

**Relationship between early
childhood and primary education
in France and Sweden**

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Declaration

I, Yoshie Kaga, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Signed 

Abstract

The relationship between early childhood and primary education is intensifying in recent years. With almost all children in Western Europe attending early childhood education (ECE) programmes by the age of four, there is increasing demand for primary education to be better linked with the preceding stage in the interest of improved educational transitions and outcomes. Thanks to the growing body of research on the benefits in later school achievement, employment, economic development, gender and social equity, ECE is now firmly on the policy agenda of national governments in Europe as well as international organisations, side by side with primary education. Fresh interest in the relationship has emerged also with the adoption of the vision of lifelong learning, prompting efforts to conceive a seamless system whereby various stages and areas of education are connected and form a coherent whole.

As participation and investment in ECE grows, the question arises as to whether this is a distinct phase of education or an adjunct to primary schooling and what the consequences of the different types of relationship might be. This study aims to understand and compare the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden, which have contrasting histories and approaches in relation to ECE and schooling. In particular, using globalisation and the social construction of the child as key framing concepts, the study seeks to understand and compare policy changes over time and the views and experiences of key stakeholders in ECE and schooling regarding the relationship in both countries. This is a unique comparative study on the relationship that employs a case study method involving policy and interview analyses. It seeks to contribute to theoretical and policy discussions on the relationships between different stages of education, including conditions for forging a constructive relationship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Inspiration

My interest in the relationship between early childhood and primary education has grown from my professional experience in working for the promotion of early childhood education (ECE) within the Education Sector of UNESCO for over 15 years. ECE has generally attracted less programmatic and funding attention compared to other levels and areas of education within UNESCO. Priority has always been given to primary education; and ECE has been its 'poor relation'. By virtue of being the stage prior to primary education, but despite the fact that successful primary schooling necessarily requires quality early care and education (OECD, 2001; Sylva et al., 2004; Smith, 2014; Naudeau et al., 2011), ECE seems to be condemned to always looking up towards primary education for improving its own effectiveness – and even for justifying its *raison d'être*, especially when it is officially part of the education system. The asymmetry between early childhood and primary education may almost seem unsurprising, or 'natural'. Why is it so? But should it be so? What might be the consequences of such an asymmetrical relationship for education? Might there be alternative relationships? These experiences and thoughts have inspired me to focus my study on the topic of the relationship between early childhood and primary education.

1.2. Context and rationale for the study

Today, an increasing number of young children participate in ECE services. Already a decade ago, most children in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries attended ECE services for at least two years prior to primary schooling (OECD, 2001). In 2012, on average, 84% of 4-year-olds in OECD countries that are part of the European Union participated in ECE; and Belgium, France, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden had more than 90% of their 3-year-olds enrolled in ECE (OECD, 2014). With a great majority of children now in ECE, how best to design and support children's positive transition from ECE to primary education is an important issue for professionals and policymakers concerned with both sectors. Its importance is accentuated by the growing body of research demonstrating the positive effects of participation in quality ECE on educational achievement, equity and system efficiency (European Commission, 2011; Eurydice, 2009; Hart and Risely, 1995; Heckman and Masterov, 2004; UNESCO, 2010) – disseminated actively by international organisations – and by increasing adherence to the discourse on lifelong learning starting from birth (European Commission, 2011).

The issue is, however, not new, being the object of research, programme and policy initiatives for some decades (Kagan, 2013). But the attention to the issue has rather been sporadic

(Kagan, 2013), considered predominantly an 'operational challenge' needing a 'smoothing out of difficulties' (Bennett, 2013: 60), and generally limited to a couple of years around primary school entry. It has lacked a broader perspective that involves questioning of the purposes, content and methods of the ECE and primary education sectors and of how these relate to one another. For example, should ECE provide school learning through environments and pedagogies similar to those used in primary school? Or, should primary school be aligned with ECE to provide for children's all round development and well-being?

There are two notable exceptions in terms of literature. One is the paper by Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) written on the relationship between preschool and compulsory school in Sweden for a government commission. Another is the volume edited by Peter Moss (2013), which invited historically informed critical reflection on the relationship in different countries from experts in Belgium, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States. Nevertheless, these and other existing studies are either theoretical and historical (e.g. Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, 1994; Moss, 2008) or national policy review-based analyses (OECD, 2001 and 2006). They are rarely informed by empirical studies seeking views and experiences of key early childhood and primary education stakeholders operating at different levels. Apart from OECD's analyses, the literature mostly comprises single country case studies and does not include cross-national studies. Moreover, existing research on the relationship is undertaken more often by ECE researchers than by primary education researchers (e.g. Moss, 2013). This tends to reflect more the concerns, dilemmas and perspectives found in the field of ECE than that of those working in the field of primary education.

Investigating the relationship may not only support a better understanding of the policy- and system-related factors that shape children's experiences of transition from ECE services to primary school. It also invites exploration and reflection of 'the values, goals, concepts, understandings and practices of education' that could apply across the entire field (Moss, 2013: 2), which potentially contributes to the realisation of the vision of lifelong learning. The value that the present study can add, especially in view of the above-mentioned spearheading volume by Moss and colleagues – which for the most part provides analyses at a macro level – is an empirical investigation of the relationship. It is based, to a great extent, on the views and experiences held by key stakeholders at different levels of seniority in policy and practice who are influenced by the forces surrounding the relationship as much as they influence them. With the present study, I intend to pay equal attention to gathering and seeking information, views, experiences and opinions arising from both the primary and early childhood education sectors.

France and Sweden are important cases to study and compare, as they both developed a strong relationship, but with different conceptualisations of how early childhood and primary

education should relate to each other; with contrasting degrees of specificity in their ECE provision vis-à-vis primary education; and with distinct auspices for early childhood. In France, the ministerial responsibility is divided between social welfare, which oversees care services for younger children, and education overseeing early education services – called *école maternelle* – for older children, as part of the public education system since the late 19th century. Sweden, by contrast, had an integrated system under social welfare for about five decades until the responsibility for early childhood was transferred to education in 1996. The main form of provision is preschool (*förskola*) catering for ages 1-5. Despite the differences, an initial reading of recent literature and anecdotal information suggests that the relationship in both countries is developing in the same direction, i.e. toward increasing ‘schoolification’, that is, strengthening of school-like goals, organisation and methodologies in early education (Bennett, 2006).¹ Is this really the case? Is there a consensus about the phenomenon among different stakeholders in both France and Sweden? To what extent are they concerned with the phenomenon in the two countries, and what kind of relationship do they wish to see in the future? What are the forces that influence the shape of the relationship – do they emerge from within or outside the countries?

Both France and Sweden are now at a turning point in terms of early childhood and primary education. In France, the new education law – *La loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République* – passed in 2013 has embraced the replacement of the original learning cycles with a new set of teaching cycles that would separate ECE from primary education, and the revision of ECE and primary school curricula accordingly. In Sweden, a new reflection is also appropriate as the country recently undertook several reforms in preschool and school (e.g. the revision of the preschool curriculum in 2010; separation of integrated teacher education into different degrees in 2011) whose impact may have begun to be felt in a concrete manner and which may have implications for the relationship.

1.3. Aim and objectives

The thesis, therefore, examines the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. Its overall aim is to understand and compare the relationship in the two countries to identify system, policy and practice convergences and divergences. It does not seek to explore the question of what type of relationship produces better child outcomes.

¹ Bennett (2006) elaborates that schoolified early childhood services are characterised by high numbers of children per adult, age segregation, predominant teacher instruction, whole class exercises and insufficient attention given to the needs, talents and agency of the individual child. A schoolified early education sector is often matched with a childcare sector that has limited educational goals and focuses mainly on keeping children safe and well while mothers worked.

Using a combination of data sources, the thesis will seek to achieve its overall aim through the following objectives:

1. To identify types of relationship between early childhood and primary education that have been identified or conceptualised;
2. To understand and compare the changes in policy regarding the relationship between France and Sweden, and whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the policy regarding the relationship;
3. To understand and compare the views and experiences of stakeholders in policy, research and practice regarding the relationship, including their views and experiences about whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the relationship.

Below, I will explain the evolution of the focus of the thesis over the course of my MPhil/PhD study. Then, I will provide definitions of the key terms 'early childhood education' and 'primary education', and national early childhood and primary education contexts that affect children's institutional experiences in France and Sweden. Finally, I will set out the different kinds of data sources/evidence on which the study will draw.

1.4. The evolution of the thesis

The research aim and objectives have evolved over the course of my MPhil/PhD studies that commenced in October 2005. I took off two years and two terms off from my studies: (1) the academic years of 2006-2007 (first maternity leave), (2) the academic year 2010-2011 (interruption due to heavy workload in my employment), and the first two terms of the academic year 2011-2012 (second maternity leave).

It was during the academic year 2008-9 that I entertained for the first time the idea of focusing on the theme of the relationship between early childhood and primary education. Then, I sought to elaborate the proposal with a specific focus on potential influences of early childhood pedagogy on primary education. Subsequently, I developed a detailed proposal in 2010 to study the issue in England, France and Sweden. The pilot study conducted in France in April-May 2010 was based on research questions around potential influences of early childhood pedagogy on primary education.

Then, in May 2010, my supervisors advised me to consider going back to the earlier focus (i.e. the relationship between early childhood and primary education) that would examine influences in both directions – rather than looking at only one direction – and that would allow an examination of various types of relationship identified or conceptualised so far. Following their advice, in the academic year 2011-2012, I brought back the focus of the relationship between early childhood and primary education; and decided to study France and Sweden

and drop England. This was based on the consideration that researching three countries would have been more time- and effort-intensive which, given my multiple responsibilities with work and family, did not seem feasible. The main reason for dropping England was that I was least familiar with the early childhood and primary education systems in England. In addition, France and Sweden were considered as more 'comparable' as both countries had strong traditions of public ECE and school provision, unlike England whose provision was much more market-driven.

I undertook the pilot study in Sweden in 2012 using a different set of interview questions from those employed in the French pilot. As the new academic year began (2013-2014), I came to entertain the idea of narrowing the study to France only (the country in which I am based) – instead of conducting a comparative study involving two countries – due to time constraints arising from my engagement with full-time employment and being a mother of two young children. However, the upgrade examiners in December 2013 recommended not to pursue this idea and instead to keep to the comparative study with France and Sweden for its potential for generating richer materials and analyses on the issues regarding the relationship. They also recommended giving a focus on the policy relationship and reducing the research methods from three (i.e. policy analysis, interviews and observation) to two (policy analysis and interviews). I decided to follow their advice.

However, as I proceeded with this research design, I began to realize the potential value of the observation data – consisting of written and visual data captured in photographs – I collected from the pilot study in both countries in informing the research. The data appeared to offer valuable information about the similarities and differences between the French and Swedish settings with regard to pedagogy and learning environments, which were shaping the child's daily experiences. As I saw that this would potentially enrich the understanding of the relationship, I decided to include an analysis of selected data from the observation as a compliment while I regarded the policy documents and interviews as two main sources of the present study.

1.5. Key terms: early childhood education and primary education

The thesis uses the term 'early childhood education' (ECE) to broadly include a range of organised provision for young children below primary school age, regardless of administrative auspices, funding sources, staffing and location, and which has an educational component alongside other components that are relevant to child development. The upper limit is defined as 'entry into primary school', because some countries have legislated compulsory pre-primary education, usually one or two years prior to primary education. A similar term to

denote the area is 'early childhood education and care' (ECEC), used, for example, by the European Commission² and OECD.³

'Pre-primary education' is employed to refer to ECE services typically catering for children aged 3 and above; and the term 'childcare' refers to ECE services catering for younger children, i.e. children aged 0 to 3.

The study uses the term 'primary education' to refer to a designated level within an education system after ECE. It is usually considered as the first compulsory stage of mass education, and is called 'elementary education' or 'basic education' in some countries. Entry to primary education may be as early as age 4 or as late as 7; and the end point is usually age 11 or 12 (Richards, 2008). When referring to the practices of specific countries and institutions, the terms as employed by them are used in the thesis.

1.6. National early childhood and primary education contexts shaping children's institutional experiences in France and Sweden

1.6.1. France

In France, early childhood experience before the age of 3 varies widely. Only a few children attend daycare centres (*crèches*) established for children from 3 months until the age of 3. Among children aged 3 or under not participating in the *école maternelle*, 50% are cared for by parents, probably by mothers in the majority of cases; 29% are cared for by a trained, home-based childminder (*assistante maternelle*) caring for up to four children in her home; 16% attend organised daycare (*crèches*),⁴ and 4.5% are cared for by grandparents or other family members (Le Bouteillec et al., 2014). Services for the under-3s are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. They are mainly run by municipalities and non-profit organisations and, to a lesser extent, parent cooperatives and private companies. There is no national curriculum for *crèches*, but they are required to develop a *projet d'établissement* for children's care, development and well-being, as well as describing the services offered (DEPP, 2014).

When children in France turn 3, they all participate in the *école maternelle*, administered by the Ministry of National Education. As the current policy promotes the enrolment of disadvantaged 2-year-olds as a way to give them a head start in learning, there are some 2-

² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-childhood_en.htm (accessed 7 April 2015)

³ <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/earlychildhoodeducationandcare.htm> (accessed 7 April 2015)

⁴ Includes *crèche collective* (daycare centres), *crèche familiale* (family-based daycare) and *crèche parentale* (centre-based daycare provided by parents in the presence of trained supervisors).

year-olds participating in the *école maternelle*. The enrolment rate for this age was 11.9 percent in 2013

Like primary school, or the *école élémentaire*, the *école maternelle* currently operates from 8:30 until 16:30 on Mondays and Thursdays, 8:30 until 15:00 on Tuesdays and Fridays, and 8:30 until 11:30 on Wednesdays, with the possibility of shorter days for younger children. After-school care is provided between 15:00 or 16:30 until 18:00, organised by municipalities within the school premises. The *école maternelle* is offered in a school environment and is often adjacent to the *école élémentaire*. The *école maternelle* and *école élémentaire* follow the same school calendar: the instruction time (*le temps scolaire*) for both the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* is defined as 24 hours per week and 36 weeks per year. In 2013, the average child:teacher ratio in public *école maternelle* was 25.8:1 and 22.9:1 in public *école élémentaire*,⁵ a considerable difference from French daycare centres (*crèches*) that are recommended to have ratios of 5:1 for babies, and 8:1 for children who are able to walk (Rayna, 2010).

The *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* are taught by *professeurs des écoles*, educated at master's level through a unified initial training for preschool and primary school teachers. This is in sharp contrast with staff in services for younger children, who are less educated and paid, and qualified as either nurses, childminders, or early childhood educators. Compulsory education in France starts at the age of 6 at the entry of the *école élémentaire*, which caters for children ages 6-11. The *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* have been strongly connected, notably through the learning cycles, or *Cycles d'apprentissages*, adopted in 1989 and in effect until 2013, which placed the last year of the *école maternelle* and the first two years of the *école élémentaire* in a common learning cycle. In short, early childhood education in France is divided into services for children ages 0-3 and 3-6, without any coherence and continuity between the two fields, but with the latter being 'scholarised' since the 1970s (Garnier, 2011) and strongly connected with primary education.

1.6.2. Sweden

Having had an integrated early childhood system under welfare since the 1940s, Sweden transferred the responsibility to education in 1996. In terms of policy and administration, provision, workforce, curriculum and funding, there was already a high degree of coherence within the early childhood sector prior to this reform. The Swedish Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for all ECE services for children aged 1-6⁶ in addition to compulsory

⁵ http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NATTEF07147

⁶ Sweden has a generous parental leave system with 360 days paid at 80% of annual earnings. Thus, young children stay with their parent at home during the first year of life.

education that starts at the age of 7 (OECD, 2006). ECE services consist of preschools (*förskola*), family day care⁷ (*familjedaghem*) and open pre-schools⁸ (*Öppen förskola*), with the majority of preschool-age children attending preschools. Almost all children aged 6-7 are enrolled in preschool classes (*förskoleklass*) – a voluntary service provided free of charge for at least 525 hours per year within compulsory schools (*grundskola*) – which has been conceived to serve as a bridge between preschool and school. Eighty four percent of children aged 1-5 were enrolled in preschool in 2013, an increase compared to 75% ten years ago; and over 95% of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds participated in 2013 (Skolverket, 2014).

The *Curriculum for the Preschool Lpfö 98*, revised in 2010, promotes a holistic pedagogy where care, socialisation and learning form a coherent whole, and is conceptually linked with the *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre 2011* (Lgr11), which together promote a common view of knowledge, learning and development. Swedish compulsory school (*grundskola*) has a single structure that encompasses primary and lower secondary education that together last for 9 years – unlike most French children, who move from one structure to another, i.e. the *élémentaire* to the *collège*. Teaching methods and the number of teachers per class, and their degree of specialisation differ to some extent between the grades. After school hours, leisure time centres are provided within school premises.

Initial teacher education programmes for preschool, preschool class and compulsory teachers are separate.⁹ To obtain the degree in preschool education takes three and a half years of full time studies, while it takes four years of full-time studies to complete the degree in compulsory school education with a specialisation in preschool class and grade 1-3. In Swedish preschools, the learning environments tend to resemble a home environment rather than a school classroom, and children of different ages are grouped together. The average group size was 16.8 children in 2013 (Skolverket, 2014). While there is no national statutory requirement for a specific child:staff ratio, the average ratio was 5.3:1 when counting both preschool teachers and teaching assistants, and 10.1:1 when counting preschool teachers only in 2013 (Skolverket, 2014). The average ratio in preschool class was 13:1 (OECD, 2001). The municipal compulsory schools have the ratio of 8.3 teachers per 100 children (Eurydice, 2009/2010). In summary, Swedish ECE provision is integrated within the education

⁷ Family daycarer who receives children of preschool age in his or her own home.

⁸ Open preschool is for children aged 1-6, accompanied by a parent or another adult.

⁹ Between 2001 and summer 2011, initial education for preschool teachers, preschool class teachers, compulsory schoolteachers and leisure-time pedagogues was integrated, and lasted for three and a half years. The first year was dedicated to studying a common core module, which included knowledge important for all teachers, regardless of their eventual specialization. The scheme was designed to allow these teaching professionals a common understanding of pedagogies appropriate for children at different ages and to give them a shared professional identity (Kaga, 2007). However, the government decided to separate the degrees with the aim of strengthening specialisations at different ages, in different subjects (Ministry of Education and Science, 2010).

system while it retains its pedagogical specificity vis-à-vis compulsory school. Its preschool class for 6-year-olds provides a bridge that facilitates a smooth transition from early childhood to primary education.

Below are summary tables of socio-demographic and ECE and primary education contexts of France and Sweden.

In socio-demographic terms, the two countries are similar in that they have comparable national wealth and human development indices. They have relatively low child poverty rates and inequity levels. They also have similar fertility rates and relatively high female labour participation rates. However, the French population is six times larger than Sweden. While both France and Sweden are unitary states, the former is centralised and the latter decentralised. Sweden (4th out of 142 countries in 2014) is much higher in the gender ranking than France (16th out of 142 countries).

Table 1.1: Socio-demographic contexts of France and Sweden

	France	Sweden
Population	62,814,233 (July 2014 est.) ¹⁰	9,723,809 (July 2014 est.)
GDP per capita (PPP)	\$35,700 (2013 est.)	\$40,900 (2013 est.)
Child poverty rate	8.8 (2009)	7.3 (2009)
GINI Index	30.6 (2011)	25 (2013)
Female labour force participation (age 15-64)	66.29 % (2012)	76.66% (2012)
Total fertility rate	2.08 (2014 est.)	1.88 (2014 est.)
Gender gap index	16th out of 142 (2014)	4th out of 142 (2014)
Government administration	Unitary with centralised system (22 'régions' / 100 'départements')	Unitary with strong decentralisation

Sources: CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html> (accessed 5 April 2015); World Economic Forum <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>

Table 1.2: ECE and primary education contexts of France and Sweden

	France	Sweden
Compulsory school age	6-16	7-16
Education expenditure	5.9% of GDP (2010)	7% of GDP (2010)

¹⁰ The figure is for Metropolitan France only, i.e. does not include overseas regions.

Public expenditure on ECE institutions (in % of GDP)	0.66% (2011)	0.72% (2011)
Origin of services	First <i>crèche</i> in 1844 First <i>salle d'asile</i> ¹¹ in 1828 Compulsory free education system introduced in 1879 (ages 6-13) EM officially recognised as free, non-compulsory and first level of primary education in 1886	First <i>crèche</i> in 1854 First public kindergarten in 1904 Compulsory elementary education introduced in 1842
Parental leave	Paid maternity leave 16 weeks Paid paternity leave 2 weeks Parental leave up to age 3 ¹²	Paid leave 480 days (60 days reserved for each parent) Fathers entitled to 10 extra paid days of leave at child's birth
Auspice	0-3 Social affairs and health 2/3-11 Education (<i>École maternelle</i> and <i>élémentaire</i>)	0-1 parental leave Education 1-16 (preschool and compulsory school) ¹³
Public/private	Age 2/3-11 – public Age 0-3 – mixed	Age 1-16 - public
Child:staff ratio	1:5 for group with babies recommended in childcare 1:8 for group with children able to walk recommended in childcare Average ratio of 25.8:1 in the public <i>école maternelle</i> Average ratio of 22.9:1 in the public <i>école élémentaire</i>	Average ratio of 5.3:1 for preschool group 5.3:1 when counting both preschool teachers and teaching assistants Average ratio of 10.1:1 when counting preschool teachers only Average ratio of 13:1 in preschool class
Curriculum	No curriculum for 0-3 ¹⁴ Curriculum for <i>écoles maternelle</i> Curriculum for <i>écoles élémentaires</i>	Curriculum for the Preschool (Lpfo 98) Curriculum for Preschool Class, Compulsory School and Leisure-

¹¹ Predecessor '*salle d'asile*' was later renamed '*école maternelle*'.

