by continuity and incremental change. The article traces the role played by central governments, private associations and educational reform in the development of the training of preschool personnel.

## Keywords

Training regimes, early childhood education and care, comparison, Sweden, Switzerland, historical institutionalism

## Introduction

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a global phenomenon with a shared transnational history (Campbell-Barr and Bogatić, 2017), which has received increasing policy attention at national and international levels since the 1990s. The latter includes attempts by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), Eurofound and the OECD to

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### Corresponding author:

Michael Geiss, Institute of Education, University of Zurich, Freiestrasse 36, Zurich, 8032, Switzerland.

Email: [mgeiss@ife.uzh.ch](mailto:mgeiss@ife.uzh.ch)

map the scale of international development in the field and to stimulate improvements in the provision and quality of ECEC (OECD, 2001, 2017; Peeters et al., 2015; Pascal and Bertram, 2016).

Despite this global political interest in ECEC, great differences in the provision and organization of early childhood centres persist. These differences can also be seen in the way in which childcare staff are educated. In this article, we address the training of early childhood professionals, which differs in a wide variety of ways across European countries: not only does the content, but also the lengths and levels of training differ, ranging from secondary education schools and vocational education and training to universities and so-called universities of applied science (OECD, 2001; Oberhuemer et al., 2010; Oberhuemer, 2015). Behind these differences lie specific cultural traditions and different understandings of the best organization of education. However, differences in education systems also reflect contingent historical developments and are thus the result of specific historical conditions and legacies, as well as past political decisions (Willekens et al., 2015; Tröhler and Lenz, 2015). Therefore, we understand the differences in training regimes for childcare professionals as cultural specifications of the global trend towards an expansion and consolidation of the comprehensive education and care of young children.

The article sheds light on the tension between the general transnational theme of ECEC and national variations by examining the emergence of vastly different training regimes in 20th-century Sweden and Switzerland, two resource-rich Western countries in the global North. These countries represent two different training regimes in the field of ECEC. While preschool professionals in Sweden are trained in universities, in Switzerland, a workplace-based form of vocational education and training at a secondary level is the standard way for day nursery staff to qualify. Swiss kindergarten teachers, however, are presently trained at so-called universities of teacher education (Daguerre, 2006; Bloechliger and Bauer, 2016).

Using a historical institutionalism approach (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992), this article attempts to explain these differences by examining how the different solutions for professional skill formation in the field of ECEC developed historically from common starting points in the 19th century up to the early 21st century. Our specific focus is on the different developments after the end of the Second World War, against the background of more or less comparable starting conditions. We have chosen to highlight the dominant role of corporate actors and interest groups that have advocated a certain form of education in the field of ECEC. We ask by what means these actors have tried to achieve their goals, how private organizations, professional associations, municipalities and central governments were involved and what role laws and regulations played. As a result, this article indicates that underlying the differences in skill formation regimes is a complex set of inter-related factors. These include the level of state intervention, but also the status of preschool associations, wider developments in the educational system in general and changes in primary and secondary teacher education.

Our investigation into the education and training of early childhood professionals addresses professionals in early childhood centres, today known as *förskola* and *förskoleklass* (6-year-olds) in Sweden, or *Kindertagesstätten* for infants and toddlers and *Kindergärten* for older children in Switzerland. In this article, we will use the term *preschool* to denote the wide range of early childhood centres, ranging from 19th-century infant schools to contemporary day nurseries and kindergartens. We use the term *professional* to denote so-called core practitioners (Oberhuemer, 2012), that is, staff with a comprehensive and certificated qualification (i.e. *förskollärare* in Sweden and *Fachperson Betreuung Kind* or *Kindergärtner/in* in Switzerland) (cf. Oberhuemer, 2015; OECD, 2017). Terms such as *staff* and *preschool personnel* are used in a more general sense to include childcare workers with a lesser (or no) formal qualification, while terms such as *kindergarten teachers* or *day nursery staff* denote personnel working in specific kinds of early childhood centres.

## State of the research

This article builds on growing research into ECEC from a comparative, transnational or even global perspective (Willekens et al., 2015; Mahon, 2016). As early as the 1990s, Cochran (1995) located European training regimes within a global context. On the basis of 11 case studies, Cochran was able to show how, in Europe, in contrast to other continents, learning before starting the job is given more weight than learning on the job in the early-years sector. From a comparative perspective, Oberhuemer and Schreyer have recently given a broad presentation of the various workforce profiles in ECEC in 30 European countries (Oberhuemer and Schreyer, 2018). Today, knowledge of the situation in various states is so comprehensive that the call for a theoretical conceptualization of educational landscapes is growing more urgent (Miller et al., 2012).

Of particular importance is Oberhuemer's work which has established a systematic knowledge of training in the early childhood education sector (Oberhuemer and Ulich, 1997; Oberhuemer et al., 2010). Oberhuemer et al. have shown how different professional traditions determine the educational workforce profiles in individual countries to this day (Oberhuemer, 2000; Oberhuemer, 2008; Oberhuemer, 2011). In Europe, two different kinds of training regimes can be distinguished: firstly, for infants and younger children and secondly, for those of a preschool age. In some cases, however, these tracks have been merged into one institutional form (Pascal and Bertram, 2016). To date, it has also been revealed that, in practice, two professional groups face each other: one with higher qualifications and better pay, the other with few or no formal qualifications. This hierarchy runs alongside the distinction between education and care (Van Laere et al., 2012).