¹² 16 weeks of maternity leave for the first two children. 26 weeks for the third child. Parental leave is allowance permitting a parent to stay out of the workforce [how much]; and a parent can receive an income during the last 6 months of the leave before returning to employment.

¹³ The responsibility for the preschool was transferred from the social welfare to the education sector in 1996.

¹⁴ However, the *crèche* is required to establish a '*projet d'établissement*' (school plan) containing (1) '*projet social*' (social project) and (2) '*projet éducatif et pédagogique*' (educational and pedagogical project).

		time Centre (Lgr 11)
Workforce (main contact worker)	<i>Professeur des écoles</i> 2/3-11 Paediatric nurses (<i>puéricultrice</i>) 0-3 <i>Educateur des jeunes enfants (EJE)</i> 0-6	Preschool teacher (1-6) School teacher (6-16)
Initial training	5 years university-level education for <i>professeur des écoles</i> 4 years post-secondary education for <i>puéricultrice</i> 120 hours training before or during employment for <i>assistant maternelle</i> (family daycarer) 3.5 years post-secondary education for <i>EJE</i>	Degree in preschool education - 3 years higher education (210 higher education credits) for preschool teacher Degree in primary school education directed at work in pre-school class and years 1–3 of compulsory school (240 higher education credits) Degree in primary school education directed at work in years 4–6 of compulsory school (240 higher education credits)

Sources: Martin Korpi, B. (2007); Eurydice (2009/10b); Rayna, S. (2010); Institute Français de l'Education <http://www.inrp.fr> ; http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Work/The-Swedish-system/Employment_based_benefits/Parental-leave/ ; OECD Family Database www.oecd.org/social/family/database ; <http://skills.oecd.org> ; OECD (2014); UNICEF http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc10_eng.pdf

1.7. Structure of the thesis and the kinds of evidence on which it will draw

This chapter has outlined the focus of the study and the importance of the topic studied. It has defined the research aim and objectives, and introduced the reasons for selecting France and Sweden as focus countries, as well as the French and Swedish early childhood and primary education policy contexts in which the study is situated. Chapter 2 reviews the literature. Chapter 3 provides a conceptual framework for the study, which draws from globalisation and sociology of childhood. It suggests hypotheses to be considered in the policy and empirical analyses, presented in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively. Chapter 4 presents the design and methods of the study. It proposes qualitative research methods which enable a deep understanding of the historical backgrounds and developments of early childhood and primary education as well as an understanding of views and experiences of key stakeholders concerned with ECE and primary education. It also describes the two main methods used: policy document analysis and semi-structured interviews. Chapter 5 presents the results of the analysis of relevant policy documents from France and Sweden. Chapter 6 presents the

results of the analysis of the empirical study in France and Sweden. Chapter 7 discusses the findings from policy and empirical analyses in a comparative perspective. Finally, Chapter 8 presents conclusions, including the contribution of the study to the field.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of the present review is to situate the study within the existing body of literature, explore the extent of literature relevant to the thesis, and point out the gaps in the literature. In particular, it seeks to identify the types of relationship between early childhood and primary education that have been identified or conceptualised in the existing literature, and to draw out relevant themes that are important to consider in the study.

The organisation of the chapter is as follows: Firstly, it reviews the historical backgrounds of early childhood and primary education in order to understand the current relationship between the two sectors, including the question of relative influence between them. Secondly, it reviews the policy and research contexts that point to the growing importance of the relationship between early childhood and primary education. Thirdly, it critiques the concept of 'relationship' by reviewing the literature on the related and perhaps more familiar concept of 'transition' from early childhood to primary education. Here, I try to understand what difference there may be between transition literature and that on relationship. Fourthly, it reviews the types of relationship that have been identified or conceptualised and, lastly, it highlights the gaps in the literature.

2.2. Literature search strategy

The primary focus is on reviewing relevant European and North American literature written in English. Published, peer-reviewed literature (books, journal articles, conference papers, technical reports, dissertations and theses) since 2000 was included, although an exception was made for some, particularly material from outside this period. The literature search was focused on sources listed in the main education-related databases, such as the British Education Index, ERIC and Proquest Education Journals. These databases were searched using combinations of search terms associated with: (1) early childhood education; (2) primary education; and (3) relationship.

Table 2.1: Search terms

Main search terms	Similar search terms
Early childhood education	Early childhood education and care, preschool, kindergarten
Primary education	Primary school, compulsory education, compulsory school, elementary education, elementary school
Relationship	Transition, link, continuity

The search criteria also included European and North American countries as well as Australia and New Zealand where there was possibility to do so in the search engine.

The search was then restricted to publications that dealt with the relationship or transition between ECE/preschool and primary education/primary school. It included publications concerning 'school readiness' and 'ready school', i.e. two major types of the relationship to be dealt with in the thesis. It excluded the publications that had specific subject-focus (e.g. mathematics, music, science, technology) as well as those outside of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Reference lists of the selected publications were subsequently reviewed. Where relevant, major international studies conducted by international organisations, such as those published by the OECD and the European Commission, were included in the review.

2.3. Different histories and aims of early childhood and primary education

Both primary schools and early childhood education programmes for young children emerged around the 19th century in Europe and North America (Kamerma, 2006), but have evolved separately over time (OECD, 2006).

Primary school is a well-established institution. A moment in history marked by industrialisation and nation-building, one key purpose of schooling was the production of disciplined and industrious citizens. Children in primary schools were to learn basic literacy and numeracy as well as elements of national history and culture. By the end of the 19th century, primary schooling was firmly integrated in a national system in many countries (OECD, 2006) with attendance inscribed by law. The widespread provision of primary or elementary education by governments in Europe and North America in this era also represented the 'systematisation of ad hoc provision provided over centuries by a wide variety of institutions and individuals, very often, but not always, associated with religious groups' (Richards, 2008: 452).

With regard to the aims of education, what primary education worldwide has in common is an emphasis on reading, writing and numbers, which forms a 'basic' curriculum (Bourne, 2000; Richards, 2008). Beyond this, considerable variation exists as to which aims to uphold and emphasize. Such aims include socialisation (induction of children into norms, values and traditions and other aspects of the culture of a given society); promotion of children's physical, social and emotional welfare; the formation of a disciplined, knowledgeable and skilled workforce for the future economy; and the classification of children into various categories to provide differentiated educational provision (Bourne, 2000; Richards, 2008). Generally managed by ministries of education, primary education is provided in state-funded schools, complemented by a small number of privately-funded schools (Richards, 2008).

Early childhood education – in the forms of child welfare and early education services – emerged in the 19th century in Europe and has evolved more slowly than primary education (OECD, 2006). In OECD countries, maternal or extended family care was the typical means of childrearing during most of the 20th century (OECD, 2006). Kamerman (2006) notes that, except for the eastern European socialist countries and France, the most significant developments of the field date from the 1960s. This was due to the dramatic increase in female labour force participation and the extensive developments of child and family policies in Europe and the United States. The emergence of young children from the private sphere of the family to the public policy domain is only a recent phenomenon; and the roles and responsibilities of the state and family vis-à-vis early care and education may still be unclear (UNESCO, 2006).

The differentiation of ‘education’ and ‘care’ services has occurred, due to historical reasons rather than the needs of children and families (Bennett, 2003). A distinction was made early on between ‘kindergartens’ or ‘preschools’ for middle-class or all children providing enriched educational activities prior to formal schooling, and ‘nurseries’ or ‘childcare centres’ serving as welfare measures for working-class children who required custodial care while their parents were at work (Kamerman, 2006; Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010). The division continues today notably in countries where the responsibility for ‘care’ and ‘education’ is split between different ministries or departments. A recognisable pre-primary education subsystem, usually for children ages 3-6, exists in most countries, with eligibility criteria and system characteristics similar to those in the school system. For younger children, services are more difficult to access, and are characterised by divergence in eligibility criteria, regulation, staffing, aims and programming, and providers, even within the same country. Typically, the early ‘care’ and ‘education’ sectors operate independently, resulting in children and their families facing difficulties due to distinct expectations, daily routines and practical arrangements (OECD, 2006; Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010).

Thus, primary education is a well-established, well-funded, stable and fairly uniform institution supported firmly by governments, while ECE is characterised by diversity in terms of types of provision, eligibility criteria, regulation, staffing, programmes, providers and funding sources. Underlying these distinctions, according to Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994), are the differing conceptions of the child held by these fields. In *Pre-school and School – Two different traditions and the vision of a meeting place* (1994), Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi offer a rare and important analysis of the preschool and school traditions in historical and social-historical perspectives in the Swedish context. They argue that a key difference between the preschool and school traditions in Sweden arises from the distinct constructions of the child. In the preschool tradition, it is ‘the child as nature’; and in the school tradition, it is ‘the child as (re)producer of culture and knowledge’. They maintain that these constructions influence the

view about children's learning and knowledge-building, the organisation of preschools and schools, and the contents and working methods of pedagogical activities in both settings. Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi state that the 'child as nature' conception is rooted in Rousseau's philosophy, which stresses childhood as the innocent period of human life, or the 'golden age', and which attaches importance to giving children freedom to develop and express their ideas, feelings and personalities in the here-and-now. This conception is also related to the preschool tradition's attention to the whole child as Froebel put forward, which provides a certain degree of protection against the rationality and subject-divided and cognitive-oriented work dominating the school. The authors also note the different degree to which child psychology provides the basis of the development of content and pedagogical approach: the connection with psychology is much stronger in preschools than in schools.

Landers and Myers (1989) provide a stereotypical representation of the differences between early childhood and primary education. Characteristics of ECE programmes include: informal, supportive adult-child relationships, learning through play, a mix of contextualised and decontextualised learning, use of concrete objects to teach concepts, emphasis on the process of care and learning. Features of primary education include: formal, learning through didactic teaching and memorisation, decontextualised learning, passive role in learning and school events, emphasis on results. Speaking from the US experience, Kagan (2013) refers to the inherent and distinct disciplinary professional and pedagogical orientations as sources of misunderstandings in efforts to forge linkages between early childhood education (ECE) and compulsory school education (CSE):

Firmly ensconced in a developmental tradition, ECE fosters an integrated approach to the social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive development of young children. ECE does not disaggregate these domains of development. In stark contrast, CSE espouses a disciplinary orientation that focuses on the discrete disciplines of language, arts, maths, science, and social studies. Such distinctions lead to fundamental differences in pedagogical approaches that render transitions very hard to implement... Further fuelling the different orientations of ECE and CSE are the professional orientations and training levels of their respective workforces. Often, those who work with younger children have less training than their counterparts in CSE. Moreover, historically ECE and CSE teachers are prepared for their roles according to different pedagogical traditions; child-centred play is the preferred pedagogical orientation of ECE, while CSE is characterised by a more scripted and didactic approach to learning (2013: 196-7).

Two things can be said regarding the above-mentioned analyses. First, depending on the country, the distinctions are not so clear-cut. In France where the *école maternelle*, or pre-primary schools, became part of the public education system as early as the late 19th century,

the *école maternelle* has grown to have more commonalities than differences with primary education in terms of the organisation, pedagogy, workforce training, working conditions and funding. In countries where ECE is a relatively 'new' area, its provision may resemble that of primary education partly due to the fact that ECE has not been established as a legitimate policy and professional area with a visible and specific body of theory and practice of its own. Secondly, the attempts to distinguish early childhood and primary education could be counterproductive if they place excessive emphasis on outlining their differences, instead of making similar efforts to find points of convergence on which to build bridges and explore possibilities for constructing shared understandings of children, learning and development as well as shared pedagogical practices. Similarly, the exercise of clarifying distinctiveness and learning about how things are done on the 'other side of the border' can be, and should be, turned into something positive, providing an opportunity to challenge one's own traditional and limited ways of thinking and to create new professional learning and knowledge (Britt and Sumsion, 2003).

2.4. Question of relative influence

The question of the relative influence of ECE on primary education and vice versa merits particular attention. For some authors, early childhood and primary education are not only marked by their distinctness but are also in an unequal relationship, with the latter having the tendency to exert a downward pressure on the former. This is said to result in 'schoolification' of ECE – that is, bringing into ECE the traditional aims, contents and practices of primary education (Bennett, 2006; OECD, 2006; Woodhead and Moss, 2007). Being a younger, weaker and less prestigious institution, ECE tends to be 'colonized' by the more established primary education (OECD, 2006; Bennett, 2006). It leads to an introduction of inappropriate practices in ECE by bringing a narrow focus on literacy and numeracy at the expense of other important areas of early learning and development (OECD, 2001:42), which may have a 'detrimental effect on young children's learning' (OECD, 2001: 129).

A study commissioned by UNESCO examining the experience of integrating ECE in five countries within the education sector confirms the general failure of integration efforts to bring an enhanced influence for early childhood pedagogy on compulsory schooling – that influence continues to be one way, i.e. from primary education to ECE (Kaga, Bennett and Moss, 2010: 127). OECD (2001) welcomes closer cooperation between ECE and primary education as long as the former is 'viewed not only as a preparation for the next stage of education... but also as a distinctive period where children live out their own lives' and if 'the specific character and traditions of quality early childhood practice are preserved' (2001: 129).

For Haddad (2008), the inequality of relationship between early childhood and primary education has been nurtured historically, as evidenced in the trajectory of the respective

institutions. Showing a continuous evolution, primary school has been recognised as a 'right' – that the State has an obligation to ensure children's participation as a human right – for a longer period of time than ECE, and is widely seen as a public good. With clearer objectives and a firm identity, school practice is familiar and widely accepted. By contrast, ECE does not have a continuous, linear history. Originally being a demand from the civil society, its development is characterised by 'discontinuity, inconsistencies, contradictions, parallelisms, and overlapping of responsibilities between the social and educational sectors' (2008: 35); and its identity is still in the making.

The following sections attempt to address the question of why it is important to pay attention to the relationship between these two areas.

2.5. Policy and research contexts of the importance of the relationship

Some reasons may be highlighted as to the growing importance of examining the issues of the relationship. They arise from particular policy and research contexts in which the relationship is situated. They are: 1) the expansion of participation in ECE, giving rise to concerns for better linkage between the two levels of education; 2) the adoption of lifelong learning as an overarching discourse for education development; 3) the growing evidence on the benefits of investing in ECE for later learning and equity; and 4) an increased interest in international comparisons and league tables of student achievements.

2.5.1. Increased participation in early childhood education

Already a decade ago, most children in OECD countries attended ECE services for at least two years prior to primary schooling (OECD, 2001). Statistical data from Europe show that, on average in the EU countries in 2011, the participation rate of 3-year-olds in pre-primary education was 82%. Ninety-one percent of 4-year-olds participated in pre-primary or primary education. The rates for 5-, 6- and 7-year-olds were 95%, 98% and 99% respectively. Moreover, virtually all 7-year-olds participated in primary education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). The growth of participation in pre-primary education is not confined to Europe; it is a clear global trend (Woodhead, 2007). Enrolment in pre-primary education worldwide reached 184 million children in 2012, an increase of nearly two-thirds since 1999 (UNESCO, 2015). Gross enrolment rates in pre-primary education grew from 33% in 1999 to 52% in 2012, with the regions of South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing the largest increases (UNESCO, 2015). The ECE provision for children under 3 is also expanding in many European countries due to the changing family structures and increased female labour participation, although its availability far outstrips supply and is often subject to parents' ability to pay (OECD, 2012). Only 10 of the European Union

countries as well as Iceland and Norway have reached the participation rate of 33% - the Barcelona Target set for European Union (European Council, 2002) – for under-3s. The rates vary from, for example, Norway (74%) to Sweden (around 50%), Slovenia and the United Kingdom (approximately 30%), and the Czech Republic and Hungary (approximately 10% or less) (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014).

Given this situation, education policymakers are compelled to assess ECE and ensure that it provides the right kinds of experiences to children, including a successful transition to primary schooling. Kagan (2013) asserts that it is precisely now - at the time of increased attention, reform and investment in the early years – that the relationship between early childhood and primary education must be addressed, and that a fresh perspective on the issue is most necessary.

2.5.2. Discourse of lifelong learning

The interest in lifelong learning has never been so intense (Claus, 2012: 1). The discourse on lifelong learning has become globalised, with claims often made that lifelong learning is the key to both national economic competitiveness and social cohesion (Claus, 2012). Almost every OECD country, from the Republic of Korea to Canada, refers to lifelong learning and the knowledge society in its education policies (Green, 2002). According to Hasan (2012), lifelong learning is understood to have two core features: (1) a system-wide perspective that sees all continuous learning activities as part of a system of learning; and (2) a learner-driven approach in which learners are considered to have a greater say in making education policy choices. OECD's definition of the central features of lifelong learning include: i) a systemic and connected view of education covering the whole lifecycle, and ii) a multiplicity of educational goals that include personal and knowledge development, economic, social and cultural objectives, and motivation to learn as an essential foundation for learning that continues throughout life (OECD, 2004).

Given the above, learning is no longer considered to begin with primary school entry, and its continuity is to be promoted from early childhood, pointing to the importance of the relationship between early childhood and primary education. The Communication from the European Commission *Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow* (2011) recognizes that early childhood education and care is 'the essential foundation for successful lifelong learning' (2011: 1). OECD acknowledges that early childhood is an 'important phase for developing important dispositions and attitudes toward learning' (OECD, 2001: 128). Based on the lifelong learning perspective, the World Education Forum on Education for All held in 2000 in Dakar defined the expansion of early childhood care and education as the first goal to achieve in providing education for all children (UNESCO, 2000).

2.5.3. Evidence on the benefits of early childhood education

Influential on the acceptance of ECE as being part of lifelong learning is the growing body of evidence on its social, educational and economic benefits. High quality ECE has been shown to have positive impacts on personal and social development, educational achievement, health, gender equality, equity and social cohesion, employment and earning prospects, and system efficiencies (UNESCO, 2010; European Commission, 2011; OECD, 2012). ECE supports and complements families' childrearing responsibilities and facilitates female labour participation. Research evidence on the potential of quality ECE for positively impacting on the participation of later schooling, 'school readiness', skills acquisition and learning outcomes in later stages of education, educational equality and the efficiency of the education system – realised through better school retention and progression and reduced likelihood of the need for later remedial educational and social programmes (Hart and Risely, 1995; Heckman, 2008; Naudeau et al., 2011) – is particularly attractive to education ministries.

Furthermore, brain development research and effectiveness and cost-benefit studies of early childhood education and care, carried out in both the developed and developing countries, have contributed to heightened policy interest accorded to this area in recent years. Early childhood has been shown to be a period of rapid and remarkable brain development, with the brain the most malleable in the life course and highly sensitive to environmental factors, and the experiences gained in this period affect the development of the brain architecture, which lays the foundation for all future learning, health and behaviour (Shonkoff and Philipps, 2000; UNICEF, 2014; Center for the Developing Child, n.d.). Despite criticism of the designation of early childhood years as 'critical periods' by some developmental psychologists drawing from neuroscience research, the influence of neuroscience in early childhood education is rapidly increasing, fuelling 'brainification of early childhood education' and strengthening the argument for 'the earlier the intervention, the better and cheaper it is' due to savings on education and welfare costs, delinquency, unemployment benefits, and so on (Vandenbroeck, 2014). The compensatory, preventive and cost-saving effects of quality ECE have been shown in a number of studies (Barnett, 2010). Economists, including the Nobel Prize winner James Heckman, have asserted that the most productive form of educational investment is to be made in children below compulsory school age (Heckman and Masterov, 2004). The Heckman curve,¹⁵ which shows the returns on investing in different levels of education, with investment in preschool generating the greatest return, has been referred to by numerous ECE researchers and advocates.

Moreover, international assessments are adding their contributions to the evidence base.

¹⁵ See <http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/heckman-curve>

OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one of the best-known international assessments and compares the outcomes of 15-year-olds in reading competence, mathematical and scientific literacy. The PISA findings consistently showed that students with pre-primary education outperformed those even without controlling for socio-economic backgrounds (OECD, 2011). The results from the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), focused on measuring the reading achievement of fourth grader students, shows that students who have participated in ECE for longer periods of time are better prepared to enter and succeed in primary education. For most of the European countries which took part in PIRLS 2011, the data indicates that when the child spends longer in ECE, his or her reading results improve (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014). In sum, there is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of ECE, and this contributes to increased policy and investment attention to the area. However, the discourses on ECE are increasingly defined in terms of its value in future (economic and human capital) terms rather than seeing it as residing in the early childhood period itself, for children's present well-being and fulfilment.

2.5.4. Increased interest in international comparison and accountability

There is a dramatic and global growth in the interest in learning outcomes. The number of countries participating in international and regional learning assessments is increasing (Kamens and McNeely, 2010). Seen as a vital resource for nation building and competitiveness, there is keen interest in knowing and comparing educational outcomes cross-nationally. According to Kamens and Benavot (2011), who examine country participation – especially developing countries – in international and regional assessments between 1960 and 2009, participation has become global since the mid-1990s. Almost all developed countries have undertaken at least one learning assessment, while, by 2008, nearly three-quarters of all developing countries have also done so (Kamens and Benavot, 2011). There are 16 international, regional and cross-national learning assessment instruments and initiatives listed in the discussion paper prepared by the Center for Universal Education at Brookings and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012). These include PISA; PIRLS; Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), measuring mathematics and science outcomes at grade 4 and 6; Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEQ), measuring reading and mathematics at grade 6; Latin American Laboratory for Assessment (LLECE) looking at reading, mathematics and science at grade 3 and 4/6; Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) assessing reading and mathematics at age 6-16; Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) measuring basic literacy and mathematics respectively at grade 1-4; and Early Development Instrument (EDI), measuring

physical, social, emotional, language, cognitive, communication development at age 4-6.¹⁶

While many of these assessments concern primary and secondary school students, they can possibly have impact on ECE. For example, when the 2001 PISA results ranked Germany in the lower third of the league table of 32 countries, it prompted a prioritisation of ECE by the government that led to better regulation, curricula and pedagogical work of the sector (Oberhuemer, 2005). Furthermore, there is increased interest in measuring early childhood outcomes, such as through UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Early Learning and Development Scale (ELDS), the Regional Project on Child Development Indicators (PRIDI) launched by the Inter-American Development Bank in 2009. With expanding provision and increased investment, ECE is expected to account for what it produces as outcomes.

2.6. Literature on transition

As discussed in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter, there is greater concern for promoting the continuity of children's learning and experience between ECE and primary school. The start of primary schooling is one of the most important transitions in a child's life, and can be a major challenge for those who are poor and disadvantaged (Fabian and Dunlop, 2006). Arnold et al. (2006) state that often, drop-out rates are the highest in Grade 1 compared to other primary school grades in developing countries (Arnold et al., 2006), pointing to the need for improving children's experience of transition from home or ECE programme. But, how should the issue of transition from ECE to primary education be understood with respect to the relationship between the two sectors?

Through a scan of transition literature, three recent international reviews of transition were identified as providing overviews of trends in conceptions of transition, and reviewing concepts, theories and practice. These are Petriwskyj et al. (2005) *Trends in construction of transition to school in three western regions 1990-2004*, written on the basis of a review of English-language literature from USA, Australia, New Zealand and Europe between 1990 and 2004; Fabian and Dunlop (2006) *Outcomes of Good Practice in Transition Processes for Children Entering Primary School*, prepared as a background paper for the Education for All (EFA) *Global Monitoring Report: Strong Foundations: early childhood care and education* (2006), highlighting issues regarding children's socio-emotional well-being and cognitive development in the transition and outlining some practices that have been found to be successful in supporting their smooth transitions from different countries; and Vogler et al. (2008) *Early childhood transitions research: A review of concepts, theory, and practice*,

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http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Centers/universal%20education/global%20compact%20on%20learning/LMTF_Paper_1_Multi_Country_Assmts_6_July.pdf

presenting a review of the major theoretical perspectives in research on early childhood transitions.

The analysis by Petriwskyj et al. (2005) indicates that over the years, the understandings of transition have become more complex and emphasise the continuity of children's experience, partnership with stakeholders and system coherence. Transition was previously conceptualised as a set of teacher or school practices in a time-limited period around primary school entry. It was seen as a single-time change event for children and families involving a focus on initial adjustment to school and practices that supported children's preparedness and/or adjustment. Subsequently, the concept of transition as a process of establishing continuity to primary school emerged, drawing attention to communication linkages, coherence of experience, and system coherence. More recently, it has then shifted to an understanding of a multi-faceted and multi-year experience.

Fabian and Dunlop (2006) comment that, often, transition research has typically 'focused on the child's experience and how this is viewed by various stakeholders in the educational process' (p. 9), and 'there is much less research dealing with the transition process from the perspectives of parents and families' (p. 9). They suggest three aspects that make a positive contribution to the transition process. These are (i) 'activities that support learning across the transition', such as visits to primary school prior to starting, and school teachers becoming familiar with the children's background and learning before the commencement of transition; (ii) 'supporting socio-emotional well-being during the transition', such as arranging for children to move to primary school with their friends, and making children familiar with the rules, expectations and environments in school; and (iii) 'communication' between parents and teachers (pp. 13-15).

Vogler et al. (2008) present the main concepts and theories underpinning transition research in early childhood, and identify four branches: (1) developmental concepts and theories, such as those of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, and socio-cultural perspectives, such as guided participation put forward by Barbara Rogoff; (2) attention to children's transition implicated on age, gender, periods and spheres of life, such as 'rites of passage', put forward e.g. by Arnold van Gennep, and 'border crossing' introduced by Campbell Clark; (3) attention to structural influences on children's transition, including the ecological theory, put forward by Urie Bronfenbrenner, and life course theory, suggested by Glen Elder; and (4) children's participation in transition, based on interest in children's agency that informs, for example, rights-based research (Vogler et al., 2008).

What is clear from the above is that the point of departure for conceptualising transition research is children's experience, and that transition research does not necessarily involve careful and systematic attention to policy, governance and structural conditionings and

differences between the early childhood and primary education sectors. These latter concerns are central to investigations on the relationship between the two educational fields. While relationship is one factor that shapes children's experience of transition, it has a wider significance for the overall education system. It opens up possibilities of exploring 'the values, goals, concepts, understandings and practices of education' that could apply across the entire field (Moss, 2013: 2). This potentially contributes to the shaping of the whole education system and realisation of the vision of lifelong learning. Furthermore, it lends itself to an analysis that is more aware of the question of relative influence between ECE and primary education.

2.7. Types of relationship conceptualised

Different types of relationship between early childhood and primary education have been conceptualised. As presented earlier, OECD (2004) elaborated the features of lifelong learning (e.g. systemic and connected view of education covering the whole lifecycle, multiplicity of educational goals, and motivation to learn as an essential foundation for learning throughout life). However, in this work, space was not given for elaborating specific directions with regard to the relationship between early childhood and primary education. In its seminal report on early childhood education and care in 20 countries, OECD (2006) suggested three types of relationship based on its analysis of the policy, practice, philosophical traditions and aims of early childhood services: (1) pre-primary approach to early education, (2) social pedagogy tradition, and (3) strong and equal partnership. Moss (2008) discusses four possible types of relationship: (1) preparing the child for school, (2) stand off (a relationship whereby ECE holds a degree of suspicion and antagonism toward primary school due to the narrowly didactic approach seen as typical of the school), (3) making the school ready for the child, (4) the vision of a meeting place. In his recent edited volume, Moss (2013) chooses three 'pure' types of relationship and asks the authors contributing to the volume to reflect on them. These are (1) readying for school, (2) a strong and equal partnership, and (3) the vision of a meeting place. One of the contributors, Haug (2013) suggests a relationship of indifference and isolation based on his historical analysis of the evolution of the relationship in Norway – which is similar to the relationship of 'stand off' mentioned above.

It should be acknowledged that, in addition to the above-mentioned types of relationship, other types may exist or have been conceptualised. For the purpose of the thesis, the following four types have been chosen for further elaboration and discussion below: (1) school readiness, (2) ready school, (3) strong and equal partnership, and (4) the vision of a meeting place. The choice was made due to the reason that the first two models are frequently referred to in early childhood education literature (e.g. Ackerman and Barnett, 2005; Arnold et al., 2006; Dowker, 2007; Fabian and Dunlop, 2007; Kaga, 2008; Kagan,

2007; Myers, 1997; Myers and Landers, 1998; Moss, 2008; OECD, 2006; Shore, 1998; UNESCO, 2006); and that the last two models represent a constructive typology that goes beyond the first two binary models. These types are considered as ideal types, with the recognition that situations close to these typologies can be found in particular countries.

2.7.1. School readiness

The school readiness model of relationship emphasises the role of ECE in equipping young children with knowledge and skills deemed useful for primary schooling. It involves the identification of characteristics that individual children should display if they are to be considered 'ready for school'. The research consensus today is that school readiness includes development in five distinct but interconnected areas: (1) child health and physical development, (2) social and emotional development, (3) approaches to learning (e.g. enthusiasm, curiosity, persistence), (4) language and communicative skills, and (5) cognitive development and general knowledge (e.g. cognitive and problem-solving skills, such as learning to observe and to note similarities and differences) (UNESCO, 2006). While it provides a benchmark for early childhood educators, the school readiness model can involve certain risks, such as privileging literacy and numeracy skills over others, placing excessive responsibility on children and their families for school success, and failing to recognize children's individual differences (Kaga, 2008). OECD (2006) calls this model a 'pre-primary approach to early education', characterised by a focus on knowledge and skills useful for school as well as sequential and discipline-based learning processes brought down from primary education. It observes that the approach is prominent in France, the Netherlands and English speaking countries (apart from New Zealand), that it tends to favour literacy activity, teacher-initiated, large group activities and the adoption of learning standards against which to measure individual children's progress at a given time.

Several arguments are made for the school readiness model of relationship. Firstly, there is considerable attention to economic and labour market rationales, which regard literacy, numeracy and mastering of high technology as key to success in subsequent education and in the job market. This urges ECE services to be mainly concerned with early acquisitions of related skills as their main purpose and with the production of 'the flexible workforce of the future' (Moss, 2008: 225). Secondly, in contexts where populations have diverse language and cultural backgrounds and levels of inequality are high, a teaching or instructional approach, with strong focus on acquisition of basic language skills and general knowledge of the host country, may be regarded as more effective and necessary in facilitating all children to have a fair and equal start in life (OECD, 2006: 135). Thirdly, given its emphasis on school readiness skills, the model appeals to education ministries, which are generally keen to see all children enter primary school prepared to read and write and able to conform to classroom procedures and routines. Fourthly, the school readiness approach – in its most conservative

forms – is attractively simple to policymakers, in theory as well as in implementation. It is seen to require the application of certain types of human technology (e.g. developing preschool curricula, training preschool educators, setting new goals and modes of performance assessment, introducing incentives and sanctions) to steer ECE towards greater conformity to the demands of primary education, expressed in certain predefined norms and standards (Moss, 2013: 73-4).

The incorporation of ECE into primary education facilitates transition from one to the other. At the same time, it is argued that the school readiness model has certain associated problems. Children are likely to find themselves in over-formalised, school-like situations from their early ages, and are 'denied the experience of an appropriate pedagogy where they can follow their own learning paths and learn self-regulation at their own pace' (Bennett, 2007: 40). Research in France, the UK and US demonstrates that children from poor and second language backgrounds tend to do poorly in formal, instructional classrooms compared to children from literate and supportive families, and that they require an environment that can provide more individualised attention and support for their successful learning (Barnett and Boocock 1998; Barnett et al., 2004; Blatchford et al., 2002; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Piketty and Valdenaire, 2006). Emphasis on early mastery of the official language of instruction used in primary school may prevent children from socializing and building basic learning skills in their mother tongue. Research suggests that narrowing of ECE content does not correspond to the psychological and developmental needs of children, and there is wide agreement that young children learn best through meaningful interaction with caring adults, their peers and with real materials and experiences rather than the teaching of isolated skills (Bodrova, 2008; Elkind, 2007; Marcon, 2002).

Critiques of the school readiness model of relationship raise concerns about its potential effect of undermining children's potential and creativity and the utilitarian view of ECE. Moss (2013) argues that readying children to enter school and achieve predetermined outcomes 'ignores the potential with which children are born, indeed threatens to waste it, and applies a reductionist, fragmented and narrow approach, which is more about taming, controlling and predicting rather than creating learning based on movement, experimentation and meaning making' (2013: 45). Within the frame of school readiness, Vandebroek, De Stercke and Gobeyn (2013) state that the meaning and value of ECE does not reside primarily in early childhood itself and is therefore defined by what comes next – that ECE is regarded only as a transitional period for the 'real education' that occurs in primary education. Similarly, Moss (2013) writes:

ECE is, in this formulation, the lowest rung on the educational ladder, the first step of a linear process of educational progression consisting of a sequence of predefined goals, each needing to be achieved before moving on to the next. Primary or

elementary education becomes the frame of reference for ECE, especially the nearer children move to compulsory school age, just as 'secondary' or 'high' school becomes the frame of reference for the upper years of primary education, and university or college becomes the frame of reference for the upper years of secondary school. Not just standards and expectations, but pedagogical ideas and practices cascade down the system, from top to bottom (Moss, 2013: 9).

It can therefore be said that the school readiness model of relationship favours 'schoolification' of ECE services. Bennett (2013) says that in countries with split early childhood systems, where 'care' services typically for younger children and 'education' services for older children are divided, the schoolification of the latter was, and perhaps remains, the most difficult issue to resolve. However, signs or tendencies of schoolification are being reported from countries that have integrated early childhood systems, such as Sweden (Skolverket, 2004 and 2008), New Zealand (Carr, 2013), and Norway (Haug, 2013).

In the school readiness formulation, the image of compulsory school education is one that takes the average child as natural, the norm, the standards, the one that fits the system, with less expectation for dealing with diversity (Vandenbroeck et al., 2013). The concern for equity and social justice has historically underpinned and continues to underpin school readiness. However, the school readiness paradigm appears to have a contrary effect of increasing inequality and excluding precisely children it wishes to include (Vandenbroeck et al., 2013: 174).

2.7.2. Ready school

'Making schools ready for children' embodies another approach to building a relationship between early childhood and primary education. It arises from a critical questioning of the traditional school – which typically remains anachronistic in its responses to challenges of globalisation – and 'whether it needs to change its ways, both to better meet the needs of children and in response to a changing world' (Moss, 2008: 221). A 'ready school' perspective also questions the one-sidedness of the school readiness conception of educational success, which places the cause of school difficulty and failure on children as well as their families' inability to efficiently help them meet the expectations of school.

The ready school model of relationship therefore stresses the need for recognising and appreciating the learning children bring with them into primary school (Alexander, 2010). It emphasises the school's adaptation to the child's developmental needs, focuses on the school's accessibility as well as characteristics of the school environment that can encourage or hinder learning. It recognises that schools carry a major responsibility for every child's success and gives attention to aspects such as school leadership and environment, curricula,

teacher training and support, and parental and community involvement. It also advocates that the first years of primary school adopt pedagogical methods and materials used in ECE in order to facilitate transition and make primary schools more welcoming and familiar for children (Kaga, 2008).

Drawing from the definition put forward by the National Education Goals Panel (Shore, 1998), Ackerman and Barnett (2005) highlight three main features of a 'ready school':

1. *Provide necessary support to children:* A 'ready school' is attentive to the cultural, linguistic or contextual constraints that can make children's adjustment to school difficult, and is attentive to individual children's needs. It strives to make a link to children's previous ECE experiences and to adjust the teaching and learning environment accordingly. It has positive expectations about children's abilities to learn and succeed in school regardless of their socio-economic or linguistic backgrounds.
2. *Fine-tune programmes:* A 'ready school' avoids one-size-fits-all approaches to learning and teaching. It takes professional development of all staff who interact with children and families seriously, encourages them to adapt programmes to children's needs, and facilitates parental involvement in supporting their learning. It also takes responsibility for each child's success and determines the most appropriate ways to assess individual children's progress.
3. *Mobilise necessary resources:* A 'ready school' has strong and articulate leadership with the ability to determine which resources the school needs. It sees that children can benefit from support outside the school, including health care, nutrition and social services, library and museums, and seeks collaborations with providers of such services.

Vandenbroeck et al (2013) propose, based on their research involving parents of ethnic minority children in ECE in Belgium, a school readiness premised on welcoming 'a unique child', who is not 'an average child' but who will have similarities and differences compared with the 'average' children primary schools have had so far; a child with a family that will resemble and also differ from the families they know. A child, therefore, is 'fundamentally unpredictable'. For schools to be ready for that child 'means being ready for unpredictability and uncertainty and, consequently, being ready to search and to research what ECE may mean for this child and for his family' (2013: 273). The importance of working with parents as an essential feature of a 'ready school' is also shown in a study by Liz Brooker (2002) of 16 4-year-old children from low-income households in the UK. She concluded that the school ethos and the pedagogical discourse of the classroom positioned these children as unable, and that

the rich social and cultural capital that children had available to them from home and family on school entry was useful knowledge only when the inclusion of that capital was negotiated into the classroom. Often, this negotiation had to be facilitated by the children's families (cited in Carr, 2013: 150).

In contrast to the 'schoolifying' tendency in the school readiness model of relationship, the ready school model is inclined to favour primary schools adopting some of the pedagogical strengths of ECE, such as attention to well-being, emphasis on the natural learning strategies of the child (e.g. play, active and experiential learning and personal investigation), and avoidance of child measurement and ranking (Bennett, 2006) at least in the first years of primary schooling. An upward influence from early childhood to primary education is advocated, In Sweden, when preschool was moved into the education sector in 1996, the then prime minister Göran Persson spoke of ECE as the first stage towards translating the vision of lifelong learning into reality and that 'preschool should influence at least the early years of compulsory schooling' (Martin Korpi, 2005). Similarly, in Norway, school reforms that reduced the age of starting compulsory school from 7 to 6 years involved a discussion of the need for kindergarten pedagogy to have greater influence on the school: the new first grade for 6-year-olds previously in kindergarten was intended to be significantly distinct from the 'traditional' school pedagogy by being based on kindergarten pedagogy, while the subsequent four grades were to integrate the traditions of both the kindergarten and school, accompanied by an emphasis on exploration and learning through play, and introducing only gradually subject-oriented teaching (Moser, 2007).

Other examples of the ready school model of relationship include close collaboration between the 'feeder' nurseries and primary schools to establish curricular and social continuity in order to respond to individual children's needs in Denmark (Broström, 2002, cited in Fabien and Dunlop, 2006: 12). In this effort, school teachers learned about the interest of individual children through meetings with nursery staff and sharing photographs, drawings, favourite stories of children; and facilitated opportunities to make the transition with friends, which worked positively on their emotional well-being and confidence to approach new challenges in new environments. In North Carolina, in the USA, the State Board of Education, together with various stakeholders, defined 14 items (e.g. physical environment of the classroom, the curriculum, the services offered, collaboration with parents) that can help assess the readiness of schools as part of a broad readiness framework (Ackerman and Barnett, 2005).

In the ready school model of relationship, the image of ECE is not as a subordinate, but as an active collaborator, an advisor and partner for primary education. While this model appears more positive for children and their families, it is acknowledged that ECE's purpose of readying children does not have to be dismissed. Regarding the function of readying children by ECE, Vandebroek et al (2013) state that '[f]or some families, this is precisely what they

expect. Some immigrant families, for instance, do not choose child care as a 'home away from home', but precisely because it differs from the home: it is a place for learning the dominant language and for socializing their children, holding out the prospect of integration and social capital... whether ECE has this function or not, and especially *how* this function is shaped in practice, is the result of on-going negotiations between local communities, practitioners, management and policymakers – and parents' (2013: 273). Moss (2013) points out:

Educators who contest the dominant discourse, such as those in Reggio Emilia, do not dismiss literacy or other icons of school readiness. Rather, they place them into a wider context of multiple languages, which together contribute to rich learning by a rich child; and argue that literacy and numeracy call for 'theoretical perspectives and didactical tools that align themselves and are closer to children's own strategies for engaging' with these particular languages (Olsson, forthcoming). Similarly, we need not dismiss all predetermined outcomes; rather, it is important to keep open a space where movement and experimentation, lines of flight and unexpected directions can thrive, a space for outcomes that are not predetermined, that are unexpected, that provoke surprise and wonder' (2013: 64-5).

Today's conceptions of ready children and ready schools increasingly recognise that readiness of children and that of school systems are two sides of the same coin (Woodhead, 2007). The National Education Goals Panel of the USA explicitly states that reinforcing achievement necessitates *both* getting children ready for school *and* getting schools ready for the children they serve (Shore, 1998). Brown (2010: 137) states that the 'interactionist approach' to defining readiness – which understands readiness as a 'bidirectional concept' constructed from the child's contribution to schooling and the school's contribution to the child – is the frame used in the current research in ECE in the US as well as across the globe.

2.7.3. Strong and equal partnership

A third model of relationship between early childhood and primary education is the 'strong and equal partnership' model, proposed by OECD (2006). This goes beyond the binary models of readying children and readying schools, and is concerned with not only the child-school equation but also the institutional relationship.

By creating a strong and equal partnership, the diverse perspectives and methods of both early childhood and primary education are brought together, focusing on the strengths of both approaches, such as the emphasis on parental involvement, holistic approach to children's development. Such a partnership is constructed on three important elements (OECD, 2006):

1. *A unified approach to learning* in both early childhood and primary education, recognizing the contribution that the early childhood and primary school approaches bring to the child's learning and development;
2. *Early childhood education as a public good*: Early childhood education is recognised as a public good just like primary schooling and as an important part of the education process. All children have the right to access quality early childhood education services before starting primary school, as recognised in General Comment 7: Implementing child rights from early childhood (The Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005);
3. *Smooth transition for children*: Attention should be given to transition challenges faced by young children as they enter schools. There should be greater efforts on building bridges across administrative departments, staff training, regulations and curricula in both the early childhood and primary education sectors.

A unified approach to learning, adopted by both sectors and as envisioned by the strong and equal partnership perspective, is one that necessarily recognises the contribution of the early childhood approach to fostering important dispositions and attitudes to learning. It is a coming together of the strengths of both early childhood and school pedagogies. It differs from the readiness and ready school relationships in that the former is based on the idea of mutual exchange and learning, while the latter are a one-directional relationship.