While the early childhood sector is thus marked by a rising global interest and a continuous exchange of ideas and policies (Campbell-Barr and Bogatić, 2017), these conspicuous differences in training regimes raise important questions as to their preconditions. Building on the research presented above and its associated analytical discussions, we will provide an analysis of the historical processes underlying the systematic differences in this sector. Our main contribution is the adoption of a longitudinal perspective on how diverging training regimes have developed over time. In this respect, our article will make a particularly substantial contribution in the Swiss case. Since Switzerland withdrew from the OECD review project 'Starting Strong' in 1999 (OECD, 2001, 15) and is also not a member of the EU, the Swiss case has often been missing from comparative studies on the preschool sector. Previous developments in Switzerland are therefore often unknown in internationally oriented research.

In this respect, the article builds on historically oriented studies of preschool institutions (Willekens et al., 2015; Allen, 2017; May et al., 2017). However, only a few studies have explicitly focused on the historical development of training in the early childhood sector. Those which do tend to focus on local or national developments (Shapiro, 1983; Pound and Buckingham, 1992; Tellgren, 2008; Halvarsson, 2009; Hohnerlein, 2015; Nawrotzki, 2016). Although these studies have made vital contributions, they have nevertheless often been limited by their national framework, enabling them to detail the development of preschool staff training but not to explain the presented developments. This has partly been counteracted by attempts which are both comparative and historical but, to a lesser degree, dealt with training issues (Wollons, 2000; Prochner, 2009; Scheiwe and Willekens, 2009; Willekens et al., 2015; Caroli, 2017).

Finally, by presenting the historical developments that underlie the current training regimes, this article contributes to research on present-day preschool training and how it has changed over the last few years. This includes research on the academicization of preschool teacher training (Erixon and Erixon Arreman, 2017; Husa and Kinos, 2005), the marginalization of care in preschool teacher education policy (Aslanian, 2018) and the role of preschool training in the fostering of professional competences and perceptions of professionalism (Strohmer and Mischo, 2016; Kuisma and

Sandberg, 2008). As is evident from this article, such tendencies, which are obvious today, are the result of a longer period of development, dating back at least to the end of the Second World War.

## Methodology and sources

Historical institutionalism is a comparative approach in which institutional developments in different countries are compared and typologies are then worked out (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992). In methodological terms, this approach means identifying important critical junctures where national developments have taken a certain path (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007; Capoccia, 2016). In recent times, historical institutionalism has received important impetus from the discussion about how to explain the different forms of organization of capitalist democracies (Hall and Soskice, 2001). In this context, the reconstruction of different training regimes is a common subject (cf. Thelen, 2007; Busemeyer and Vossiek, 2016). Usually, ‘collective skill formation systems’, in which private companies and other employers have important functions in the organization, implementation and reform of vocational training, are distinguished from school-based forms in which the state is the central actor. As a third variant, systems that are much more liberally organized can be described, where training is left to companies and other employers or to the employees themselves. However, there are also major differences in the individual types and the realities of training, which, even in Europe, seem to be much more complex (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012; Vossiek, 2018; Emmenegger et al., 2019).

Our methodological orientation determines our investigation in three respects. Firstly, we concentrate on the institutional level and the importance of corporate actors in the creation, reform and stabilization of these arrangements. Secondly, we consistently apply a longitudinal perspective, stressing path dependencies and the critical junctures in the development of training regimes in the field of ECEC. Thirdly, we perceive the specific organization of the training of childcare professionals as not solely driven by the needs of the field of ECEC but closely linked to other social, institutional, political and economic developments.

In contrast to the literature on historical institutionalism, however, we do not compare the development of entire national skill formation systems but concentrate on training regimes in one professional field: that of ECEC. This also broadens the strongly economically oriented view of current comparative research on skill formation regimes by considering a field in which other socio-political or educational rationalities and gender issues play a major role.

In historical institutionalism, it is commonplace to concentrate on national developments. This means that the level of national legislation and regulation plays a major role in the analyses of institutional change. The resulting problem of methodological nationalism, however, is a huge challenge for comparative research (Peck and Theodore, 2007; Jessop, 2011), not least in the face of a globalized and interdependent world (Farrell and Newman, 2014). We respond to this challenge in at least three ways. First, we compare two countries in which one, Sweden, has a high degree of centralization, while the other, Switzerland, is characterized by federalism and communal autonomy. This also brings cultural, confessional or regional peculiarities into view. In addition, we consider the role of private actors who, alongside state boards and state legislation, play an important role in the institutionalization of specific training regimes. Second, we take into account the local or national reception of alternative models of organizing the training of childcare professionals. Third, we understand the specific national solutions as part of a global development towards a comprehensive education and care offer in the preschool sector.

In this article, we first use the available research literature for secondary analysis purposes and re-evaluate it in terms of our research question. Where this is not sufficient, historical sources that summarize the developments from their own points of view will be analysed in a second step.

Government reports, annual reports of professional associations and other stakeholders, commissioned studies and white papers are especially helpful. Thirdly, primary sources, laws and regulations, statements and reports are also taken into account in order to complement the picture. Statistical data are used if they are available during the investigated period.