In a strong and equal partnership, children's natural learning strategies, holistic attention to the child, outdoor environment as a pedagogical tool, and giving space and time for them to discover and work out solutions, used in ECE, would have as much place in a unified approach to learning, as in some sequential learning, emergent literacy and numeracy, the focus on educational goals and learning in schools (Bennett, 2013). Bennett (2007) states that children's pleasure in using the 'hundred languages of children' – a multiplicity of languages that include different modes of expressions such as words, drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, movement and music, as promoted by the Reggio Emilia approach (Edwards et al, 1998) – can be channelled positively towards readiness for school, 'without undue pressure to achieve a pre-specified level of knowledge or proficiency at a given age' (in Woodhead, 2007: 60). The Carnegie Task Force on Learning in Primary Grades (1996) refers to the potential contribution of ECE to primary school programmes as its commitment to hands-on, child-directed learning activities geared to children's individual developmental trajectories; and the potential contribution of primary school approaches to ECE as the emphasis on challenging content that characterise the best primary school classrooms (cited in Shore, 1998: 19).

Bennett (2013), the co-author of OECD *Starting Strong I and II: Early Childhood Education and Care*, who played a critical role in proposing and elaborating the 'strong and equal partnership', concludes that the four Nordic countries reviewed, i.e. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, displayed characteristics that correspond to the 'strong and equal partnership' conceptualisation. ECE was not expected to 'deliver' ready children to primary schools, but was to nurture child well-being, self-actualisation, socialisation and playful learning (including understanding and practising the uses of reading and writing). These countries had instituted 'preschool classes for 6-year-olds, staffed wholly or partly by early childhood pedagogues or teachers generally located in school, and offering a mix of early childhood education and school-like activities, before commencing compulsory schooling at the age of 7. There was no overt presence of a strong administrative concern about what children were learning. Early childhood teachers or pedagogues sought to respect the natural learning strategies of young children (e.g. learning through play, interaction, activity, and personal investigation guided by a curriculum), and used cooperative project work to give children the experience of working together and build up knowledge and more complex understandings of chosen themes. Looking across the four Nordic countries, conditions that seem to favour a relationship of equality and strong partnership are: i) a strong and coherent identity and tradition of early childhood education, cultivated over years; ii) an integrated early childhood education system for children from birth to compulsory school age governed by a single ministry or government department; iii) positive public recognition and opinion of early childhood education; and iv) highly educated workforce in both early childhood and primary education influencing and practising research (Bennett, 2013; Moss, 2013; Kaga et al, 2010).

However, Kagan (2013) asserts that partnership based on equal contributions from early childhood education and compulsory school education has not been the norm, with the latter more heavily shaping the former. Analysing the trajectory of Norway's early childhood education and its relationship with compulsory school education, Haug (2013) qualifies Norway as having experienced in recent years the kind of relationship very similar to the strong and equal partnership model of relationship only up to 2006, when the responsibility for ECE was transferred from welfare to education. Moreover, the idea of taking the best from both early childhood and primary school traditions may be too simplistic. Speaking of the Norwegian attempt to export kindergarten education to school, and relating it to the concept of strong and equal partnership, Haug (2013) says:

What I find of most interest in this situation is the ambition that it is possible to 'take' the best from different traditions and just mix them together. From a technical or instrumental perspective this could be done, just like baking a cake. You take a bit of this and that and stir it together, and a new type of 'education' grows out of it (2013: 178).

For him, the idea appears fundamentally naïve and overlooks the power of different educational traditions and of the institutions that have contoured early childhood and primary education. The values, ideas and practices do not stand on their own; these have been embedded and cultivated under different institutional conditions - for example, those related to buildings, materials, rules, norms and expectations. He argues that the different educational traditions cannot be practised independently of the conditions under which they developed (2013: 179). To illustrate this point, he provides an example of Norwegian kindergarten teachers who adopted the traditional school pedagogy of teaching, instructing and providing explanations to children more strongly than primary school teachers when they went to teach 6-year-olds in primary school premises.

2.7.4. Vision of a meeting place

'The vision of a meeting place' is a fourth type of possible relationship (referred to the 'meeting place relationship' hereafter) conceptualised by two Swedish scholars Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi in their seminal report *Förskola och skola – om två skilda traditioner och om visionen om en mötesplats* [Preschool and school – two different traditions and the vision of a meeting place], prepared for a Swedish government committee in 1994 to inform the debate about whether to extend the length of compulsory education and whether to extend it downward by lowering the starting age of compulsory education from age 7 to 6 (Dahlberg, 2013). While the meeting place relationship was conceptualised within the Swedish context, embedded in Swedish history, traditions, education systems, and so on, it is seen to have a great potential in informing the discussion and analytical methods to approach the relationship in other country contexts (Moss, 2013).

The point of departure for Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi is the inequality of the relationship between early childhood and compulsory education in which the latter dominates the former in terms of status and prestige. Central to the reflection on the relationship also are the traditions in each area, which, in their view, frame the current and future ways of working as well as prospects for changes in the relationship. In their analysis of the pedagogical traditions of each area, the authors emphasise that 'the child is always a social construction and not the actual child' (cited in Moss, 2013: 22) and that, as mentioned earlier, preschool and school have distinct constructions of the child – the 'child as nature' for the former, and the 'child as a re-producer of culture and knowledge' for the latter. With its roots in the philosophies of Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau and child development theories, the 'child as nature' conception is in line with the early childhood education tradition that values 'a holistic view of the child; free play and creativity; giving rise to free and self-confident people, free expression of ideas and feelings; fun; and the here-and-now' (Moss, 2013: 22). By contrast, the 'child as reproducer of culture and knowledge' conception considered to be held by school supports an image of the child 'as an empty vessel or tabula

rasa... [needing to] to be filled with knowledge, skills and dominant cultural values which are already determined, socially determined and ready to administer – a process of reproduction or transmission’ (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, 1994: 44, cited in Moss, 2013: 22-23). The constructions of the child affect the purposes of education, the content to provide, teachers’ roles, and the teaching and learning approaches to employ.

The authors propose an encounter between the two fields in which differences in tradition and power are clearly addressed – a pedagogical meeting place that aims to create shared understandings about each other as well as itself, and to explore what might be considered a common view that can be shared by both sectors. Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) argue that creating a common view of the child, learning and knowledge is a starting point for realizing a long-term development of the preschool and school’s pedagogical work; and therefore call for a ‘true meeting place’ to explore and shape together a similar view of the ‘learning child’, ‘pedagogy’s role’ and the ‘pedagogical work’ and the ‘value base’ on which these are built.

As with the strong and equal partnership, the vision of the meeting place is not about one dominating the other – no schoolification, nor preschoolification – but equal partners engaged in exchange and learning. What distinguishes the vision of the meeting place from the strong and equal partnership is that the former embraces the idea of co-constructing something new – the co-construction of new, shared understanding as well as pedagogical practices by bringing their own values, perspectives, experiences and practices. Although realizing a ‘true meeting place’ might be difficult, the authors do believe that such a meeting place is possible, taking Sweden as an example of what might point to this potential, for instance, conceptually linked preschool and school curricula with a common view of learning and development, and democracy as a fundamental value underpinning preschool, school and other institutions in the country.

In sum, the section has reviewed the four models of relationship, namely, school readiness, ready school, strong and equal partnership, and the vision of a meeting place. The first two are binary models – readying children and readying schools – and concerned with the child-school equation. In the readying relationship, primary education defines how ECE should prepare children, while in ready school, primary education is defined by children’s experiences in ECE. The school readiness model is more widely applied than the ready school model. The strong and equal partnership and the vision of a meeting place are concerned not only with the child-school equation but also the institutional relationship, including the curriculum and workforce relationship. Unlike the first two models, they embrace a two-way equal relationship, i.e. ECE and primary education interacting as an equal partnership and learning from each other. What distinguishes the two models is that the vision of a meeting place seeks to create something new through ECE and primary school engaged

in co-construction. Such a concern is absent in the conceptualisation of the strong and equal partnership: its focus is learning from and taking on the strengths of the other. There are potential overlaps between the four models – the concerns for readying children for school and for making school ready for children can shape the interactions and outcomes of the strong and equal partnership as well as the vision of a meeting place.

2.8. Gaps in the existing literature

Overall, the relationship between early childhood and primary education has not been a focus of much academic investigation. There is an abundance of literature on transition and school readiness, and to a lesser extent, ready school, but exploration and comparison of different types of relationship that may exist or be possible has been sporadic.

Among the literature that has a focus on the relationship, Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) is the earliest, in-depth, critical reflection on and exploration of issues related to the relationship between early childhood and primary education – in the Swedish context – undertaken through analytical methods that are valuable for examining other countries. The work of Moss and his contributors (2013) stands out as the most recent, rich and critical engagement in questions surrounding the relationship informed by extended analyses of the strong and equal partnership and the meeting place relationship as well as various country case studies. The volume contains a range of theoretical frameworks that are useful for enriching the analysis and design of the thesis, such as the conceptions of the child, childhood, learning and development, Foucault's understanding of power and knowledge working through individualisation, the idea of 'borderland' and 'border-crossing' (Carr, 2013). With the exception of Carr (2013) and to some extent Vandenbroeck et al (2013), the contributions in most parts reflect macro-level, historical or/and theoretical perspectives.

There is a potential value in having more empirical studies investigating the relationship, grounded on the view and experiences of the stakeholders concerned with shaping and providing early childhood and primary education. Further comparative work on the relationship would be of value in testing the models' applicability. The aforementioned volume edited by Moss (2013) contains a valuable collection of single case studies, but does not include any chapter based on a cross-national comparison. OECD (2006) is an important report based on reviews of 20 countries, with insights still of relevance today, but some of the statements may no longer reflect the current situations; moreover, it does not involve in-depth investigations looking across relevant subsystems of each of the countries in a systematic way, such as provision, entitlement and access, curriculum, workforce qualification, training and working conditions, financing, inspection and monitoring, and governance.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

3.1. Introduction

The chapter aims to develop a conceptual framework that helps address the research questions of the thesis and informs the policy and empirical analyses undertaken in the study, namely the analysis of relevant policy documents (presented in Chapter 5) and that of key stakeholder interviews (presented in Chapter 6). The framework highlights a set of key concepts that are drawn from two fields of literature: globalisation and the social construction of the child. In so doing, it considers the following theoretical question: whether and how globalisation and the image of the child influence the policy regarding the relationship as well as stakeholders' views and experiences regarding the relationship.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it presents the reasons why globalisation and the image of the child have been chosen for the development of the conceptual framework. It then explains the linkages between these two fields of literature. Secondly, it describes how globalisation has impacted on education and looks at two effects in particular: (1) globalisation of values and ideas of education, and (2) globalisation of educational governance. It suggests how some concepts related to globalisation will be useful for the policy and empirical analyses of the thesis. Thirdly, the chapter provides a definition of the sociology of childhood and describes the changes in the social construction of the child over time in social sciences. It then considers the social construction of the child as discussed in ECE and explores how some concepts related to the image of the child will be useful for the policy and empirical analyses of the thesis.

3.2. Rationales for and linkages between the two fields of literature

The reasons for choosing these two fields of literature are as follows: Globalisation, defined as consisting of cross-national and erratic flows of capital, labour, services, goods and ideas (Ball, 1998), has a profound impact on different aspects of life, including education. It involves an increasing globalisation of educational ideas and policies through globalised education governance in which international organisations play an important role. A significant impact of globalisation on education is the demand for skills and qualifications required for performing in the high value-added sector – which constitutes the so-called knowledge economy – ‘in order to survive in the global economic competition’ (Green, 2002: 14). This calls for tying education more closely to national economic interests (Ball, Goodson and Maguire, 2007) so as to construct the knowledge economy and promote human capital development. In fact, globalisation is characterised by prioritisation of the economic dimensions of nation-states' activities above all others (Dale, 2007). Another important impact is the diminished power of

nation state to define their education policy – termed ‘decoupling of education from direct state control’ (Ball, Goodson and Maguire, 2007: xi) - and the strengthened power of international organisations to influence it (Green, 2002). These globalisation effects are particularly relevant to this study, as they support particular kinds of educational ideas and policies associated with economic neoliberalism. Therefore, my task here is to explore key concepts related to globalisation to see whether globalisation might have a tendency of supporting a certain kind of relationship between early childhood and compulsory education built upon particular kinds of ideas, purposes and management of early childhood and primary education.

There is a growing academic interest internationally in the social construction of the child, in particular through the sociology of childhood, which began to be established in the 1980s (Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig, 2011). In the sociology of childhood, children are understood not as actual children but a social construction reflecting the social, economic, political and cultural circumstances at a given historical time and place. The social construction of the child influences the manner in which policies and services are shaped, prioritised and governed (Jones, 2008).

The value of applying the social construction of the child approach in examining the issue of the relationship between early childhood and primary education was demonstrated in the Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) paper, discussed in Chapter 2. The paper begins with an analysis based on the premise that Swedish preschool and school work with different images of the child: child as nature in preschool, and child as reproducer of culture and knowledge in school. These images affect decisions about appropriate purposes of preschool and school, teachers’ roles, pedagogical approaches and institutional environments; and have serious implications for constructing a new relationship between the sectors. While their analysis applies only to the Swedish case, their method can usefully be applied to analysing the relationship in other countries. The present thesis finds inspiration in this work of Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi as well as other more recent writings that work with the social construction of the child in the development of ECE, such as in the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia (e.g Rinaldi, 2006).

Two linkages can be suggested between these fields of theoretical literature. Firstly, both the globalisation and the sociology of childhood literature emerged around the 1970s. According to Robinson (2007), globalisation studies arose around several sets of phenomena, such as ‘the emergence of a globalised economy involving new systems of production, finance and consumption and worldwide economic integration, global political processes’, ‘the rise of new transnational institutions, and accompanying spread of global governance and authority structures of diverse sorts’, and ‘new social hierarchies, forms of inequality, and relations of domination around the world and in the global system as a whole’ (Robinson, 2007: 125).

Globalisation literature does not embrace a single theory of globalisation but many theoretical discourses (e.g. world-system theory, theories of global capitalism, the network society), rooted in broader theoretical traditions and perspectives such as Weberianism, Marxism, postmodernism, critical and feminist theory (Robinson, 2007). Meanwhile, the sociology of childhood emerged as a response to the traditions of social sciences that existed before the 1970s, which conceptualised children and childhood in terms of 'instability, dependency, passivity and vulnerability' (James, 2011: 35). The paradigm shift took place in the 1970s and 1980s, which increasingly recognised children's active role in human development and the importance of 'here-and-now' as well as the future for children (Qvortrup, Corsaro, Honig, 2011; James, 2011). The process of negotiations around the Convention on the Rights of the Child that commenced in 1979 was crucial for the establishment of a new sociology of childhood in the early 1980s (Qvortrup, Corsaro, Honig, 2011).

Secondly, both globalisation and the social construction of the child suggest possible influences on the relationship, although the types of influence are very different. Globalisation points to common, cross-national forces and directions, while the social construction of the child points more to national and local differences reflecting particular traditions and cultures. Possible influences of globalisation are expected to be more direct and explicit, as well as stronger on a policy level rather than an individual level. By contrast, possible influences of the social construction of the child may be more indirect, operating through culture and tradition, and impacting more strongly on the views and experiences of individuals regarding the relationship.

3.3. Globalisation

3.3.1. Globalisation and the dominance of the economic interest

Although globalisation involves 'transformations in the very texture of everyday life' (Giddens, 1996: 367-8), it represents, to a large extent, a 'triumph of the economy over politics and culture' (Burbules and Torres, 2003, cited in Ball, Goodson and Maguire, 2007: x). Globalisation during the last 30 years is known as neoliberal globalisation, 'driven by an ideology that promotes markets over the state and regulation, and individual advancement or self-interest over the collective good and common well-being' (Lingard, 2009: 18, cited in Ball, 2012: 2). Neoliberalism gives rise to a set of practices organised around 'a certain imagination of the "market"' as a basis for 'the universalisation of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives of the discourse and/or practice of commodification, capital-accumulation and profit-making' (Wood, 1997, cited in Ball, 2012: 3). States are transforming themselves to what Cerny (1997) calls 'competition states' (cited in Dale, 2007: 67), characterised by prioritisation of the economic

dimensions of their activities above all others. The importance of building a knowledge economy, realising lifelong learning and supporting human capital development in order to improve individuals' 'knowledge stock, skills level, learning capabilities and cultural adaptability context' (s: 80) becomes important for strengthening national economic performance and thriving and succeeding in the global economy. However, Ball (2012) points out that there is nothing natural or inevitable about neoliberalism.

3.3.2. Globalisation as a heterogeneous process

Globalisation is not a unitary causal mechanism that uniformly affects all countries, populations and aspects of life. It can be considered a complex process in which many different forces are operating on many scales (Ball, 2007). Effects of globalisation vary from country to country, locality to locality, depending on institutional traditions, cultures and structures (Van Zanten, 2002). Clearly, different sectors of national societies are more likely to be affected by changed global dynamics than others and in distinct ways. Also, some global effects are more direct than others and more narrowly focused on particular organisational structures, such as in the case of the work practices introduced by Transnational Corporations (Dale, 2007). Policy ideas are received and understood differently within different political architectures, national infrastructures and ideologies, and business cultures (Ball, 1998: 126-127). It is essential to recognise the importance of national societal and cultural effects in the way that globalisation impacts. Dale states: 'Globalisation may change the parameters and direction of state policies in similar ways but it does not inevitably override or remove existing national peculiarities (or different sectoral peculiarities within society)' (Dale, 2007: 68).

3.3.3. Globalisation and education

As mentioned earlier, education is becoming tied to national economic necessities – or the necessities of competition – due to globalisation. Education is increasingly a site of production and reproduction in connection with the knowledge economy (Ball, Goodson and Maguire, 2007), with its priorities being reorganised to make them more competitive (Dale, 2007). Seller and Lingard (2013) state that globalisation is bringing about 'economisation of education' and 'educationalisation' of economic policy (Takayama, 2013: 540). Among the globalisation influences on education that are associated with neoliberalism, as suggested by Ball (1998: 123), are (1) ideologies of the market; (2) new institutional economics using devolution, targets and incentives combined; (3) performativity, i.e. a steering mechanism which is indirect steering or steering from a distance, which replaces intervention and prescription with target settings, accountability and comparison; and (4) new managerialism involving the insertion of theories or techniques of business management, and the cult of

excellence into public sector institutions, emphasising quality, being close to the customer, and the value of innovation. In a similar vein, Carter and O'Neill (1995, cited in Ball, 1998: 122) have identified five elements that bring about a shift in the relationship between education, government and politics in Western post-industrialised countries. These are: (1) tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade to strengthen the national economy; (2) improving student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies; (3) having more direct control over curriculum content and assessment; (4) diminishing the costs of education for the government; and (5) augmenting community input to education by closer involvement in school decision-making and market choice pressure.

3.3.3.1 Globalisation of education values and ideas

While globalisation is a heterogeneous process, with regard to education, there is convergence of its policies between countries with very different political and social welfare histories, something that can be called 'a global education policy' – 'a generic set of concepts, language and practices that is recognisable in various forms and is for sale' (Ball, 2012: 115). Suggesting a global trend toward a convergence in thinking about educational values, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) observe that policymakers and experts coming from different social, political and economic traditions frequently put forward similar diagnoses of and solutions to the problems facing education systems, rooted in neoliberal orientations, such as privatisation. In education policy discourses, focus has shifted from democracy and equality to efficiency and accountability, with a stronger emphasis on human capital formation, required by the building of the knowledge economy. This has not involved the abandonment of the values of democracy and equality, but rather, their rearticulation and subordination to dominant economic concerns. Similarly, David Labaree (2003) states that education has traditionally involved struggle over three competing values: democratic equality, social mobility and social efficiency. Labaree maintains that these are not mutually exclusive, and are interpreted differently by different countries. In addition, one has been dominant over the others over the course of history; however, the social efficiency view of education seems increasingly prominent in recent years.

Globalisation has given rise to a new human capital theory that entails a reconceptualisation of the very purposes of education. This theory responds to the requirements of the global economy as well as to the 'competitive advantage of individuals, corporations and nations within the transnational context' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 80). Increasingly, performance is connected to people's knowledge base, level of skills, learning capabilities and cultural adaptability, which in turn call for education and training policy frameworks that better align with the evolving nature of economic activity. Requirements to produce different kinds of persons – lifelong learners who are flexible, adaptable, mobile, cosmopolitan, interculturally confident and competent, being able to work creatively with knowledge (OECD, 1996) – are

greater than ever. Education is strongly linked to the instrumental purposes of human capital development and economic self-maximisation (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 81) while its relationship with ethical and cultural issues continues to exist but 'within the broader neoliberal social imaginary' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 81).

Children as human capital in the making and early education as a smart investment strategy has also entered the discourse in early childhood education and care. OECD's advocacy brief entitled *Investing in High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*¹⁷ highlights that 'ECEC has significant economic and social payoffs' as the very first rationale. It reads: 'Why talk about ECEC as an investment? An investment is simply a way of looking at costs and benefits of different periods of time. So if you spend a dollar, euro or yen today on ECEC, what benefits can you expect this spending to generate in future years? Benefits can be financial benefits or non-monetary 'in-kind' benefits' (p. 1). The 'Heckman curve', showing that the greatest investment returns are to be generated in preschool years, is presented in this OECD document as well as in numerous advocacy materials published by national and international entities. Penn (2011) argues that the recent narrative about early childhood development by major international NGOs, in particular the World Bank, is derived from human capital theory which focuses on economic productivity, and emphasises a neoliberal approach of enabling individual success and striving. Science is often portrayed as the most important and infallible base for promoting and developing early childhood programmes in international advocacy literature, such as the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (2013), and UNICEF's *Building Better Brains* (2014). These kinds of discourse are also found in national policy statements (Moss, 2015). These claims, influenced by neoliberal orientations, have been critiqued by authors, such as Penn (2002), Dahlberg and Moss (2008) and Moss (2015), as uncritical, one-dimensional, linear, instrumental and technical in nature, employing a reductionist logic that cannot embrace complexity and context.

Furthermore, globalisation is supporting a particular notion of lifelong learning which is useful for increasing economic efficiency of individuals and societies and which serves the knowledge economy. To thrive in the global economy, it is considered vital to make learning continuous and not restricted to formal learning, since the creation of wealth - of individuals, corporations and nations - is viewed proportionate to their capacity to learn and share innovation (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Thus, the contemporary notion of lifelong learning is linked to different claims about the knowledge economy, located within 'the neoliberal imaginary of globalisation' (ibid: 82). However, the idea of lifelong learning is not new. It first emerged in the 18th century, and has been elaborated by thinkers, such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, as well as by the special commissions set up by UNESCO that produced the Faure report on lifelong education (1972) and the Delors report (1996) conceptualising

¹⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/48980282.pdf>

learning throughout life. While embodying different approaches, each assumed that education should be continuous if it is to serve broader social purposes. Nevertheless, the recent ideas of lifelong learning embrace a systematic offering of learning pathways from early childhood. They are predicated on the assumptions of social efficiency, considered largely in terms of economic efficiency, and linked to the production of 'self-responsibilizing' individuals (Rose 1999, cited in Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 85). Moreover, they are deemed necessary as a way of establishing an informed and self-reflective community, but also 'as an investment with which individuals, corporations and nations can maximize their economic advantage' (ibid: 86).

3.3.3.2. Globalisation of education governance

The above-mentioned education values and ideas are transferred through several mechanisms of globalisation. Dale (2007) suggests five such mechanisms, including dissemination, standardisation, harmonisation, installing interdependence, and imposition (pp. 76-80). As part of globalisation effects, these mechanisms are characterised by the locus of viability being outside of nation states, the use of less direct forms of power, being externally initiated and extending to policy goals as well as policy processes. Intergovernmental organisations play an important role in shaping particular discourses on education, such as that of 'imperatives of the global economy' for education, and have become major sites for the organisation of knowledge about education (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 79). Exploration, exchange, promotion and steering of particular values and ideas across national borders have been facilitated by the development of ICTs (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

Globalisation has thus brought about an expansion of policy space, diminished power of nation states, and multiplication of actors with different levels of power. The locus of policymaking has become unclear, and policymaking processes are increasingly exposed to power games in an expanded field of influence over policy (Ball, 2012: 8). Education is more open to outside control (Levin, 1998); and particularly, small and fragile states see their capacity to steer their education system diminishing. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) state: 'Policies are developed, enacted and evaluated in various global networks from where their authority is now aptly derived' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 338). Therefore, with globalisation, there is the emergence of a conception of the globe as a single space: there is a move from government to 'governance' operating with multiple actors, but with international organisations (e.g. OECD, EU), multinational corporations and think tanks increasingly playing a role in defining education policy (Lingard et al., 2013).

For example, OECD's PISA is functioning as a regulatory mechanism of national education systems, offering universal solutions, i.e. 'best practices', generated out of PISA's data analysis (Lingard, et al., 2013). Starting with 45 countries and economies in its first round, the

number of participating countries and economies increased to 65 in the 2012 round.¹⁸ PISA increasingly has the power to 'induce changes in how nations and states organise public education, to what ends, and in what spirit – and whether to do so according to emergent international standards' (Meyer and Benavot, 2013: 7). The claim that PISA assesses the quality of a nation's school system and generates politically and ideologically neutral and disinterested data is contested. Concerned with PISA's dominance in the global educational discourse, critics see a risk of producing an 'unprecedented process of worldwide educational standardisation for the sake of hitching schools more tightly to the bandwagon of economic efficiency, while sacrificing their role of preparing students for independent thinking and civic participation' (Meyer and Benavot, 2013: 7).

Ball (2003) speaks of 'policy technologies' that constitute a politically attractive alternative to the state-centred, public welfare tradition of educational provision. These technologies are: (1) the market, (2) managerialism, and (3) performativity. Performativity can in fact be considered as a technology, a culture or a mode of regulation that 'replaces intervention and prescription with target setting, accountability and comparison' (Ball, 2003: 215-6). Similarly, Levin (2007) suggests three common elements in many reform packages: (1) decentralising authority to schools and creating school or parent councils to share that authority, (2) various market-like mechanisms, and (3) increased use of achievement testing and publication of the results, together with more centralised curriculum (Levin, 2007: 50). Increasingly dominant is the role of numbers and statistics in such technologies through which surveillance can be exercised in the name of improvements in quality and efficiency (Ball, 2012: 98).

However, the nation state is still a valid unit of analysis, and exerts influence over national policy development and implementation (Ball, 2012). While globalisation constitutes a powerful process, it does not lead to the disappearance of national state policies. It is difficult for nation states to avoid global pressures to change their education policies and systems in specific directions; but they are able to adjust and transform them to fit national purposes and opportunities. The influences of globalisation on nation states are far from uniform, and local processes are also very important (Van Zanten, 2002: 97). As evidenced in a number of studies, globalisation 'does not inevitably override or remove existing national peculiarities' (Dale, 2007: 68) and leaves the possibility for nation states to interpret and act differently from others. It should also be noted that the same international organisations may provide advice based on distinct philosophical orientations on the same issue, as shown, for example, in the comparison between the work of *Starting Strong I and II* and the work on *Babies and Bosses*, produced by different divisions of OECD (Mahon, 2005).

¹⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/aboutpisa/pisaparticipants.htm>

3.3.4. What globalisation means for the study

Globalisation literature provides, in the main, two angles from which to approach the study. Firstly, the kinds of educational concepts, values and ideas promoted by globalisation, which in turn have an impact on the definition of the conceptualisations and purposes of early childhood and primary education, and, ultimately, the relationship between the two sectors. Secondly, the role of international organisations, which is increasing through globalisation, in affecting national policies and discourses concerning education, ECE and primary school.

With the shift from 'government' to 'governance', involving an emergence of the globe as a single space, through which particular education discourses are disseminated, globalisation could produce common forces operating on study countries France and Sweden. It contributes to a reconceptualisation of ECE and school based on concepts it promotes, such as knowledge society, human capital formation, lifelong learning in its contemporary definition, and economic efficiency. This justifies the notion that the values of ECE and school do not reside in the school and primary schooling respectively, but in a distant future. Conceived to serve future purposes, globalisation may push the countries to adopt the idea of ECE as a preparation for the next educational stage and for the future, which fits a model of school readiness relationship. Furthermore, it can be hypothesised that the impact of globalisation on the relationship is a direct one, felt more at the policy level, through its effects being variable on the two countries due to the different ways in which they appropriate concepts and ideas promoted by globalisation because of their differences in culture and tradition.

3.4. Image of the child

3.4.1. Definition

Social construction can be defined as 'a theoretical perspective that explores the ways in which 'reality' is negotiated in everyday life through people's interactions and through sets of discourses' (James and James, 2008: 122). Thus, it is the idea that different 'realities' arise from the interactions people have with each other and their environment. This perspective provides that the image of the child is constructed differently by different societies; it can also differ within society varying from locality to locality. It can also vary at particular historical moments. Oberhuemer (2005) states that our conceptions of childhood and young children are profoundly embedded within specific historical, geographical, cultural, political and economic contexts, as well as within certain sets of values and societal norms. 'While childhood is a biological fact, the way in which childhood is understood, is socially

determined', and 'childhood is constructed both for and by children, within an actively negotiated set of social relations' (Oberhuemer, 2005: 34).

Social constructions of childhood differ not only across and within societies, but also within particular 'disciplines, professions, agencies, settings and policy areas' (Moss and Petrie, 1997: 20). The image of the child has an influence on the ways services are conceived and provided; for example, the Reggio Emilia early childhood services are conceived based on the image of the child as a rich and competent (Rinaldi, 2005). Policies, initiatives and programmes reflect ideas about children and their upbringing, ideas about children's relationship with family and community, and the role of government in children's lives (Jones, 2008: 54).

3.4.2. Changes in the images of the child in social sciences

Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life by Philippe Ariès (1962) is considered a landmark study that showed the emergence of the concept of childhood as separate from adulthood during the 15th to 18th centuries. Before, infants were depicted as vulnerable but not viewed as different from adults after about ages 7 or 8. It constitutes a first historical analysis of how children and childhood have been constructed according to values within social and cultural contexts. James (2011) states that the dominant image of the child and childhood in social sciences – developmental psychology, anthropology, sociology – prior to the 1970s was that of incompleteness, becoming, instability, dependency, vulnerability and passivity. The importance of children and childhood as a category laid 'primarily in what they revealed about adult life' (James, 2011: 35). This perspective – children as 'becomings' without agency – was found in the work of scholars such as Piaget's universal stages of human development, Mead's cultural reproduction and Parsons' socialisation theory.

The paradigm shift in the 1970s and 80s gave rise to a growing recognition of children's active role in human development, the role of individuals shaping society in addition to social structures and institutions (with the rise of interpretive and interactionist perspectives), challenges against the hegemony of existing social and political relations, articulating the worldviews of different subcultural groups by feminism and anti-colonialism, and the move toward reconciling the role of agency and structure (e.g Giddens' structuration theory) (James, 2011). Significant influence came from the International Year of the Child (1979), and in particular the negotiations around the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that began in 1979 and the resulting United Nations CRC (1989).

The CRC has contributed to reframing research, policy and action with the notion of the child as active, rights holder, who has contributions to make to the people and environments surrounding her, and whose voice must be listened to and acted upon. The early 1980s

marked the take-off of social studies of childhood, which embraced a 'new childhood paradigm' characterised, among other things, 'by its critical appraisal of the conventional socialisation perspective and its intention to give voice to or acknowledge agency in children' (Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig, 2011: 4). Children as social actors means that 'children are and must be seen as active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes' (James and Prout, 1990: 8, cited in James 2011: 40).

In sum, the paradigm shift that contributed to the establishment of childhood studies involved the following changes:

- Children as becomings to beings;
- Childhood as preparation for adulthood to both preparation for adulthood and 'here-and-now';
- Children as passive to being active agent;
- Children as recipient of action to shaping and influencing action;
- Children as vulnerable to being seen as strong and resilient;
- Children as dependent, subordinate and victim to being actor in her/his own right.

This shift has freed children from the status of being incomplete, subordinate, dependent, passive and vulnerable, contributing to an expansion of research and formulation of actions based on their voices. However, Smith (2014) observes the emergence of a new conception of the child, embedded in neoliberal thinking and subject to new forms of control and surveillance. It is called the 'Athenian conception of the child', a third alternative after the two dominant models, i.e. 'Dionysian' and 'Apollonian' child, as elaborated by Chris Jenks. The Dionysian child is a child as evil, and the Apollonian child is a child as innocent. They both make a clear distinction between childhood and adulthood, and consider the child malleable: in the former, child as evil can be corrected by interventions; and in the latter, the innocence of the child must be protected so as not to lose it. These conceptions are present today: the Dionysian child may be a poor, disabled, homeless or immigrant child who requires interventions; and the Apollonian child may be conformist, who meets the societal norms and expectations of 'a good child' in need of protection from harmful forces.

By contrast, the Athenian child represents a mode of governing childhood linked to advanced liberal government, in which 'ideas about children's agency can be deployed in the kinds of instrumental, future-oriented strategies that the image of the child as 'competent social actor' was developed to counter' (Smith, 2014: 34). There is less clear distinction between childhood and adulthood in the conception of the Athenian child. Being a competent agent, the Athenian child operates via responsibility and reflexivity, and is governed through the relatively novel mode of regulating children by strategies of participation and 'responsibilisation': 'The idea of the competent, participative child opens up new opportunities

for children while simultaneously facilitating forms of control which place potentially onerous responsibilities upon the young ... which can be taken up in ways that can burden or disadvantage children' (Smith, 2014: 31). The contradictory and simultaneous presence of freedom and control is linked to the idea of governmentality in which individual freedom itself operates as a form of control, or, in the words of Rose (1999), 'sovereignty over the self' (cited in Smith, 2014: 31).

3.4.3. Images of the child in early childhood and primary education approaches

Early childhood policies and practices are shaped by competing images and discourses of the child, informed by different perspectives among which the most influential have been (1) the developmental perspective; (2) the political and economic perspective; (3) the social and cultural perspective; and (4) the human rights perspective (Woodhead, 2006). The first stresses the regularities of the child's psychological and physical development in the early years despite different cultural and socio-economic environments, and places emphasis on dependencies and vulnerabilities. An ECE approach informed by this perspective is developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), which sees the child as universal and going through Piaget's fixed stages of development. Other approaches embracing the developmental perspective are the child as nature and innocent (Rousseau, Froebel and Montessori); the child as tabula rasa and empty vessels (Locke); and the child to be trained and to internalise the already known (Skinner).

The second, i.e. the political and economic perspective, consists of translating developmental principles into social and educational interventions on the basis of economic models of human capital. Many of these interventions are about testing the hypothesis that intervening in the formative early years can compensate for disadvantages, equalize opportunities, and provide a head start for poor and disadvantaged children. Examples are High/Scope Perry Preschool Study and Head Start experimental evaluation. Early childhood intervention as having the best investment return is expressed within international early childhood policy initiatives, notably those of the World Bank (Woodhead, 2006: 14-15). This discourse links with an instrumental view of the child and a vision of early childhood as a technical strategy underpinned by 'belief in the power of science to prescribe for children's needs and development, along with curricula and assessment technologies appropriate to this grand project in social engineering' (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005, cited in Woodhead, 2006: 16).

The third, i.e. the social and cultural perspectives, sees early childhood as constructed, therefore, the understandings and practices vary, with attention directed to what goals, models and standards are set by whom. It is marked by the recognition of diversities in childhood; child development as a social and cultural process as much as it is natural; and childhood as socially constructed. The child is seen as influenced by and interacting with

others as much as influencing the surrounding, as suggested by Lev Vygostky and Barbara Rogoff. Rather than seeing childhood as a universal, decontextualised process of growth and development, it emphasises children's engagement with a range of settings, relationships and activities in a given socio-cultural context. Recently, early childhood thinking has also been influenced by critiques informed by social constructionist, post-modernist and post-structural perspectives, 'liberating early childhood from narrow conceptualisations of what is natural, normal and necessary, and opening the way to a more historical and political perspective on institutions, policies and practices, as well as on the ways theories, knowledge and beliefs about young children regulate their lives (Qvortrup et al., 1994; James and Prout, 1990; cited in Woodhead, 2006: 21).

The fourth, i.e. human rights perspective, reframes theoretical, research, policy and practice approaches in ways that hold in respect the child's dignity, entitlements and capacity to contribute (Woodhead, 2006). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 established a new kind of universal standard, and – as discussed earlier in relation to the sociology of childhood – had a significant impact on how research, policy and practice are framed. The rights perspective is not about charity toward the needy and dependent child, nor about viewing the child as a mere recipient of services and protection and subject of social experiments. It is based on important general principles, such as the right to survival and development; non-discrimination; respect for views and feelings; and the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. It marks a radical departure from a conventional, instrumental paradigm, notably through recognition of children's entitlement to quality of life, respect and well-being.

3.4.3.1. An example of applying the social construction of the child framework to analyse the relationship

I now return to Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) in more detail since it is a crucial document for my thesis. As mentioned in Chapter 2, *Pre-school and School – Two different traditions and the vision of a meeting place* (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, 1994) is a unique paper that adopts a social constructionist approach to analyzing the relationship between early childhood and primary education in Sweden. They state:

it is clear that the view of the child is a construction of the prevailing times' culture and social relationship, and the prevailing knowledge about people and how it is interpreted and used. The child is always a social construction and not the actual child. The conception of what the child is and what one child needs in order to

develop in the best way possible is always interwoven in different social practices at different levels and in different social and historical situations.¹⁹

At the centre of their analysis is the existence of distinct and opposite images of the child held by preschool and school. They suggest that the Swedish preschool and school embrace different constructions of the child – ‘the child as nature’ in the preschool tradition, and ‘the child as reproducer of culture and knowledge’ in the school tradition. The former is a ‘scientific child’, developing according to his or her own pace, choosing the contents and forms of expression, and for whom freedom is important. The latter, by contrast, is the one facing the dominant and knowing teacher instructing the child and inducing him or her with right answers – an image of the child that fits the readiness for school discourse (Moss, 2013). Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi assert that ‘preschool resisted the image of the child as defined by school, and took up an opposite image of the child for its own field’. Also important to their analysis is the inequality between ECE and primary school; in fact, the dominant prestige and status of the school was the point of departure for their paper.

Moreover, Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi argue that this difference in the images of the child held by preschool and school has serious implications for creating a new relationship between them, since the images of the child influence the kinds of content, working methods and organisation of preschool and school should adopt. They argue that we should ask, in every historical period, the question about the relationship between the pedagogical activities for preschool and school and what we want for our children’s ‘here and now and the future’.

The ‘solutions’ which we choose as answers to the value questions are mirrored partly in our view of the child’s potential, societal rights and position in the society, as well as how we in the pedagogical practice can, in the best way, increase the children’s rights, partly our understanding of the now and the future and how one can meet the demands which the process of societal modernisation is placing on children and youth.

Thus, for Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, the question of what image of the child for preschool and school is essentially a political question, since it reflects particular ideas about the mandates, organisation and processes of the institutions. The political nature of this question also arises from the insight that the choice is subject to ‘how well the alternatives and decision areas can be described, analysed and understood’. In other words, it concerns power relationships that are working around preschool and school in a particular time and context. At the same time, the choice is dependent on the traditions, routines, values and identities of the institutions as it should resonate with these elements. Indeed, one encounters

¹⁹ The quotes from the Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi paper (1994) included in the thesis do not have page numbers indicated. The paper was originally written in Swedish, and its English translation does not provide page numbers.

difficulty in creating a new relationship which is not within the dominant discourse. Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi refer to an experience from Norway, documented by Peder Haug,²⁰ where preschool teachers coming to teach in school adopted the teaching style dominant in school, such as instructing children and explaining more than in preschool.

To pursue a long-term development of the preschool's and school's pedagogical work, then, Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi argue, effort toward constructive change starts with establishing a common view of the child, learning and knowledge through a creation of a 'true meeting place' – 'where preschool and school have a similar view of the learning child, pedagogy's role, and the pedagogical work and which is built on the same value base'. The common view of the child proposed by Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi is the child as a constructor of culture and knowledge, an investigative child who is rich, competent and curious, a 'child filled with desire to learn, to research and develop as a human being in an interactive relationship with other people'. They also suggest that a common view of the teacher be adopted, that is matched with that of the child, for example, that the image of the teacher as an 'investigative teacher'. The kind of pedagogical activity that emerges from these views would be characterised by 'a research, reflective and analytical approach at different levels' and involving continual discussions between professionals of both sectors. For them, it is important that reforms of preschool and school have a close connection with the view of the child and knowledge that one wishes the organisation to evoke. To do so, they state, preschool and school should 'gather around a living pedagogical value-base and practically applied philosophy... a philosophy which has a wide support from the personnel, parents, leadership, and politicians in the municipalities'.

3.4.4. What the image of the child means for the relationship

Like the concepts related to globalisation, those related to the social construction of the child have an impact on the relationship. However, the ways in which they impact are arguably different. Applying the social construction of the child to the analysis of the relationship between early childhood and primary education may help explain the differences between France and Sweden with regard to their policy and perspectives of stakeholders regarding the relationship. Recognising the image of the child as the result of the particular social, cultural and economic circumstances, traditions, routines and identities in which it is found, it can be expected that France and Sweden uphold different images of the child for early childhood and primary education, influencing the two sectors and their relationship.

In contrast with globalisation, which seems to operate more at the policy level, the social construction of the child would appear to operate more at an individual and local level,

²⁰ This experience is also referred to in Haug (2013).

explaining the co-existence of diverse images of the child and allowing alternatives to be present. Therefore, while certain images of the child are promoted at the policy level – which give rise to a certain type of relationship between early childhood and primary education – it is possible for individuals and groups of individuals to aspire to and embrace alternative images of the child in their daily work and practices concerning children. The images of the child held by individuals may be the result of personal adherence to certain pedagogical approaches or personal engagement in certain communities of practice (e.g. professional associations such as the Reggio Emilia Institute in Sweden). They may be shaped through continuous development opportunities (e.g. research conferences, training workshops) or experience of encountering and working with professionals engaged in certain pedagogical practices. They may be similar to those promoted by the policy due to the latter's influence. Or, they may be in opposition to those upheld at the policy level because of personal resistance against the latter. It can be said that individuals' lived experience of relationship is affected by both the images of the child held individually as a result of personal preference and experience and the policy that governs ECE and primary education.

3.5. Conclusion: how the chosen theories can help the data analysis

This chapter has explored globalisation literature and discussed some concepts associated with globalisation that may help explain cross-national differences and changes over time with regard to the relationship. It has also explored the sociology of childhood literature and discussed the possible relevance of the social construction of the child to understanding the relationship, including the policy and the views and experiences of stakeholders concerning the relationship.