## Common starting points: A wide range of training institutions

Sweden and Switzerland have a shared history of early childhood institutions. As elsewhere in Europe, these countries saw the establishment of such institutions during the 19th century, linked to a renewed interest in the potential of young children, the politics of the moralization of the working classes and a strengthened belief in the powers of education (Luc, 2015). As a result, a range of ECEC centres were established across Europe and its colonies, including infant schools based on British models, crèches inspired by the French model and kindergartens based on philosophy of Friedrich Froebel. While infant schools generally stressed knowledge-oriented instruction, crèches were intended to provide hygienic care and kindergartens home-like motherly care and education (Wollons, 2000; Burger, 2014; Caroli, 2017). In reality, however, these visions were often entangled and the differences between different kinds of preschools were far from clear (see e.g. Read, 2006; Burger, 2014).

In Sweden's larger cities, the first infant schools (*småbarnsskolor*) were introduced in the 1830s, the first crèches (*barnkrubbor*) in the 1850s and the first kindergartens (*barnträdgårdar*) at the turn of the century (Westberg, 2008: 21–22). In total, around 33 infant schools and at least 26 crèches were founded in the 19th century. While infant schools lost their popularity, crèches and thereafter kindergartens increased in numbers. In 1932, statistics indicate that there were 15 infant schools, 73 crèches and 33 kindergartens in Sweden (Westberg, 2008: 212–214).

In Switzerland, evidence indicates the existence of daycare institutions in the cantons of Basel and St. Gallen as early as 1817 (Zollinger, 1904; Federer, 1847: 97). In the 1820s, institutions were founded in other regions as well. A statistical survey from 1846 lists a total of 107 such institutions in Switzerland, although it is not clear which were preschool-like institutions (*Kleinkinderschulen*) and which had a purely caring function (*Kleinkinderbewahranstalten*) (Criblez, 1999). In addition, in 1845, a first short-lived Froebel kindergarten was established in Zurich-Riesbach. The first kindergarten in French-speaking Switzerland was founded in Lausanne in 1860 (Forster, 2008: 75). However, it was not until the 1870s that these new institutions became established in Switzerland in the long term (Nufer, 1978: 21–25). The first Swiss crèche was founded in Basel in 1871, followed by crèches in Lausanne (1873), Neuchâtel (1873), Geneva (1874) and Zurich (1877) (Schärer and Zottos, 2011: 76).

In both countries, the training of preschool staff was undertaken by private institutions and associations during the 19th and early 20th centuries. As ECEC institutions were established across the so-called West, training centres for preschool professionals were organized. The most important of these were the kindergarten seminars, which were fundamental in creating a professional identity in Sweden and Switzerland, but also internationally (Read, 2019).

In Sweden, kindergarten and other preschool associations were important organizers of the training of preschool professionals. While the Society for the Promotion of Infant Schools in Stockholm had organized a so-called normal school, intended to provide practitioners with the necessary training for running an infant school, the first seminars for preschool professionals in Sweden were those organized by kindergarten associations. Seminars were founded in the cities of Stockholm (1897), Norrköping (1904), Örebro (1902) and Uppsala (1911). On the basis of these, the Swedish Froebel Society (*Svenska Fröbel-förbundet*) was founded in 1918 (Hatje, 1999: 159).



These seminars were heavily influenced by their German predecessors, and the training provided at these seminars generally lasted for one year but could also be prolonged. The training included both theoretical subjects, such as citizenship education, social work, child health, natural science, cultural history and practical exercises. During the training, mornings were usually spent at a kindergarten, while afternoons were spent at the seminar (Tellgren, 2008: 5; Johansson, 1994: 8).

In Switzerland, the first one-year courses for kindergarten teachers were initiated in St. Gallen and Zurich in the 1870s. In many cases, the establishment of new seminars was promoted and organized by local kindergarten associations. Unlike the Swedish case, where professionals were mainly trained at standalone kindergarten seminars, the training of kindergarten teachers in Switzerland was increasingly affiliated to teacher training seminars, either those for elementary school teachers or those offering specific training courses for female teachers (Büchi, 1931; Rüfenacht, 1984: 94–96; Guler, 1921). In the canton of Geneva, on the other hand, there was a very special situation: no elementary school teacher seminars were established here in the 19th century (Schärer, 2008: 63–64).

Unlike in predominantly Lutheran Sweden, Swiss seminars were often organized by religious actors who provided training opportunities for either Protestant or Catholic kindergarten teachers. For example, kindergarten teachers were trained at the Catholic Theresianum Ingenbohl, a girls' higher institute with a boarding school and a teacher training seminar, from 1904 (Venzin, 2002: 66–69; Vorbürger-Bossart, 2008: 111–112). The kindergarten in the canton of Zug, near Zurich, served as a practice school for the kindergarten seminar, which belonged to the Catholic monastery (Rüfenacht, 1984: 63). The kindergarten training track and later the kindergarten seminar in Berne, which was established in 1877, belonged to a Free Protestant girls' school (Morgenthaler, 1976: 18–20). This religious structure of kindergarten teacher training remained central throughout the 20th century, at least in the Catholic cantons.

The kindergarten cause in German-speaking Switzerland was promoted by the formation of a central association for kindergartens (*Schweizer Kindergarten-Verein*) in 1881 (Wannack, 2002). The association quickly changed from a loose association with a broad approach to a purely professional interest organization (Rüfenacht, 1983: 107–112). With this function, it issued diplomas to kindergarten teachers and claimed at the end of the 19th century that the training of preschool staff should be extended to two years. After 1921, this demand was increasingly met, although not universally. In 1942, the association published a comprehensive catalogue of criteria for the training of preschool teachers and called for the better qualification of kindergarten teachers in Switzerland (Nufer, 1978: 27–30; Wannack, 2013).

For other categories of preschool staff, additional training options also existed. In Sweden, various private institutions provided training for *barnsköterskor* (child nurses) and *barnvårdslärare* (childcare teachers). Child nurses enjoyed a shorter training programme of varying length up to a year at private institutions. This training consisted mostly of practical experience working with children either at a childcare institution or in a private home, complemented with some education in children's nutritional needs, clothing and creative activities. Childcare teachers were provided with a longer education (up to 3 years), which included wider domestic training where half of the time could be spent on practical training in institutions and the other half on theoretical studies in childcare, psychology and education (SOU, 1972: 459–460). While organizations such as the Central Association for Crèches, Infant Schools and Child Protection Institutions (*Centralföreningen för barnkrubbor, småbarnsskolor och barnavårn*) attempted to govern and coordinate the efforts of day nurseries in Stockholm (1919), these associations did not make any attempts to organize the training of preschool personnel (Westberg, 2008: 151).

In Switzerland, only slightly different developments can be observed during the first half of the 20th century. In 1907, a central organization for crèches was founded, known as *Schweizerischer*

*Krippenverband*, which from then on pushed forward the institutionalization of day nurseries, at least in German-speaking Switzerland (Schärer and Zottos, 2014: 76–78). Already from the beginning, this organization transformed the training of staff into one of its most important concerns. An initial attempt to standardize training in the 1920s, however, failed because of the very different visions of the actors involved. The result was that each crèche pursued its own training concept. Even after a second attempt in the 1950s, binding standards for training continued to be rejected (Grob-Menges, 2007).

However, since crèches in Switzerland were not integrated in the public education system, the training of professionals in day nurseries was not affiliated to elementary teacher training. In addition, the medical and educational professions were both active in the field. Thus, the personnel structure in the crèches remained very heterogeneous and even included infant nurses (*Säuglingsschwestern*). The training of these nurses lasted a maximum of two years and two months, was not regulated by the state and took place in specialized schools, foster homes and hospitals. The curricula differed massively from school to school and in different parts of the country (Schweizerische Zentralstelle für Frauenberufe, 1941; Schärer and Zottos, 2011: 80). According to a nationwide survey at the end of the 1920s, a huge number of crèche professionals in Switzerland were qualified as medical or infant nurses. Since in several cantons the Catholic tradition played an important role, not just in the training of kindergarten teachers, many of the crèche managers were Catholic nuns (Meyer, 1928: 110).

## **The impact of a decentralized educational and political system in Switzerland**

In the Swiss case, the evolution of training regimes for early childhood was marked by continuity and incremental changes. This may be explained by the specific national context. The Swiss central government has, in terms of an international comparison, relatively weak powers, while the autonomy of the cantons and municipalities is especially pronounced. To date, most taxes remain at the cantonal and communal levels. In addition, the different cultural traditions in the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland are noticeable, and this is highly central to questions of education. Last but not least, denominational differences still played an important role during the second half of the 20th century (Braun, 2003; Giudici and Grizelj, 2017; Rota and Müller, 2015).

In Switzerland, each canton has its own school law (Criblez, 2008). To date, it is only in vocational education and training that a binding national regulation exists. However, private professional and economic associations, as well as the cantons, have a strong say even here. The first national Vocational Education and Training Act was enacted in 1933, but it did not regulate the social and educational professions. Even though there has been two legislative revisions, this context remained more or less unchanged throughout the 20th century (Büchel et al., 2020; Gonon, 2019).

The earlier developments in Swiss early childhood training regimes in the 19th and early 20th century largely ran their course during the second half of this century. The training of kindergarten teachers remained diverse, denominations and language regions played a major role, private associations were still important actors, and the cantons could have either a large or very small role in regulating and financing the training of kindergarten teachers (Rüfenacht, 1984).

Nevertheless, the context had changed, which at least moderately affected the training regime of preschool staff. After the end of the Second World War, Switzerland experienced an economic boom that lasted for 3 decades, leading to enduring staff shortages in most professions. This circumstance, together with increased demands in the world of work, was met in Switzerland – as in other European countries – by an accelerated expansion of education (Tanner, 2015; Criblez, 2002). At the beginning of the 1960s, there were corresponding calls to enhance the quality of



educational staff and to extend the training of kindergarten teachers to 3 years (Gilomen and Ritter, 1970: 35–37). In 1967, a study commission was established within the kindergarten association, which published a framework curriculum for work in kindergartens. The didactic concepts for kindergartens that were developed there were much more oriented towards primary schools. Although cantonal, religious and regional differences remained, the kindergartens had an increasingly clear professional profile. In the following years, the framework curriculum adopted by the association in 1971 was especially popular among professionals and public authorities. In 1982, the curriculum was extended to focus more on both the educational and the social function of the kindergarten. However, an already-planned revision of the framework curriculum was abandoned at the beginning of the 1990s as the responsibility for organizing work in the kindergartens was now finally seen as belonging to the cantons (Wannack, 2003).

The central kindergarten association thus promoted improvements in the work of the kindergartens. With its internal regulations, it provided the impetus for corresponding laws to be passed at the cantonal level. But the private cause of preschool professionals increasingly became a public one. In light of this development, the supervision, regulation and financing of kindergarten seminars were transferred from the municipalities or private associations to the cantons (Rothen, 2015; Rufenacht, 1984: 97–99). As with the training of elementary school teachers, the qualification of kindergarten teachers remained under the management of seminars. As education for elementary school teachers was not based in universities (Criblez, 2000), it was even more unthinkable for it to do so in the case of kindergarten staff.