I argued that both fields of literature are useful in understanding and explaining the cross-national differences and changes over time, but that they affect the relationship in very different ways. Globalisation points to common cross-national forces on education, promoting particular education ideas and values (e.g. knowledge nation, lifelong learning), with an in-built tendency for promoting a readiness relationship across countries, partly due to the influence of international organisations. Its effects are also more direct at the policy level, compared to local and individual level, as governments are exposed to international discourses that support particular kinds of education policy and governance. Furthermore, although globalisation tends to bring about convergence in approaching education policy and governance cross-nationally, its effects are not uniform, depending on the national and local traditions and cultures. Globalisation effects might be exerted on the relationship at the practice level through the adoption and implementation of reforms (e.g. education law, curriculum, evaluation) which reflect the instrumentalist view of education (including ECE) and which are centred on target setting, accountability, comparison and efficiency, through an enhanced use of numbers and statistics.

Meanwhile, approaching the relationship from a social constructionist perspective focusing on how children are understood may help explain national differences in terms of the policy as well as views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the relationship. It also allows an understanding of differences across historical moments within countries, as well as across localities, subcultures and groups with regard to the views and experiences concerning the relationship. At the same time, the social constructionist analysis of the relationship also helps clarify which are the dominant images of the child at the foundation of the policy relationship. Unlike globalisation, the social construction of the child operates more at an individual and local level, allowing different and competing images to co-exist, i.e. opening up space for resistance against dominant images and pursuing alternatives. The images of the child held by individuals are the result not only of what the policy prescribes; they are the result of a host of factors, such as their particular experiences in being exposed to different ideas of the child, learning and education, the particular institutional contexts in which they work daily, or the level of their individual criticality and independence of thought from the ideas promoted through the policy or dominant discourses on ECE and primary education.

The hypotheses regarding the influence of globalisation and the image of the child on the relationship between early childhood and primary education, discussed above, are summarised in the table below.

Table 3.1: Hypotheses

	Globalisation	Image of the child
Hypothesis 1	Explain convergence of relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toward schoolification 	Explain differentiation of relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individuals holding different images, leading to resistance/alternative
Hypothesis 2	Impact of globalisation on relationship is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct • felt more at policy level • not uniform (due to culture and tradition etc.) 	Impact of the image on relationship is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more indirect • felt more at individual level • framed by culture and tradition

Having defined this conceptual framework, I will now turn to presenting the design and methods of the thesis, followed by the policy and empirical analyses of evidence with regard to the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden.

Chapter 4: Design and Methods

4.1. Introduction

The research questions presented in Chapter One suggested that the design should lead to a comparative understanding of policy evolution regarding the relationship as well as an understanding of the views and experiences of key stakeholders regarding the relationship between France and Sweden. Thus, the thesis adopts a two-pronged, comparative design consisting of policy analysis, presented in Chapter 5, and analysis of stakeholders' views and experiences, presented in Chapter 6. It embraces two main sources of evidence: policy documents and semi-structured interviews.

This chapter is structured as follows. It first refers to the overall two-pronged, comparative design. Secondly, it describes the evolution of the research design from the pilot to main investigation, and discusses what has influenced the final design of the study. Thirdly, it explains the specifics of the designs of the policy documents analysis as well as the empirical study consisting of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, adopted in the main investigation. It includes discussions on the issues of validity and constraints in the study design and ethical issues as relevant to the thesis.

4.2. Two-pronged comparative design

The policy analysis - covering historical and contemporary policies - will serve to identify the conceptual basis inherited from the past and clarify the emergence of themes and debates that shape the current policies in early childhood and primary education which, in turn, gives a certain configuration to the relationship between the two sectors in France and Sweden. By analysing the key policy documents, I will seek to identify the kind of policy in force regarding the relationship. The 'policy documents' are defined broadly to include legislation, official reports, circulars, government press releases, public speeches and debates, evaluation reports prepared by government agencies, and national curricula that reflect government policy, position and endorsement. The reason for analysing a broad range of documents is that a policy position on the relationship between early childhood and primary education may not be elaborated or clearly stated in typical government policy documents.

By conducting semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and analysing their responses, I aim to understand what changes in the relationship they have experienced and what their views are on the changes. As stated in Chapter 2 (Literature Review), there exists little research on the relationship that seeks the views and experiences of those who are 'recipients' (teachers and directors of school), 'mediators' (e.g. teacher educators and

inspectors) and ‘developers’ (policymakers) of policy. Thus, this aspect can be regarded as one salient strength of the study. In addition, some of the information (including photographs) obtained through the observation undertaken as part of the pilot study in France and Sweden – but not included as the final design of the main study - is supplemented to illustrate the differences between the ECE and primary school settings that serve to enhance appreciation of the relationship between early childhood and primary education.

The table below indicates data and information sources to be used in the study.

Table 4.1: Data sources used in the study

Data type	Data description	Time periods	Principal references
Policy documents	Contemporary policy documents related to ECE and primary education France and Sweden	1989-2014	Chapter 5, 7 & Appendix
	Academic literature and technical reports concerning ECE and primary education and their evolutions in France and Sweden	From late 20 th century until 2014	Chapter 5, 7 & Appendix
New empirical data	Semi-structured interviews with policymakers, researchers/teacher educators, inspectors, trade union representatives, directors and teachers in France and Sweden	June/July/Sept 2014 (France) May 2014 (Sweden)	Chapter 6, 7 & Appendix
	Observation in (1) ECE environments (2) primary school settings for 6-year-olds	2010 (France) 2011 (Sweden)	Chapter 4, 7 & Appendix

Cameron et al. (2008: 35) note that cross-national studies provide an opportunity to draw attention to taken-for-granted assumptions about the conceptualisation and operation of issues and concerns held in common across countries. They note: ‘By investigating the process by which policy agendas are developed and implemented in two or more countries, it is possible to throw light on how and why it came to be that different paths were adopted and in so doing, identify how, by learning from each other, improvements to policy and practice might be made’. The authors also claim that such studies serve as a method of assessing progress in policy and practice, making possible the questioning of key concepts and assumptions held in each country. In a similar vein, Alexander (2001) states that ‘[O]ne of the values of comparativism is that it alerts one to the way that the apparently bedrock terms in a particular discourse are nothing of the sort’ (Alexander, 2001: 512). In her study that compared nurseries in Italy, Spain and the UK, Penn (1997) refers to the strength of comparative design as enabling a deeper reflection on everyday practices that are normally

taken for granted through exploration of how other people in other settings work with young children (Penn, 1997: 4).

I have chosen to compare France and Sweden because of the similarities and differences between the two countries in ways that shape the relationship between early childhood and primary education. Both countries have a long tradition - since the 19th century - of providing early childhood and primary education services. In France, the first *salle d'asile*, which is the precursor of the *école maternelle*, was established in 1828; and the first *crèche* was set up in 1844. The *salle d'asile* was renamed *école maternelle* in 1848, and was integrated into the national education system in 1868.²¹ Primary education for children ages 6-13 was free and compulsory as of 1882 (Eurydice, 2009/2010). In Sweden, the first *crèche* and kindergarten (*barntädgård*) were established in 1854 and in the 1890s respectively (Martin Korpi, 2007). Primary school (*folkskola*) was introduced in 1842; and a decision was taken in 1895 to make 3-year primary schooling as the basis for further schooling, i.e. lower secondary education (Eurydice, 2009/2010). France and Sweden have strong concerns about linking early childhood and primary education: the former through learning cycles (*cycles d'apprentissage*) that until very recently connected the last year of ECE and the first years of primary education;²² and the latter through curricular continuity and the establishment of pre-school classes for 6-year-olds that acts as a bridge between the two stages of education. Furthermore, there are high rates of public provision of ECE in both France and Sweden, particularly in the age group 3-6.

Meanwhile, France and Sweden display a number of differences, which can highlight the taken-for-granted assumptions and practices existing in each country. For example, the statutory age for compulsory education is age 6 and 7 in France and Sweden respectively. This raises the question as to when and why each country has come to designate a particular transition age. As mentioned in Chapter 1, France has a split ECE system while Sweden has an integrated system. According to OECD (2006), France and Sweden apply contrasting approaches to relating early childhood and compulsory education. OECD (2006) designated France as the 'pre-primary approach' whereby ECE tends to be formal and is shaped by the demands of compulsory schooling; and considered Sweden to take the 'social pedagogical approach', which promotes a holistic attention to children's development, learning and well-being, aiming to bring the influence of early childhood approach into at least the first years of compulsory schooling.

²¹ www.inrp.fr

²² In July 2013, a new decree on modifying the learning cycles was adopted. Now, the first learning cycle consists of the first to third year of the *école maternelle* (ages 3-5) and the second learning cycle (called the fundamental learning cycle) comprises the first to third year of the *école élémentaire* (ages 6-8).

It is important to be aware of some challenges in designing and undertaking cross-national studies as there exist cultural and linguistic differences between countries. Based on evidence of cross-national health research, Harkness (2004) alerts us to profound cultural and linguistic differences of interpretations of research and research instruments by researchers and respondents. Cross-national studies are likely to encounter problems of a lack of conceptual equivalence between different cultures with different languages. Drawing from their research on schools involving England and Finland, Vulliamy and Webb (2009) found that certain words, such as 'whole class teaching' or 'group work' had very different meanings within the English and Finnish education systems due to the differing cultural contexts of schooling. Another example is the term 'pedagogy'. In England, pedagogy normally concerns teaching strategies, and is rarely referred to outside the context of the classroom and formal education. However, in Sweden, and much of continental Europe, pedagogy can be understood as 'education in its broadest sense', providing the overall support to children's holistic development, and is applied to a much broader set of services (Petrie et al, 2009). Preschool education (*éducation préscolaire*) in France refers to the education of children aged 2/3 to 6 provided in *école maternelle*, whereas in Sweden, it refers to the education of children aged 1 to 7 provided in preschools (*förskola*) for children ages 1 to 6 and preschool class (*förskolaklass*) for ages 6 to 7. Cameron et al. (2008: 35-36) draw attention to the value of using the first language term (and not a translation) to 'protect' the particular meanings embraced in the term and to understand the concepts and methods of a given country in detail before drawing out points of comparison.

4.3. Designing the policy document analysis

The purpose of the policy analysis within this study is to address the research objective of understanding how policies regarding the relationship between early childhood and primary education have changed from 1989 to 2014, including whether globalisation and the image of the child have had influence on the policy changes. As explained earlier, policy documents consulted are broadly defined. To gain a historical and contextual understanding of the policy changes since 1989 in France and Sweden, I also reviewed relevant secondary literature, including academic journal articles, books and technical reports, which provided information about developments concerning the ECE and primary education policies and systems in the pre-1989 period. The policy analysis will not only address the research objective concerned, but will also facilitate an understanding and appreciation of 'the participants' categories and to how these are used in concrete activities' (Silverman, 2005: 160). As Atkinson and Coffey (2004) say, the documents to be analysed are considered 'social facts' in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways; however, they are by no means 'transparent representations of organisational routines, decision-making processes, or professional diagnoses' but 'construct particular kinds of representations with their own conversations' (cited in Silverman, 2005: 160).

One main challenge in undertaking the policy analysis was my inability to read and understand the Swedish language – unlike the French language which I read and speak fluently. Thus, there was more need to rely on secondary literature written in English in achieving the Swedish analysis of the policy changes regarding the relationship. Nevertheless, efforts were made to identify and access essential, key policy documents in Swedish language for the study. For example, the article by Martin Korpi (2005) that appeared in the English language magazine *Children in Europe* made a reference to the speech made in 1996 by the then Prime Minister's speech about bringing preschool pedagogy into the first years of primary school as part of the government vision of integrating preschool into the education system. By making an internet search using the month and year of the speech indicated in the article as well as key words in Swedish such as *förskola* ('preschool'), I found a government document that appeared to be appropriate. Then, with the aid of Google Translate, I attempted to see the relevance of the document. After checking that this was most likely to be the right document, I asked a Swedish research colleague to verify it, including the way I would translate and indicate in my thesis.

The decision to focus on the policy changes between 1989 and September 2014 was based on the fact that the period covers recent policy developments that have had an important impact on the relationship between early childhood and primary education in both countries. In France, the year 1989 marked the introduction of *Cycles d'apprentissage* that grouped the years of the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* in successive learning cycles. The *Cycles* represent the government vision of educational continuity between *école maternelle* and *école élémentaire* and have affected the way teachers work within and across the two fields. In Sweden, a decisive reform took place in 1996 with regard to the relationship, through which the responsibility for preschool was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education. The inclusion of several years preceding 1996 as part of the analysis is justified on the basis that in Sweden, the transition from 'preschool as social policy' to 'preschool as education policy' emerged as early as the late 1980s, when some municipalities voluntarily made decisions to transfer the responsibility for preschool from the childcare board to the municipal school board as a response to the decentralisation policy.

4.4. Designing the empirical study

4.4.1. Initial design of the empirical study

Initially, the empirical study was conceived in two parts: the first part consisted of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and the second part consisted of observation.

4.4.1.1. *Semi-structured interviews*

A semi-structured interview is defined as having 'predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given; particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included' (Robson, 2002: 270). The choice of this method is to provide the researcher with the flexibility to adapt the questions to interviewees according to their verbal and non-verbal reactions. For example, some of the interviewees may not be familiar with the issues raised, and require more extensive explanations or additional questions; or, some responses may lead to the kinds of questions not previously considered by the researcher but which are of relevance to the research. Key stakeholders to be interviewed would include national policymakers, trade union representatives, researcher/teacher educators, inspectors, school and preschool directors and teachers from France and Sweden. These can be considered key policy actors who produce, interpret and/or enact the policy, though the degree of policy production and that of interpretation done for others differs from stakeholder to stakeholder; some of them may even have other roles as conceptualised by Ball et al. (2011). For example, junior and newly qualified teachers are in principle receivers of policy, relying heavily on 'interpretations of interpretations' (Ball, et al., 2011: 632).

The purpose of these interviews was to understand their views and experiences regarding the changes in the relationship between early childhood and primary education, including whether globalisation and the image of the child have influenced the relationship, since they started working in the field. The interview guides was shared with the interviewees prior to the interviews, which would be recorded with the aid of an audio recorder if the interviewees permit. The questions addressed to the interviewees²³ were:

- How would you describe the current relationship between ECE and school?
- Has the relationship changed during your time in the education field? In what ways? When? Why? With what consequences?
- What are your views about these changes? And the current relationship?
- How do you think the relationship will develop in the future? How would you like to see it developing in the future?
- One (Swedish) study of the relationship between preschool and school thought that each had a very different image or concept of the child. What do you think?

²³ The interview guides used for the main field study in France and Sweden can be found in Appendices 8 and 10 respectively.

4.4.1.2. Observation

Participant observation, in which I would play a 'marginal participant', i.e. 'a largely passive, though completely accepted, participant' (Robson, 2002: 318-9), was part of the initial design of the empirical study. It meant that I would adopt the role of a marginal participant while paying conscious and active attention to what can be observed. Groups of 4-year-olds participating in ECE settings and those of 6-year-olds in primary school premises were to be observed. The purpose of observation was to understand the ECE and school settings, daily routines of the groups, actors who worked in the settings, and interactions that took place with and around children. In order to record these different aspects, I was to take notes and ask for permission to photograph the physical environments (both indoor and outdoor) and some of the interactions that involve children.

The method of observation chosen was informed by the framework of descriptive observation proposed by Spradly (1980, cited in Robson, 2002: 320), Whitehead (2006) and Ofsted's study (2003) on the education of 6-year-olds in England, Denmark and Finland. It involved:

- Recording the basic information about the setting (**space**), the teacher and other adults present, and the children (**actors**);
- Making a sketch plan of the classroom (**space**), showing seating/grouping arrangements and the location and kinds of furniture, resources and materials (**objects**). If permitted, record the setting in photographs also;
- Recording and describing: **activities** (e.g. goals and content of sessions; organisation of sessions, e.g. whole group activity, group activity, or individual activity; structure and sequence of activity – including the recording of **time**; teaching approach of sessions; routines and rituals and the role of teacher and other adults; resources and materials used); **acts** (e.g. interactions between teacher, other adults and children such as feedback and assessment; roles of teacher and other adult; individual children's engagement, involvement, behaviour and actions); **events** (relevant particular occasions), **goals** (what teacher and other adults are attempting to accomplish in a session or activity such as recreation time), and **emotions** (emotions of teacher, other adults and children in particular contexts).

The observation was to be made of groups of children whose teachers would be interviewed, and was conducted prior to interviewing the teachers. This sequence gave me an opportunity to ask clarification questions regarding what had been observed to the teachers, which would help gain a better appreciation of ECE and primary school settings and practices. The observation of each group was to last an entire day. The recorded observation was to be summarised afterwards under the nine headings marked in bold above and compared cross-nationally, as well as between ECE and primary school settings.

The reason for taking the age group as the criteria – rather than the grades – was because it would highlight, for each country, what type of service and environment was considered appropriate for children at particular ages, what ECE and schools expected them to do at those ages, and how ECE and schools catered for the interests and needs of children at those ages. In France, children aged 4 are generally in the *moyenne section* (middle section);²⁴ and children aged 6 are generally in the *cours préparatoire* (first grade) of the *école élémentaire*, or primary school, which is obligatory. In Sweden, children aged 4 are grouped with children of other ages; and children aged 6 are in preschool class, which is voluntary, provided in primary school premises.

Public ECE settings and schools were chosen for observation due to the fact that the majority of ECE and school provision is in the public sector in both France and Sweden. In the former, 14% of children in the *école maternelle* were in private services in 2010-2011;²⁵ in the latter, 19% of the children enrolled in pre-school participated in independently-managed pre-school²⁶ in 2010 (Skolverket, 2011). Two sets of ECE and primary school per country – one located in the capital and another in a rural area – were considered to be observed.

4.4.2. Influences on the design

As emerged from the literature review, presented in Chapter 2, there has been little research conducted that explores the relationship between early childhood and primary education with a focus on understanding the views and experiences of education stakeholders. Thus, the empirical study was designed to include a component that would allow these to be captured.

There were a few elements that influenced the design of the empirical study. Firstly, allowing a range of views to emerge would necessitate a method and interview guide sufficiently flexible to accommodate the variation. Secondly, to be able to accommodate both interviewees familiar with the theme of the study and those who are not, the method to be employed also needed to be sensitive to individual differences. Thirdly, the fact that I was neither a native French nor Swedish speaker and that I did not speak and understand Swedish required skills that would allow close attention and sensitivity to the nuances of respondents' narratives and words.

²⁴ In some *écoles maternelles*, some classes have children of two different age groups. Such classes are called *petite-moyenne section*, *petite-grande section*, *moyenne-grande section*. They have these mixed age classes for reasons of space and pedagogy/socialization. In rural areas where there are few children, all ages of *maternelle* may be grouped into the same class.

²⁵ http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=NATSOS07101 (accessed 20 July 2012).

²⁶ Independently-managed pre-schools include pre-schools operated by private companies and by parental cooperatives. In autumn 2010, 44% of children attending independently-managed pre-schools attended pre-schools operated by private companies, while 24% attended parental cooperatives (Skolverket, 2011).

For the study to be able to seek and explore the views and experiences of interviewees that reflect their lived worlds, a qualitative research methodology was considered suitable. Qualitative research allows an exploration of complex human issues (Marshall, 2006) through studying people in their natural or usual setting, and emphasises 'concept', 'context' and 'meaning', including meanings given to individual narratives (Hantrais, 2006; Hammersley, 1992; Sandberg and Heden, 2011). The purposes of qualitative research are contextualisation, interpretation and understanding subjects' perspectives (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Thus, qualitative methods were deemed appropriate for encouraging interviewees to express and narrate how they actually view and experience the changes in the relationship, which is one of the research objectives of the thesis. The effort was to be made to interview them in their natural or usual setting, e.g. the classrooms or offices in which they work.

My language ability in French and Swedish was also an important consideration in the design of the empirical study as much as the policy documents analysis, which was referred to earlier. Not being a native French speaker but able to understand and communicate fluently was not expected to pose too much of a problem. But I was aware of the importance of being attentive to the words, expressions and nuances in the responses. I felt the need to be ready to react quickly whenever necessary; however, I expected that there would be moments when it would be difficult to probe because the flow of the conversation could go at a speed which would make it difficult for a non-native speaker like myself to react in a timely and effective fashion. To lessen the risk of such a problem, I thought of being well-prepared and versed with the questions in the interview guide, and being attentive and alert as much as possible during the interviews.

My lack of Swedish language ability would inevitably lead me to use English as a medium of communication with Swedish interviewees. I had been told that Swedish people were in general very good in English and were capable of communicating in English. Semi-structured interviews seemed helpful with regard to the language issues I would be facing – both in French and Swedish interviews - because they were considered to give more flexibility and room for asking for clarification, further elaboration, confirmation and so on. From this standpoint, it could be assumed that interviewing stakeholders individually might generate more in-depth information because interviewees would not need to be concerned about not being able to express themselves fluently or accurately in the eyes of their colleagues.

4.4.3. The pilot study and its results

The purpose of the pilot study was mainly to gain a sense of the range of themes that interviewees felt were relevant with regard to the topic of the study, which would facilitate the

construction of an initial analytical framework. Thus, the pilot study results were not meant to be generalizable to the respective population groups in France and Sweden, but were used to highlight the appropriateness of the proposed methods in light of the research aim and objectives, and to provide a basis on which to think of the theoretical orientation of the study.