At the beginning of the 1980s, there were still a few cantons that had no legal regulations for the training of kindergarten teachers or for the kindergartens themselves. Others, while merely commenting on the standards to which kindergartens should adhere, regulated education at the municipal level. There were also comprehensive legal regulations in place covering a broad range of preschool aspects. However, where cantonal kindergarten laws already existed, these often regulated who could work in the kindergartens or how the training of kindergarten teachers should be organized (Schweizerische Dokumentationsstelle für Schul- und Bildungsfragen, 1981). A study on the forms and content of seminarist training in German-speaking Switzerland in the 1980s also showed that the kindergarten seminars differed greatly in terms of requirements, training duration, examination forms and subject proportions (Unteregger-Mattenberger, 1989: 28–41).

The training of crèche personnel exhibited similar continuities and remained diverse. As crèches, which already took in infants and toddlers, had both social and medical, as well as educational functions, their employment structure remained much more heterogeneous. Even though both kindergartens and crèches were unregulated at the federal level, the former became, in several cases, a natural part of the education system. As described above, their curriculum was now more oriented towards elementary schooling.

In most cantons, however, crèches continued to be regarded as an interim solution which was accepted only reluctantly and did not have a good public reputation. They were considered institutions for those children whose mothers had to work and therefore could not care for their children. However, the responsible association always emphasized the educational aspect of the work in the crèches (Grob-Menges, 2007). Moreover, the fact that the increased demand was strongly linked to labour migration was not conducive to public concern for a stable care landscape for smaller and older children. The proportion of foreigners was above average for both staff and children. When, in the mid 1970s, as a result of the oil crisis, many migrant workers returned to their countries of origin, demand sharply collapsed for the time being (Falk, 2019).

In a decentralized educational and political system, change is, almost by necessity, incremental. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, Geneva was the driving force behind the professionalization of ECEC. With the economic boom, the need for supplementary childcare for families

increased. In the 1960s, there was intense debate in the canton of Geneva about improving the quality of preschool childcare. In 1963, cantonal regulations were issued, with which care personnel had to comply. In Geneva, municipal and cantonal authorities commissioned various expert reports to highlight the need for and perspectives on development in day nurseries (Schärer and Zottos, 2011). In 1971, a separate Geneva day nursery association was formed, which continued to advance developments and act as an advocate in the interests of its members.

Nevertheless, in the canton of Geneva alone, the training of childcare staff remained extremely varied. Until the 1960s, there were three private institutes attached to nurseries where future professionals could obtain a degree. In 1961, the Ecole de Jardinières d'Enfants was founded under the patronage of the University Institute of Education. The aim was to train skilled professionals who were able to work with children in infant nurseries, kindergartens and crèches. As a result, at first, there were training opportunities in Geneva for professionals who cared for children from birth to 18 months and those who were responsible for 3-to-5-year-olds, but not for 2-year-olds (Borel, 2010). Many crèches were highly reluctant to employ kindergarten teachers instead of infant nurses, although the age structure of the children made this seem appropriate. This was due not only to the attitude of crèche managers towards kindergarten teachers, but also to the fact that kindergartens offered much better working conditions (Schärer and Zottos, 2014).

As in the case of kindergartens, the central association for crèches endeavoured to establish overarching regulations for the training of professionals. Since 1972, there have been non-binding regulations for a 2-year apprenticeship as an early childhood educator (*Kleinkinderzieher/in*) provided by the central crèche association, which also established its own vocational school. The lessons had to be attended in Zurich. The practical training took place in a crèche recognized by the association. In addition, many day nurseries offered training as a crèche assistant, which lasted only 1 year and included fewer school hours. In addition, practical training paths continued to exist for people who wanted to work with infant children. In the same decade, the association established a further training programme for crèche managers (Grob-Menges, 2007: 12).

In 1978, a federal decree came into force which was supposed to regulate foster and stationary care but which also brought with it an obligation for new crèches to obtain an official permit. The cantons were, in some cases, completely unprepared for this new situation. The fact that national regulations could come into force in this way also shows the highly uncertain legal status of crèches, which could encompass a whole range of very different institutions. This unclear status was also reflected in the qualification of the staff. According to a national survey carried out at the end of the 1970s, only 41% of those working in crèches had completed a relevant educational programme of at least 1.5 years. One fifth had no training at all (Scheyer, 1979).

In 1989, the training for which the central crèche association was responsible was extended to 3 years. More schools now offered this course of education. In 1995, the Zurich school was separated from the association and is now autonomous. In the early 2000s, separate, nationally regulated education was set up within the framework of the Vocational Training Act (Grob-Menges, 2007: 12; Eggenberger, 2009). At the same time, the training of kindergarten teachers and elementary school teachers was academicized. However, it is still not delivered inside the universities. For training and educational research purposes, special types of higher education institutions were created which replaced the old seminars and merged into larger organizational units (Wannack, 2003, 2013).

To conclude, the Swiss case is an example of how the training of early childhood practitioners today is the result of the long-term developments initiated in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the strong forces of continuity. In Switzerland, the training regime of preschool staff resulted from the power of path dependency in a changing context where the central government could not intervene. As a result, firstly, the role of private organizations such as crèche and kindergarten

associations, as well as numerous other civil society groups, remained central. Although they had no formal coercive powers, these groups pushed forward the harmonization of staff training. Secondly, the role of the cantons (Gonon, 2009) often reinforced existing cultural, regional or even religious traditions. Although the central state did not play a role in Switzerland, some cantons ensured that a certain consolidation of training took place, at least in their realm of regulation.