The empirical study was piloted in France and Sweden at different times; the former was undertaken in April-May 2010, and the latter in February 2012.²⁷ It should be noted that the research focus and questions have differed between these two periods, and that, consequently, the interview guide used for the French and Swedish pilots differ from each other. As mentioned earlier, both semi-structured interviews and observation were used in both France and Sweden in the pilot study. The letters, interview guides and consent form used in the French and Swedish pilots are included in Appendices 1-4.

4.4.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

Convenience sampling, i.e. selecting the most accessible subjects, was used in the pilot study to identify teachers to interview and ECE settings or schools to observe. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, in their usual workplace. Except for two interviews in Sweden which had three interviewees or more at once, all were individual interviews. A total of 8 stakeholders (1 policymaker, 1 researcher/teacher educator, 1 *école élémentaire* principal, 2 *école maternelle* principals, 1 *école élémentaire* teacher, 2 *école maternelle* teachers) were interviewed in the French pilot. As for the Swedish pilot, 17 were interviewed (4 policymakers, 1 researcher/teacher educator, 1 assistant primary school principal, 1 preschool-primary school principal, 1 principal of a resource centre, 1 school psychologist, 2 primary school teachers, 3 preschool teachers, 1 teacher union representative, 2 representatives of a local authority association). The interview guides used for the French and Swedish pilots can be found in Appendices 1 and 3 respectively.

The method utilised to analyse the interview data of the pilot study was inspired by the 'Framework' (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994), an analytic approach developed for applied policy research by a specialised qualitative research unit based within an independent social research institute called Social and Community Planning Research. Some of the features of the 'Framework' are: grounded in, and driven by, the original accounts and observations; open to change, addition and amendment throughout the analytical process; permitting a full review of the material collected; and allowing comparisons between, and associations within, cases to be made (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 176). Its analytical process consists of distinct but interconnected stages, involving 'sifting, charting and sorting material according to key

²⁷ The long gap between the pilot studies was due to the fact that I interrupted my studies in the academic year 2010-2011 in order to recuperate from exhaustion from excessive workload in my employment.

issues and themes' (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 177). It proposes five stages to qualitative data analysis as follows: familiarisation (to immerse oneself in the data); identifying a thematic framework (to gain an overview of the richness, depth and diversity of data and to identify recurrent themes, concepts and issues); indexing (to apply the thematic framework); charting (to devise and fill in charts, resulting in distilled summaries of respondents' views and experiences); mapping and interpretation (in view of research questions: to review the charts and research notes; seek explanation, patterns and connections; weigh salience and dynamics of issues; search for a structure).

Taking the 'Framework' method as the main reference, I first immersed myself with the interview data. During this process, I listed key words identified from the immersion process that resonated with key concepts and themes that emerged from the literature review. These key words were then categorised into (1) key terms/concepts, (2) contextual factors relevant to the relationship between early childhood and primary education, (3) significant events/reforms relevant to the relationship, (4) description of relationship. Secondly, I re-organised and summarised the interview notes under the following headings: (a) interviewee's position and background, (b) preschool/*école maternelle* past and present, (c) school/*école élémentaire* past and present, (d) the relationship between preschool/*école maternelle* and school/*école élémentaire* before, now and in the future, and (e) influences on the relationship.

4.4.3.2. Observation data

As mentioned earlier, I collected observation data using a framework adapted from those developed by Spradly (1980), Whitehead (2006) and Ofsted (2003). In the observation, I attempted to record in terms of the following nine items: space, actors, objects, activities, time, acts, events, goals and emotions, and summarised them to identify main issues that are related to my research questions. During the observation, it was possible to take photographs as, at my request, the teachers had kindly obtained permission to do so prior to my visits.

In France, the observation was conducted in one *école maternelle* classroom catering for 3-year-olds and one *école élémentaire* classroom for the first graders in Paris; and one *école maternelle* classroom catering for 4-year-olds located in a city adjacent to Paris. In Sweden, it was undertaken in one preschool group looking after children ages 1-4 and one preschool class group catering for 6-year-olds in a school located in a small town near to Stockholm.

4.4.3.3. *The results of the analyses of the pilot study*

The semi-structured interviews revealed recurrent concepts and themes (e.g. care, well-being, learning, education, child versus student, instruction, play, work, ECE having inferior status), similarities and differences between ECE and primary school which affected the relationship (e.g. governance, provision, curricula, training, inspection), types of relationship (e.g. separate relationship, mutual relationship, schoolification, ready school), and factors that affected the relationship (e.g. social inequality, international influences, national and international reputation of the French or Swedish ECE/school) from the interviewees' perspectives. They served to confirm what I had expected as important concepts and themes; however, they also generated unexpected responses, such as the view that politics was a factor affecting the relationship and that political parties had different orientations regarding the purposes of and practices in ECE and education.

The pilot study confirmed that semi-structured interviews were useful for generating a range of views and experiences regarding the changes in the relationship as well as for creating possibilities to probe and extend questions and explanations when necessary. The topic of the thesis seemed new to many of the interviewees in both pilots. Some of the interview questions appeared too abstract to some, and care was taken to elaborate the meaning of the questions. The interviews also showed that space should be kept for interviewees to speak about what they see as of concern and relevance, and that it was important to retain a certain level of flexibility with regard to interview questions and themes to be covered. Furthermore, the relationship as perceived by interviewees was sometimes very complex, taking some time for them to describe. Some other responses from interviewees regarding what kind of relationship they saw were difficult to understand and did not give a clear-cut picture, and there was a need for posing additional questions to reach an appropriate understanding and clarity.

It was considered useful to try to include, in the French sample, teachers with experience in both the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* sectors and those with experience in only one of the sectors, as it was expected that they might have different views about the relationship. However, the teachers who were suggested by the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* directors all had experience working in both levels. The directors mentioned that they deliberately chose people with such experience because the questions were about the two sectors and the relationship between them, and that responses from these people would have more relevance to my thesis due to their first-hand experience in working in both levels. The same problem was not encountered in the Swedish study because preschool and school teachers are trained separately (except for between 2001 and 2011 when the initial teacher education for preschool and school teachers were integrated).

The observation was found useful for gaining a first-hand experience of ECE and primary school settings and practices – learning environment (including furniture, teaching and learning materials, class or group arrangement, outdoor space), teacher-child ratio, teacher-child interactions, and daily routine. The photographs taken during the observation became valuable visual information that illustrates the above-mentioned dimensions within ECE and primary school settings. The experience and information gained from the observation enriched appreciation of the results of policy and interview data analyses, and deepened insights in the theme of the relationship between early childhood and primary education.

However, later, a decision was made not to include the observation component in the main fieldwork. The reason was that, during my upgrade examination, I was advised to make the study more focused on relevant dimensions of policy, and that observation was less critical to achieving the research objectives as set out in Chapter 1. At the same time, this decision made the question of sampling of ECE settings and schools irrelevant – what became important was to form a sample comprising a range of key stakeholders affecting, interpreting and implementing policy in equal or similar number for both countries. Consequently, based on the advice of the upgrade examiners and discussion with my supervisors, I considered it important that there were preschool and school teachers and directors, school psychologists, inspectors, researcher/teacher educators, trade union representatives and policymakers interviewed in equal or similar number in both France and Sweden. Judgment about whether the sufficient number of stakeholders has been interviewed would be made in view of whether the sample has attained a 'theoretical and thematic saturation' (Marshall, 2006: 524).

In sum, important decisions on the overall design of the thesis and empirical study that arose from the pilot experience were:

- the study should be a policy-focused comparative study, consisting of (1) policy analysis, and (2) empirical study based on interview analysis;
- semi-structured interviews were found to be a suitable method to use in the empirical study for its ability to address the research objective of understanding views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the relationship;
- sample of interviewees for each country would include an appropriate range of key stakeholders who were in a position to influence, interpret and implement policy;
- the empirical study of the main fieldwork would no longer include observation; however, the key insights gained from the observation data in the pilot study would be referred to in the findings of the study so as to reach a better understanding of the relationship between early childhood and primary education.

4.5. Validity and constraints of the design

Validity in the field of research can be described as 'truth' (Silverman, 2005: 210), 'goodness' or 'soundness' of the study (Miller, 2008: 910). It is an important aspect to address in order to counter the problem of 'anecdotalism' (Silverman, 2005: 211) whereby study findings are not based on critical investigation of all the data, and depend on a few well-chosen exemplary instances that would conveniently fit with the conclusions or explanations the researcher is eager to reach. Qualitative methods should produce accounts which are valid and 'strike a chord' of recognition with people in similar circumstances (in the case of this study, the types of stakeholders chosen) (Strauss, 1987).

Whitemore et al. (2001) propose the following as primary criteria for demonstrating validity: integrity, authenticity, credibility, and criticality (p. 529). Miller (2008) states that throughout the course of qualitative research – and not waiting until data collection and analysis are completed – researchers are able to improve trustworthiness, credibility, authenticity, transferability and plausibility of the research by employing various strategies such as 'continual verification of findings, member checks, self-reflection, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, sampling sufficiency, theoretical thinking and audit trails' (Miller, 2008: 910). The validity of all research is increased by making sure that research procedures are coherent and transparent, research findings are evident, and research conclusions are convincing (Miller, 2008: 911).

The purpose of the empirical study is to seek and explore views and experiences of key stakeholders in early childhood and primary education. Thus, its outcomes are not meant to be representative of all these stakeholders - in other words, not generalisable to the population of respective stakeholders. Attempting to arrive at generalisation would require a far larger number of respondents and resources than is practically feasible within the framework of my study. What is aimed at is analytic generalisation which ensures that 'the data gained from a particular study provide theoretical insights which possess a sufficient degree of generality or universality to allow their projection to other contexts or situations (Sim, 1998: 350, cited in Robson, 2002: 177).

For example, Sweden is a decentralised country with municipalities having a major role in the organisation, management and provision of preschool and school education, while the central government's role is to steer the sectors through e.g. providing the national curricula and monitoring and evaluating the establishments. Thus, the views and experience with regard to the changes in the relationship held by preschool teachers may be different from municipality to municipality. Also, differences in terms of individual backgrounds and experiences would have an impact on the views and experiences to be shared by the interviewees. Such differences may arise, for example, from: the experience of working in both preschool and

school, or only one of them; the level(s) at which interviewees have worked; whether interviewees have worked or are working in a situation where preschool and school are integrated and managed by a single '*rektor*' (in the case of Sweden) or in an '*école polyvalente*' or '*école primaire*' that includes children of the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*, instead of in a regular *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* with a director of its own (in the case of France).

In my study, language is a key issue that concerns the validity of the study. As part of the primary criteria of validity mentioned above, striving for authenticity and credibility 'involves the portrayal of research that reflects the meanings and experiences that are lived and perceived by the participants' (Sandelowski, 1986, cited in Miller, 2008: 910). To address my lack of Swedish language ability and my status as non-native French speaker (who has lived in the country for over 15 years) in order to arrive at research findings that reflect the meanings and experiences as perceived by interviewees, I have needed to be sensitive and attentive to the wording, expression and reaction in their responses and to capture the meanings as understood by them. The literature review in Chapter 2, the data and insights generated from the pilot study, and the policy analysis in Chapter 5, as well as seeking an assessment of my findings with knowledgeable individuals are some of the ways to address this issue.

4.6. Analysing policy documents and interview data

Given that the focus of policy documents analysis is to understand the policy changes regarding the relationship since 1989, first, a list of possibly relevant policy documents to review and analyse was made for each country. The list was divided into pre-1989 and post-1989 periods, indicating the title of the policy document, the purpose/essence of the document, and the exact year and indication of where the documents were obtained (see Appendices 5 and 6).

The relevant French and Swedish policy documents were analysed in view of policy changes that occurred with regard to a similar set of categories for both countries: administration and governance (including legislation), curriculum, workforce (including training, status and working conditions), evaluation and inspection. The analysis included attention to whether there is evidence of influence of globalisation and the image of the child, which would address a part of the research objectives of the thesis. Key concepts such as knowledge society, human capital development, (economic) competitiveness and lifelong learning were sought as 'evidence' of influence of globalisation, following the review of literature on globalisation and education, as presented in Chapter 3. Similarly, key concepts for the image of the child were themes such as the child, student, child development, care, well-being, learning, various images of the child, teacher, education and learning – as emerged from the review of

literature on the social construction of the child presented in Chapter 3 – were sought as ‘evidence’ of influence of the image of the child. The process of analysis involved continuing travelling back and forth from research objectives, policy documents and key concepts and themes.

Interview data was understood as displaying ‘cultural realities’ (Silverman, 1985: 157) that presented actual, real, lived accounts that might or might not correspond to others’ accounts. As for the analysis of interview data of the pilot study, the method used for analysing interviews undertaken for the main fieldwork was inspired from the ‘Framework’ method (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The process of analysis was made up of distinct but interconnected stages that involved sifting, charting, sorting materials in view of key issues and themes. As mentioned in section 4.4.3.1, the first step was to familiarize with the data through immersion in the data. This involved thematic attention along the interview guide in the back of my mind. The immersion brought back the memory of settings, people and their expression at the moments of conducting the interviews, which are the kinds of information accessible only to the researcher. However, it was clear that this additional and impressionistic information was contextual and could not be part of the findings in view of the type of analysis chosen. Thus, it was necessary to limit my interpretation to the transcription and written data. As with the process of analysing policy documents, the analysis of interview data involved continuing travelling back and forth from the research objectives, interview data and key concepts and themes. The basis of establishing the analytical framework was drawn from the interview guide, found in Appendices 8 and 10.

4.7. Ethical issues

Researchers are required to be aware of the ethical issues involved in research and to ensure ethical conduct in their studies. There are a number of ethical guidelines established by professional societies and research associations. This study is guided by the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, published by the British Educational Research Association (2011). According to the Guidelines, researchers should conduct their research within ‘an ethic of respect’ for the ‘person’, ‘knowledge’, ‘democratic values’, ‘the quality of educational research’, and ‘academic freedom’ (p. 4). The guidelines for ethical conduct are framed into four categories of responsibility: (1) to participants; (2) to sponsors of research; (3) to the community of educational researchers; and (4) to educational professionals, policy makers and the general public (p. 5). Below, I will refer to aspects that are relevant to my study.

Participants in research range from the active or passive subjects of research processes to collaborators, colleagues or those who are simply part of the context. Researchers must operate within an ethic of respect for anyone involved in the research they are conducting. It

is essential to treat individuals 'fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, cultural identity, partnership status, faith, disability, political belief or any other significant difference' (p. 5). I made every effort to treat all kinds of participants with equal respect, sensitivity and dignity – including the interviewees with different professional profiles (e.g. teacher, principals, inspectors, teacher educators, policymakers) as well as children, parents and other staff whom I came across in the ECE and school settings where the interviews were scheduled.

Researchers have the responsibility to obtain voluntary informed consent from the participants before the research gets underway, ensuring that they understand 'the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported' (p. 5). All participants have the right to withdraw from the research at any time, and as such, they must be informed of this right in advance. They are entitled to privacy, therefore, their right to anonymity and confidentiality must be accorded.

In my research, I sent a letter to each principal to seek permission to access his or her ECE settings and schools as well as relevant staff. The letter included a brief background about the researcher and the aims, justification and methods of the overall research, and specific requirements for interviewing (and carrying out observation) in the ECE settings and schools concerned. It informed what themes would be raised in the interviews, and what was to be recorded during the observation. It sought permission to use a camera for recording photographically. The letter included a consent form (see Appendices 4, 8 and 10) which stated ethical considerations to be adopted throughout the research, giving an assurance to protect the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees as well as my contact information to enable them to reach me as necessary. The letter also noted appropriate follow-up after the data collection, providing opportunities to share findings gathered from the research with interviewees. In this way, the interviewees were informed of myself and the objectives, methods and time needed for data collection as well as the ethical considerations.

I was conscious about the need to go back to the interviewees in order to show the kinds of information I have collected from them and to give them opportunities to review them. However, as I was so eager to make progress in my analysis and writing within the limited time that was available to me in between my full time employment and family responsibilities, I failed to make time to reach out again to the interviewees after the interviews. *Vis-à-vis* the French interviewees, it presented an additional complication because I would have had to translate into French what I had written about the French empirical data analysis in English before contacting them again (*vis-à-vis* the Swedish interviewees, this would not have been an issue as the interviews were conducted in English). It was regrettable that I was not able to

fulfill this ethical responsibility of giving them opportunities to provide feedback and correct the manners in which I presented and interpreted their views and experiences that they had generously shared with me despite their busy schedules. When my thesis is finalized, I intend to contact all the interviewees to share the thesis and thank them again for the valuable information they have provided me in order to realize the study.

4.8. Conclusion

In sum, the two-pronged, comparative design chosen for the study, consisting of policy analysis and semi-structured interviews, is considered appropriate in view of the research aim and objectives that the study seeks to address. In addition to the literature review, the results of the pilot study, policy documents analysis and the review of theoretical literature give certain pointers, such as key concept and themes, which I should be aware of and pay attention to in interviewing key stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews are found suitable to enable the study to seek and explore the views, experiences and meanings given by key stakeholders to the issues concerning the relationship. The next chapter presents the analyses of French and Swedish policy documents, pointing to policy changes regarding the relationship and possible influences of globalisation and the image of the child on the relationship.

Chapter 5: Policy changes regarding the relationship between early childhood and primary education, 1989-2014

5.1. Scope and focus of policy document analysis

The present chapter presents the result of the first part of the study, namely, documentary analysis of policy changes between 1989 and September 2014 regarding the relationship between early childhood and primary education. It is divided into three elements. Firstly, it provides a brief historical background of early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden to contextualise the recent developments concerning the relationship between the two fields. Secondly, the chapter identifies policy changes with regard to the relationship between 1989 and September 2014 describing what, why and how the changes have occurred in both countries. Thirdly, it explores whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influenced the policy changes concerning the relationship in France and Sweden.

A list of the most important policy documents for both France and Sweden is presented in synoptic form in the appendix to this chapter.

5.2. France

Central to understanding the relationship between early childhood and primary education is the split between a childcare sector for under-3s and an early education sector – the *école maternelle* – for over-3s. The division originated in the late 19th century and has been maintained until today. This has given rise to a relationship in which the *école maternelle* – but not the childcare sector – connected conceptually and structurally with primary education.²⁸

The overall picture in France is that, historically, the *école maternelle* has oscillated between a schoolifying tendency and a parallel dynamic emphasising the specificity of the *école maternelle* vis-à-vis the *école élémentaire*. The pre-1989 period witnessed the emergence of a one-sided relationship modelling the *école maternelle* after the *école élémentaire* (1881-1950s); then, a relationship in which the *école maternelle* asserted its specific identity vis-à-vis the *école élémentaire* (1960s-1970s); followed by a schoolifying relationship in which the *école maternelle* was increasingly assimilated to the *école élémentaire* (1980s onwards) in response to the growing desire to combat social inequalities.

²⁸ The only official partnership ever to have existed between the education and social ministries to encourage smooth transition from home or childcare arrangement to the *école maternelle* was the memorandum of 1990, implemented variably by municipalities, and evaluated in 2000 as quasi-inexistent.

The post-1989 period, as understood through policy documents, is a continued reinforcement of the schoolifying tendency that had begun in the 1980s, strengthening the school-like character of the *école maternelle*, until 2009. This was due notably to changes in curriculum and evaluation, arising from an increasing concern for efficiency and accountability, against the background of persisting inequalities in French society and a shrinking government budget. From 2009, some modest signs of acknowledgement of the need for a distinct educational approach for young children appear, with developments leading to attempts to create a more balanced relationship between the *écoles maternelles* and *élémentaires*, strengthening the specificity and coherence of the *école maternelle*, particularly through the adoption of the new Education Act in 2013. In addition, national consultations began in 2014 on a proposed curriculum for the *école maternelle* that reflected the spirit of the new Education Act.

5.2.1. Pre-1989 period

It is important to recall that the French ECE system is split. While both childcare and pre-primary education services originated during the period of industrialisation with the aim to cater to children of poor parents working in factories, they have developed separately. Childcare services evolved with a strong medical orientation, emphasizing children's health and hygiene. They were made part of government responsibility only after the Second World War, and have always been fee-paying except for cases of social need. By contrast, after its establishment in 1881, the *école maternelle* was integrated into the free public education system in 1886 as a vehicle for constructing the French nation and disseminating the French language, and expanded rapidly thereafter (Rayna, 2007, cited in Kaga et al, 2010: 15). In 1884, initial education of *école maternelle* teachers was integrated into that of *écoles élémentaires*; and in 1921, their status and working conditions were made equal to those of their *élémentaire* colleagues.

Pauline Kergomard, appointed as general inspector of the Ministry of National Education in 1881, is known to be the founder of the French *école maternelle* model. Seeking to transform the institution into something that was neither 'la petite caserne' nor 'la petite Sorbonne', she conceptualised a French model that aimed at holistic education – physical, moral and intellectual – adapted to young children's needs and according a particular place for physical and sensorial activities and play (Bouysse, 2006: 21). Kergomard's intention was to move away from an *école maternelle* that imitated the programme of the *école élémentaire* based on traditional educational conceptions and pedagogy, and transform it into a distinct form of school (Gauzente, 2007; Bouysse, 2006: 21). She said: 'It is the *école maternelle* as properly understood that should break down the doors of the primary school' (Kergomard, 2009: 179, cited in Garnier, 2011: 556). However, the transposition of the traditional pedagogy of the

école élémentaire pedagogy onto the *école maternelle* seemed widespread in the first half of the 20th century. Although official texts published between 1881 and 1921 condemned the practice, photographic images of *école maternelle* classes before 1950 strongly resemble the classes of the *école élémentaire* (Bouysse, 2006: 21).