Under such circumstances, the Swiss case can show how growing expectations and higher demands on personnel do not necessarily lead to academicization and the radical expansion of higher education. Rather, existing educational traditions have been continued in Switzerland. In the Swiss case, this meant that training for work in kindergartens was transformed into seminar-based teacher training, while training for work in crèches copied the established and recognized forms of vocational education and training in Switzerland. This tradition still determines the training regimes in ECEC in the first two decades of the 21st century, despite the large-scale reform programmes that have characterized recent times.

## The nationalization of preschool seminars in Sweden

Unlike in Switzerland, the Swedish training regime in ECEC was reorganized following the Second World War. This fundamental shift from the diverse training regimes of early childhood, which existed in both Sweden and Switzerland in the 19th and early 20th centuries, may be interpreted as the result of two processes. The first of these, the nationalization of preschool seminars, reflected the Swedish post-war context. Firstly, the organization of the field became a political question, partly due to the post-war increase in preschool enrolments from 28,800 children in 1950 to 47,500 in 1960 (SOU, 1960: 14). This development raised questions regarding how this sector was to be organized and how preschool staff should be educated. The importance of these questions was further emphasized by the increasing involvement of the Swedish municipalities in the preschool sector. These had, prior to the Second World War, already provided preschools with subsidies and promoted preschools with educated personnel and an educational agenda (Westberg, 2008: 154–157), and this development continued. From organizing 7% of preschools in 1941, the municipalities ran 65% of preschools in 1961 (Tallberg Broman, 1995: 133).

Secondly, the answers to the questions that these developments posed were affected by the changing status of the kindergarten seminars, which meant that they were no longer a self-evident solution for the training of preschool professionals. Although the privately-run kindergarten seminars had been pivotal in the early phases of ECEC, they lost their position following the Second World War, which had fostered a scepticism towards all things German, including Froebel and his kindergartens, which made the kindergarten seminars and the Swedish Froebel Association seem old-fashioned. Renaming the association to the Educational Association for Preschool-aged Children (*Pedagogiska föreningen för förskoleåldern*) in 1939, with the intention of raising the public profile of the association, hardly helped (Westberg, 2011, pp. 33–36).

In a context within which the demand for trained preschool staff increased, the establishment of new seminars in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Luleå also challenged the position of the private kindergarten seminars (SOU, 1960: 12). The seminars established in Stockholm, including the Socialpedagogiska seminarier managed by the influential Alva Myrdal, criticized the Froebelian tradition of the kindergartens, and the first seminar initiated by a municipality in Gothenburg in 1944 put the private organization of the seminars into question (Holmlund, 1996: 145–146).

Thirdly, the training of preschool staff was determined by the rise of the Swedish welfare state, which was comprehensive, universalist and institutionalized. That is, the social policy was intended to comprehend a wide array of social needs, target the entire population (instead of, for example, just those in need) and provide this population with a range of social services (Esping-Andersen

and Korpi, 1986: 42). In this context of a Scandinavian welfare state where the preschool sector had become a political question to which kindergarten seminars were no longer the obvious answer, it was clear that preschool teacher training had to be nationalized, in order to provide a general solution to the problem of training preschool staff (see e.g. SOU, 1960: 25). The dominant actors in the preschool sector, including the municipalities and the major government agencies, favoured the solution that the Swedish central government should take charge, not only of the preschool seminars, but also of the training of child nurses (*barnsköterskor*) who intended to work with children under the age of two, in various public institutions, and of child care teachers (*barnavårdslärare*). These types of training were either run jointly with, or separately from, preschool seminars (SOU, 1960: 41).

There were, obviously, those who supported the existing training regime, with a mix of private organizations and public financial support from municipalities and the central government. A seminar in Stockholm, KFUK:s pedagogiska institute (Educational Institute of the YWCA), argued that, while the education of preschool teachers was, in principle, a duty for state and society, preschool teacher training did not have to be state-run, not least since the operations of the existing seminars, which had been successful and independently organized, implied the freedom to develop ideas based on previously acquired experience (SOU, 1960: 21–22).

Against these arguments, however, stood all the other major actors in the field of ECEC in the 1950s and early 1960s. Governmental investigations claimed that the nationalization of preschool seminars represented ‘the most rational order’ in that the education of preschool teachers in a society should fall on the shoulders of the central government (SOU, 1960: 20). In addition, a government takeover would enable the seminars to educate the increasing numbers of preschool teachers, as demanded by the expected expansion of the preschool sector, and to address practical problems (such as necessary investments in the premises of preschool seminars) which would be easily solved when the central government took over (SOU, 1960: 20–23; see also SOU, 1955: 233–240).

Nationalization of the preschool seminars was also supported by the National Board of Education (*Skolöverstyrelsen*) and the National Board of Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*). The former argued that the nationalization of these seminars would strengthen the cooperation between preschools and schools. The latter also endorsed nationalization, claiming that such a shift would promote necessary organizational improvements, including providing the seminars with a vice principal (*rektor*), a decision that was also supported by the municipalities. They argued that they should not, especially in the current economic cycle, be held responsible for covering the costs of preschool seminars (SOU, 1960: 20–26).

As a result of this debate, all preschool seminars were nationalized with effect from 1 July 1963 (Tallberg Broman, 1995: 130), and a common framework for all state preschool seminars was drawn up. This stated that all preschool professionals were to be provided with 2 years of training. In Uppsala, psychology, education and methods in preschool education were the main subjects, together with teaching in drawing, movement and handicrafts. Almost half of the education took the form of internships at preschools (Halvarsson, 2009: 72, 90). Although organization of the training thus changed, the kindergarten seminars’ emphasis on practical training remained (Tellgren, 2008: ch. 7).

## The reform of the Swedish educational system

Nationalization of the preschool seminars was, however, not the only process that led to the current Swedish training regime in ECEC. Importantly, this regime was reformed as part of more general reforms of the Swedish educational system in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast to the nationalization of the preschool seminars, this reform was not first and foremost about these institutions.

Instead, they were intended to address the inequalities of Swedish society and the problems of an outdated segmented school system where ever-expanding numbers of children were accepted into grammar schools originally intended for a small elite. In this context, the impact that these reforms had on the training of early childhood personnel may be regarded as an unintended consequence of broader political efforts to change the Swedish educational system.

In a first step, these educational reforms introduced a comprehensive school system for all Swedish school-aged children in 1962, complemented by a new upper-secondary school (*gymnasium*) in 1966 (Johansson and Lundahl, 1995). As a result of this reorganization of Swedish primary and secondary schooling, vocational education was affected, as well as higher education. In the field of ECEC, this reform meant that the education of preschool staff was subsumed into the structures of this educational system. The training of preschool personnel with lower qualifications – so-called child nurses – was included in a two-year programme in upper-secondary schools in 1971 (SOU, 1972: 460–461). The training of preschool professionals was instead transferred to the field of higher education, because of the reform of higher education in 1977. This reform was in part the result of the introduction of the comprehensive school system, which meant that an increasing number of pupils was eligible for university studies. In 1975, about 65% of comprehensive school pupils attended upper-secondary school, rising to 80% in 1980 (Larsson and Prytz, 2011: 150). In addition to the increasing demand for higher education, other circumstances called for reform. These included an emphasis on adapting higher education to the demands of the labour market and to the profile of the welfare state, suggesting universal solutions that promoted social cohesion and equality (Askling, 2012: 7–10).

The reform of higher education in 1977 meant that all post-secondary education was integrated into one organization: higher education. In the field of early years, this meant that the preschool seminars, as the teacher seminars, were transferred to universities and university colleges. In Stockholm University, the University College for Teacher Education was formed in 1977. In Uppsala, the preschool seminar (*förskoleseminariet*) was transformed into the Department of Childhood and Education (*Barnpedagogiska institutionen*) in Uppsala University (Halvarsson, 2009: 201) and, in Örebro, preschool teacher education was transferred to a department in the University College of Örebro (Tellgren, 2008: 189).

By doing so, the reform of higher education cemented the distinction between child nurses (*barnskötare*) and preschool professionals (*förskollärare*). The former category either lacked training or received their training in upper-secondary schools, while preschool professionals attended higher education institutions. This reform also affected the content of preschool teacher training. According to the law for higher education (1977), all higher education had to be based on scientific research, train a critical mind and promote internationalization. The distinction between vocational training and academic education was thereby expected to be eliminated, and students in vocational programmes would be eligible both for academic and for professional degrees (Tellgren, 2008: 186–187).

This transfer into the context of higher education meant that education was prolonged from 2 to 2.5 years, and that practical training in preschools was reduced from half of each semester to about one third of the training programme (Tellgren, 2008: 189; Halvarsson, 2009: 147). As a result, there was a shift in emphasis in preschool teacher training, from practical experience to theoretical knowledge, and from the development of the student teacher's personality to increasing his or her academic knowledge. This meant that the new preschool teacher education stressed that future preschool professionals had to be up to date on Swedish and international research, develop an understanding of the social and cultural conditions of childhood and be able to promote democratic ideals. As a result of the recontextualization of preschool teacher training into higher education,



training became increasingly academicized and the distinction between theory and practice became important (Tellgren, 2008: 250–251; Erixon and Erixon Arreman, 2017).

The reform of higher education in 1977 was followed by additional reforms that, in effect, placed preschool teacher training more deeply within the structures of higher education. In 1990–1991, the Swedish government decided to fund two new full professorships with a focus on childhood and family; further, when a new law for higher education was enacted in 1993, all teacher training programmes were reformed. In contrast to the teacher seminars, which had provided different teacher categories with different forms of training, this reform by the central government was intended to homogenize all teacher training so as to consist of two parts: theoretical knowledge and practical teaching knowledge and abilities (Tellgren, 2008: 212–213).

This development towards homogenization also reflected the teacher education reform implemented in 2001, which meant that all teacher training programmes ended with a joint teaching degree. The training of preschool teachers was thus prolonged to 3.5 years of study, with a comparatively small amount of practical training, encompassing, in total, only 20 weeks (Tellgren, 2008: 247, 250). While remaining tightly coordinated with the training of other teacher categories, following the teacher training reform of 2011, a separate certificate for preschool teachers was once again introduced (Bertilsson, 2019).

At a local level, these changes in preschool teacher training were accompanied by organizational changes, which meant that preschool teacher training was further incorporated into the traditional structure of the universities in Sweden. In Uppsala, preschool teacher training was transferred from the Department of Childhood and Education to the Department of Teacher Training in 1985, which was increasingly subsumed into the organization of the university by the creation of the Faculty of Educational Science in 2001, and the division of the Department of Teacher Training into two departments in 2007: the Department of Didactics and the Department of Education, Culture and Media (Halvarsson, 2009: 207; Thelander and Liberg, 2006: 151–157).

Similar developments can be seen elsewhere. In Stockholm, preschool teacher training received its first PhD programme in child and youth studies in 2004 and was moved from the Teacher Training University College to Stockholm University in 2007, where, in 2008, it became part of the Department of Child and Youth Studies (Aronsson and Cederborg, 2014: 27–28). In Örebro, the Department of Preschool Teacher Education was integrated into the Department of Teacher Education in 1993 and, by integrating with the Department of Education (based on the academic discipline), it became part of the Department of Education in 1997 (Tellgren, 2008: 213). As a result of this development, conditioned by the reform of higher education in Sweden, the training that had previously been run by the kindergarten association and later by state-run preschool teacher seminars had now become an incorporated part of the higher education structure in Sweden.

## **Conclusion**

Although Sweden and Switzerland both experienced a growing need for ECEC, they developed different solutions to this common problem. As we have shown, the training of preschool staff in these two countries exhibited similar features during the 19th century and the early 20th century. A complex set of different training possibilities was created and developed. At various levels, interest groups and associations were keen both to expand the institutional structure and to establish appropriate training facilities. Local constellations and private associations played a major role in determining which training concepts were stabilized over a longer period of time. Regional characteristics could be decisive in determining whether preschool staff received adequate training in a particular part of the country.

Neither Sweden nor Switzerland was destroyed in the Second World War, with both countries experiencing a protracted economic boom and (to varying degrees) a shortage of labour. In both



cases, the post-war era was marked by a debate about the established structure of training in ECEC. Nevertheless, the training of preschool staff took two entirely different trajectories after that. While Swedish training institutions were nationalized and incorporated into the national educational system, the training regime of preschool personnel in Switzerland remained diverse and was characterized by gradual developments. In Switzerland, kindergarten seminars became an even more well-established part of teacher training, and the kindergartens themselves were partly integrated into the cantonal education system. In the case of crèches, which disappeared completely in Sweden when preschools integrating both care and education were introduced, education for staff similar to vocational education and training in other professions prevailed in Switzerland.

*From the perspective of Sweden*, these diverging developments were the result of increased preschool enrolments, increasing municipal involvement in preschools and the weakened position of kindergarten seminars, together with the rationale of the expanding welfare state which promoted the nationalization of training institutions for preschool personnel. Added to this, a fundamental reform of the Swedish educational system (including the introduction of a comprehensive school system in 1962 and the creation of a new higher education sector in 1977) academicized the training of preschool core practitioners, locating it at the university level.

*From the perspective of Switzerland*, this development was largely due to the decentralized structure of the Swiss education and general political systems. Since kindergartens have become part of the education system, which is autonomously regulated in each canton, developments of the types occurring in Sweden were not possible. Neither national comprehensive school reform nor a fundamental and global change in the field of higher education could occur under such circumstances. In addition, the training of Swiss preschool professionals could hardly take place in universities, in a context where not even primary school teachers have been trained at that level. Today, kindergarten and primary teachers in Switzerland are trained at separate so-called universities of teacher education, while core practitioners in crèches complete a nationally regulated apprenticeship.

Thus, in relation to previous research, the Swiss case illustrates the power of path dependency, but also the perfect storm that is required if change is to be implemented. As the Swedish case illustrates, such change cannot be accomplished purely by means of political decisions regarding the training regime for preschool personnel, or increasing investments in preschool institutions. Instead, this development required not only a post-war economic boom, but also the rationale of a welfare state and the restructuring of the entire educational system.

While highlighting the powerful inertia of educational institutions and the magnitude of the task for changing them, this article nevertheless provides an initial clue as to how the training regime of preschool personnel may be changed by (perhaps paradoxically) enforcing change in other structures of society. However, it also shows how quickly previous traditions of training pedagogical personnel are forgotten once they have been abolished. In our comparison, academicization appears to be a development which, once it has been embarked upon, can no longer be reversed. Nevertheless, academicization is not an inevitable development, but instead appears as the result of a specific historical context.

In comparative studies, the various lines of tradition and contexts that we have traced in our study need to be taken more thoroughly into account. Historical institutionalism as a methodological approach allows us to reconstruct the different developments, path dependencies and critical junctures in the evolution of ECEC systems. Our analyses have shown that the nation state is only one context besides others, something which must be considered in due course. At the same time, however, we were able to point out how specific private corporate actors and cultural factors have played an important role in the development of a particular training regime. The challenge here is to understand the individual developments as part of a global trend, without neglecting the specific institutional solutions developed in different times and contexts. In this sense, the cases of Sweden

and Switzerland, which at once share many similarities and reveal such different developments in ECEC, could represent a productive starting point for future research.

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### ORCID iD

Michael Geiss  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0809-2427>

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## Author biographies

Michael Geiss is head of the Education and Work Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of Zurich, Switzerland. From 2013 to 2015 he worked as a senior lecturer at the Department of Vocational



Education and Training in Zurich. He is founding and managing editor of *On Education: Journal for Research and Debate*.

Johannes Westberg is professor of Theory and History of Education, University of Groningen, Netherlands. He organizes the Nordic Network for History of Education, is a member of the editorial team of *Nordic Journal of Educational History*, corresponding member of the editorial board of *History of Education*, and member of the international advisory board of *Paedagogica Historica*.