In the decades following the Second World War, the *école maternelle* experienced a remarkable expansion. The number of children enrolled in the *école maternelle* increased 4.75 times between 1945 and 1980, resulting in the universalisation of preschooling in France (Gauzente, 2007: 23). Particularly in the 1970s, the *école maternelle* experienced a qualitative change: these years saw its specificity affirmed vis-à-vis the *école élémentaire*, prompted by the popularisation of developmental psychology at the time and a wider climate of pedagogical renovation in general. The *école maternelle* was the first school institution to genuinely appropriate active methods (Bouysse, 2006: 22). Assigning a triple role of being educational, preparatory and childcare, the 1977 circular on the pedagogical guidelines of the *école maternelle* were organised by broad functions aligned with child development, rather than by school subjects, supporting a holistic pedagogy attentive to each child's developmental level (IGEN and IGEARN, 2011: 56). These guidelines foregrounded, for example, attention to the body, movement and action; oral expression and music; artistic expression; symbolic image and representations; language; and cognitive development (Bouysse, 2007: 3).

However, a parallel development also took place in the 1970s. The school-like character of the *école maternelle* was progressively strengthened, against the backdrop of a growing concern about school failure and generalised access. In 1972, inspectors specialised in the *école maternelle* disappeared, and thereafter, inspectors of *premier degré* were to cover both the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* (Gauzente, 2007: 23). The same year marked the beginning of the official usage of the term '*pre-élémentaire*', conveying the dependence of the *école maternelle* on the *école élémentaire* (IGEN and IGEANR, 2011: 57). The 1975 Education Act (*loi Haby*) defined the *école maternelle* as favouring the awakening of the personality while stressing its role of readying for school in order to prevent educational difficulties, detect disabilities and compensate for inequalities (IGEN and IGEANR, 2011: 56). In 1977, the first circular on educational continuity between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* was issued (Bouysse, 2006: 22).

The link was further reinforced during the 1980s when the *école maternelle* was seen as an important strategy to combat school failure. Inscribed firmly as part of the education priority zones (*zones d'éducation prioritaires, ZEPs*), the *école maternelle* was given a new set of pedagogical guidelines in 1986 that further strengthened its school identity. Defining the *école maternelle* as a school – '*l'école maternelle est une école*' – the Ministry of Education put forward the following objectives for *école maternelle* teachers: *scolariser* (familiarize young

children with the new life, new environment, new forms of relation, give the feeling that the school is made for learning), *socialiser* (become sociable and aware of one's own culture and other cultures), *faire apprendre* (instructing) and *exercer* (practising). The childcare mission of the *école maternelle* disappeared for the first time in the official text and does not reappear again (IGEN and IGEANR, 2011: 57), now that all children are entitled a place in the *maternelle*. Furthermore, the notion of 'domains of activities' - in the place of developmental domains - as components that structure the curriculum of the *école maternelle* was introduced for the first time in 1986; and was to be applied also to the *école maternelle* curricula issued later on (IGEN and IGEANR, 2011: 59), albeit with different headings.

Thus, there have been changes in the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France prior to 1989. The relationship rested on the split ECEC between childcare services for children under 3 and the *école maternelle* for children over 3, which became consolidated over the years and remains today. The divided arrangement resulted in the *école maternelle*, sharply distinguished from the under-3 services centred on care, becoming an integral part of the school system, and destined to align itself organisationally, programmatically and pedagogically with the subsequent stage of schooling, i.e. the *école élémentaire*. Despite a period of undergoing a distant relationship with the *école élémentaire* and living a distinct identity, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, the relationship between the *école maternelle* and the *école élémentaire* became increasingly closer in the 1980s, a trend to be continued into the following decades. It could be said that the possibility of forging a 'strong and equal partnership' has been diminished, and even precluded, by virtue of the split ECEC system in France.

5.2.2. Policy changes since 1989

5.2.2.1. Changes in administration and governance

5.2.2.1.1. Law

Changes in the education law have impacted on the relationship between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*. These legal changes took place in 1989 (*loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*), 2005 (*loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école*), and 2013 (*loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République*). Through this series of legal changes, a schoolifying relationship accelerates – in the name of preventing educational difficulties and achieving 'success for all' and educational efficiency – followed by a new turn in 2013 toward the deschoolification of the *école maternelle*.

In the 1989 *loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*, the principle of solidarity between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* was as strong as ever; and the preparatory character of the *école maternelle* was reinforced even more (Bouysse, 2007: 4). According to the 1989 law, the objective of the *école maternelle* is defined as: 'to allow young children to develop the practice of language and the flourishing of their personality', and emphasises its benefit on the later success of children, notably in the *école primaire*; and the fundamental objective of the *école primaire* is defined as 'the learning of bases of reading, writing and mathematics'. The most significant measure introduced by the 1989 law was the *Cycles d'apprentissage*, which grouped the years of schooling from the *école maternelle* to *élémentaire* into three pedagogical cycles, with the aim of promoting educational continuity between the two levels (for further discussion on the cycles, see the section 5.2.2.2. on curricular changes below). The law also stipulated the establishment of the *instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres* (IUFM), replacing the *écoles normales* in the training of teachers, and the creation of a corps of school teachers for children ages 2/3 to 11 called *professeurs des écoles*, which came to replace *instituteurs/institutrices* trained in the *écoles normales* (see section 5.2.2.3. on teachers below). The decree of 6 September 1990 articulates the objectives of the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* indicated in the 1989 law.

The 2005 *loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école* stipulates a further elaboration of the mission of the *école maternelle* that suggests a closer alignment to the *école élémentaire*, highlighting it as 'a first approach to the tools of basic knowledge', 'prepar[ing] children for the core education given by elementary school' and 'teach[ing] them the principles of life in society' (Eurydice, 2009/2010a: 51).²⁹ The law also stipulates the introduction of the common core of knowledge and competence (*socle commun de connaissances et de compétences*) for compulsory education, adopted in the following year (see the section on curricular changes).

Eight years later, the 2013 *loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République* set the scene for new directions in the relationship. This reform followed after several years of critical assessment of the school system - the most substantive assessment of the *école maternelle* being the report prepared by the IGEN and IGAENR for the minister of education in 2011. The main reason for preparing this report was the need for carrying out a substantive sectoral assessment in view of the inability of the *école maternelle* to compensate the inequalities among children, and the critique – for example, that highlighted by the OECD's *Starting Strong* (2006) – about the *école maternelle* subjecting children to excessive academic demands and not promoting children's well-being sufficiently. Among the new measures put forward in the 2013 law, of relevance are (1) the redefinition of

²⁹ *La mission éducative de l'école maternelle comporte une première approche des outils de base de la connaissance, prépare les enfants aux apprentissages fondamentaux dispensés à l'école élémentaire et leur apprend les principes de la vie en société* (Section 1, article 24).

the mission of the *école maternelle*, (2) redefinition of the pedagogical cycles set in 1989, (3) development of new curricula in line with the redefined mission and cycles, and (4) creation of the *Écoles Supérieures du Professorat de l'Éducation* (ESPE) that provide initial teacher education (see the section on teachers below).

Article 44 of the 2013 law states that the *école* and *classe maternelle* is to 'favour the awakening (*éveil*) of children's personality, to stimulate their sensorial, motor, cognitive and social development and to inculcate respect for oneself and others that contributes to emotional development. This training seeks to develop in each child the desire and pleasure to learn that allows her/him to progressively become a student' (my translation).³⁰ According to the report annexed to the law, the redefined mission is achieved through the redefinition of the *Cycles*. The new cycle for the *école maternelle* is independent, covering only its three years, compared to the previous version whereby the last year of the *école maternelle* belonged with the second cycle of the *école élémentaire* (see section 5.2.2.2. on curricular changes). While giving a full-cycle status to the *école maternelle*, care is also taken to emphasise the importance of keeping the meeting and exchange between the teachers of the last year of the *maternelle* and the first year of the *élémentaire*, promoted by the previous version of the *cycles*.

5.2.2.1.2. Inspection and evaluation

As part of governance concerns, highlighted here are the post-1989 changes in inspection and evaluation. Being the hierarchical superior of schoolteachers as well as principals, the local education inspectors (*Inspecteurs de l'Éducation Nationale*, or IENs) play important roles in areas such as school inspection, teacher evaluation and nomination, and continuous training (Eurydice, 2009/2010a: 247). As mentioned earlier, since 1972, inspection of the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* became unified. The end of the recruitment and training of inspectors specialised in the *école maternelle* contributed to a strong reduction of expertise in early learning and socialisation (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 181; OECD, 2003: 44), and impacted on the availability of *maternelle*-related contents in the professional development courses offered by each *Académie* (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 149), which tended to privilege *élémentaire*-related content (HCE, 2007). The only relevant official text intended to reinforce the *maternelle* sector in the inspection process is the 2009 circular about the preparation for the new school year, addressing all personnel of the national public education system. The circular announced the creation of 100 new national Education inspector (IEN) positions, in

³⁰ *La formation dispensée dans les classes enfantines et les écoles maternelles favorise l'éveil de la personnalité des enfants, stimule leur développement sensoriel, moteur, cognitif et social, développe l'estime de soi et des autres et concourt à leur épanouissement affectif. Cette formation s'attache à développer chez chaque enfant l'envie et le plaisir d'apprendre afin de lui permettre progressivement de devenir élève. Elle est adaptée aux besoins des élèves en situation de handicap pour permettre leur scolarisation.*

charge of the *école maternelle*, who would locally create a dynamic for the *école maternelle* by serving as a departmental resource 'hub' specialised in the *maternelle*, supporting teachers and providing necessary training courses (IGEN, 2011: 152; Eurydice, 2010: 50).³¹

Concerning evaluation, the *école maternelle* became involved in the 1990s in the new forms of steering adopted by education systems. 'Management by results' and 'the culture of evaluation' came to be applied to the *maternelle* sector, modelled on national assessments for the third grade of the *école élémentaire* and the first year of *collège* (Gauzente, 2007: 23). The relationship between the *écoles maternelles* and *élémentaires* was reinforced through the decree of 1990³² obliging the creation of a *livret scolaire* (school record book) for all children beginning their first year of schooling, i.e. from the start of the *école maternelle*. This policy has meant that the *école maternelle*, despite its non-compulsory nature, is part of the obligatory school system and that young children were understood as students whose schooling career began at 3 years (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 57-8).

The 2001 circular,³³ addressing specifically evaluation of the *grande section* (last year of the *maternelle*) and of the *cours préparatoire* (first year of the *élémentaire*), focused attention on the last year of the *maternelle* and set it apart from the two preceding years in the *école maternelle*. In addition, the 2002 curriculum for the *école maternelle* accords an indispensable place to evaluation for regulating pedagogical practice (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 59): 'The evaluation is a central aspect of teachers' activity at the *école maternelle* in the same way as in other levels of schooling. Evaluation facilitates the adaptation of activities to the needs in the class and to those of each child' (my translation, the 2002 *Programme*). Further, the 2008 circular on the *livret scolaire* made it compulsory for teachers to include in each student's *livret scolaire*, at the end of the *grande section*, the evaluation of defined curricular skills. The IGEN and IGAENR 2011 report regrets that some of the evaluation tools proposed and disseminated by the national authorities to guide evaluation practices since 2001 had promoted formal 'pencil-and-paper' type of evaluation in the *maternelle* rather than the use of observation (115-6). The senatorial debate of October 2011 regarding the question of evaluation in the *maternelle* shows the political importance accorded to the subject.

5.2.2.2. Curricular changes

5.2.2.2.1. From Cycles d'apprentissage to Cycles d'enseignement

³¹ See page 152-154 in the IGEN report (2011) regarding to the achievements and challenges in connection with the implementation of this inspection-related measure.

³² Article 5 du décret n° 90-788 du 6 septembre 1990 relatif à l'organisation et au fonctionnement des écoles maternelles et élémentaires, aujourd'hui article D. 321-10 du code de l'éducation.

³³ <http://www.education.gouv.fr/botexte/bo010830/MENK0101686C.htm>

As mentioned above, the 1989 law (*loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*) introduced the notion of *Cycles d'apprentissage*, a new approach to conceptualising and organizing the years of schooling. The *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* were conceived in terms of three pedagogical cycles, each consisting of three years:

- Cycle 1: *Cycle des apprentissages premiers* (first learning cycle), comprising the first, second and last year of the *école maternelle*
- Cycle 2: *Cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux* (fundamental learning cycle), comprising the last year of the *école maternelle* and the first two years of the *école élémentaire*
- Cycle 3: *Cycle de consolidation* (consolidation cycle), comprising the third, fourth and last year of the *école élémentaire*

The last year of the *école maternelle*, or the *grande section*, is in both the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The introduction of the cycles was intended to improve the links between the two different *écoles*. It was also to allow each child the time to learn at her or his own pace, since the learning objectives set for each cycle were to be attained in the course of three years, and not within one single year. Importantly, working by *cycles* would mean that the pedagogy of the *école maternelle* was to influence the teaching in the entire Cycle 2 and therefore of the first and second year of the *école élémentaire*. Teaching, structured around distinct disciplines, was to start only from Cycle 3; the two years following the *grande section* should, in theory, extend the influence of the *école maternelle* and continue teaching partly inspired by the methods of the *maternelle* (HCE, 2007: 23). The *maternelle* and *élémentaire* curricula were conceived to reflect the pedagogical cycles and all schools were to organise one cycle meeting (*conseil de cycle*) per trimester in order to facilitate work.

In practice, the *cycles* have contributed to a relationship where the school model of the *élémentaire* invaded the *école maternelle* (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 181). Due to its status of being in the first and second *cycle* at the same time, the *grande section* was given more importance than other years of the *école maternelle*, being part of the target for measuring student achievement and detecting learning difficulties (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 153). The cycles remained unknown to the great majority of families who continued to think of student progress by year and not by cycle (HCE, 2007: 17). Lack of collaboration among teachers of the same cycles was apparent. The discontinuity was the greatest between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*, with teachers of the *grande section* rarely participating in the compulsory *cycle* meetings attended by teachers of CP and CE1 teaching the *same* cycle (HCE, 2007: 17).

In 2013, through the adoption of the *loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République* and the decree of July 2013, the cycles were modified. In the new version, the first cycle consists of the three years of the *école maternelle*, to allow the sector to be a full and coherent cycle. The mission of the *école maternelle* as understood in the redefined cycle was as follows:

By developing in each child self-confidence and the desire to learn, the *école maternelle* must comfort and stimulate children's affective, social, sensorial, motor and cognitive development, and initiate them to different means of expression. The *école maternelle* assures an initial acquisition of principles of life in society and equality between girls and boys. The prevention of school difficulties is ensured by the stimulation and structuration of oral language and initiation to written culture. (Report annexed to the law; my translation)

The second cycle comprises the first three years of the *élémentaire*. The third cycle is made up of the fourth and fifth year of the *élémentaire* plus the first year of the *collège*, or lower secondary school, to promote better continuity of learning between the *école élémentaire* and the *collège*. The table below summarises the composition of the Cycles adopted in 1989 and 2013.

Table 5.1: Cycles of 1989 and 2013

	École maternelle			École élémentaire					Collège
	PS	MS	GS	CP	CE1	CE2	CM1	CM2	Sixième
Cycles 1989	Cycle 1: Cycle des apprentissages premiers								
			Cycle 2: Cycle des apprentissages fondamentaux						
						Cycle 3: Cycle de consolidation			
Cycles 2013	Cycle 1: Cycle des apprentissages premiers								
				Cycle 2: Cycle des					

				apprentissages fondamentaux					
							Cycle 3: Cycle de consolidation		

5.2.2.2.2. Curricula

Since 1989, the *école maternelle* has seen three curricula adopted – the 1995, 2002 and 2008 *programmes* – and one proposed curriculum – the 2014 *Projet de Programme*. The curricular changes convey two movements in parallel: moving back and forth from a schoolified approach to a more balanced approach whereby the *école maternelle* asserts its specificity, while reinforcing and confirming its school identity and gradually establishing and consolidating language learning as the priority curricular domain.

Curriculum instead of ‘orientations’

With the 1995 curriculum, for the first time, the *école maternelle* came to have a ‘curriculum’, or *Programme*, like the *école élémentaire*, while formerly it had only *orientations pédagogiques* (or, pedagogical guidelines).

From domains of child development to domains of activities

From 1995 onwards, the curriculum was no longer organised by domains of child development, but by domains of activities that reflected competences to be acquired at the end of each cycle and that constituted the reference for evaluation (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 59). The structuring of the curriculum by domains of activities is one distinctive feature of the *école maternelle* vis-à-vis the *école élémentaire*, whose curriculum is organised around disciplinary subjects.

Coherence and progressivity

The importance of coherence and progression of learning during the *école maternelle* is expressed in the 1995 curriculum, and later in the 2008 curriculum. The former states: ‘there is no place for improvisation. This is why it is indispensable to articulate, in the school and cycle plans, an organisation that guarantees the coherence and progression necessary for learning’³⁴ (my translation). The latter provides ‘highly detailed directives on constructing

³⁴ l'improvisation n'a pas sa place. C'est pourquoi il est indispensable que dans les projets d'école et de cycle soit établie une organisation garantissant la cohérence et la progressivité nécessaires aux apprentissages.

progressive learning paths, while introducing learning of the basics of reading at an earlier stage' (Garnier, 2011: 559).

Time management

Unlike the *école élémentaire*, the *école maternelle* no longer has, since 1977, an official allocation of hours to each domain of activities (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 96). However, the notion of rigorous management of time accorded to learning entered into the 1995 curriculum: it states that recreation, time spent on children's hygiene and their reception are considered as educational and useful moments, but that care should be taken not to let these things obstruct the time for structured activities that give children the feeling of working (*travailler*) and progressing (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 58).

From instrumental to caring

The role of the *école maternelle* as a preparation for school was given increasing importance in the successive curricula, as shown in the prioritisation of language learning (see below). In the 2008 curriculum, language learning became the most important focus, being given priority over other goals. In the mission statement, the first thing featured is: 'the purpose of the *école maternelle* is to assist each child, using approaches adapted to her/him, to become autonomous and to gain appropriate knowledge and competences so as to be successful in undertaking fundamental learning in the *cours préparatoire* (the first year of the *école élémentaire*)' (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 58). The 2008 curriculum distinguishes itself from the preceding curricula by its brevity; and focuses on the content of learning to be assimilated by students and competences to be mastered at the end of the *grande section* (last year of the *maternelle*). The value of the *école maternelle* is essentially seen to reside in the final year of preschooling (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 59).

However, the instrumental nature of the *école maternelle* has receded in the 2014 proposed curriculum. The new proposal states: 'the *école maternelle* is a caring school (*une école bienveillante*). Its principal mission is to nurture children's desire to go to school to learn, grow and affirm themselves as unique subjects' (my translation, p. 4). It also supports pedagogical approaches that promote a harmonious development in an environment that is secure and rich in exploration. The emphasis on preparation for school in the *grande section* evident in the 2008 curriculum is corrected: it projects a conception of linkage between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* based on the new *cycles* through which children's learning in the second cycle is to be informed by their experience throughout the first cycle, i.e. in the entire three years of the *école maternelle* (2014 proposed curriculum, p. 6).

The making of language as priority

From the 2002 curriculum onwards, language is listed first among the domains of activities (see table below), introducing a new focus on the acquisition of competences and knowledge concerning the mastering of oral and written language, rather than on children's communication and expression (Garnier, 2011: 559). The 2002 curriculum describes language development as important for successful later schooling (Bouysse, 2006). The 2008 curriculum proposes close attention to linguistic mechanics (lexicon and syntax), which is not found in the 2002 curriculum (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011). The proposed 2014 curriculum likewise retains language learning as the priority domain, but the importance accorded to this domain arises from the understanding of language as an essential tool for enabling all forms of learning and for changing the course of social determinism and inequality (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 63). It could be considered that the first point also relates to meeting the requirements of competitiveness in the global knowledge economy (see below section on influences).³⁵

The 'downgrading' of physical and artistic activities and their recent 'upgrading'

The predecessor of the 1995 curriculum had physical activities on top of the list of curricular domains; however, in 1995, it dropped to third place, which was the position maintained in the 2002 curriculum. In the 2008 curriculum, physical activities further declined to fourth place, only to return to third place in the 2014 proposed curriculum. With regard to artistic activities – a long-time symbol of creativity in the *école maternelle* (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 60) – they are ranked at the bottom in the 1995, 2002 and 2008 curricula; then, their ranking improved in the 2014 proposed curriculum, moving to third place. The downgrading of these domains can be understood as a sign of support for a conception of school and learning governed by economic interest, as Derouet (2006) has suggested (cited in Garnier, 2011: 559). As for other aspects, the upgrading of physical and artistic activities suggests support for a more holistic conception of early development, valorising physical and artistic aspects of children's development as for other aspects.

Socialisation in school: from 'living together' to 'becoming students' to 'learning to live together'

³⁵ Contrary to language, the place of mathematics and science in the 1995, 2002 and 2008 curricula for the *école maternelle* is discrete and ambiguous (IGEN, 2011: 63) while these are disciplinary subjects that are emblematic of 'school'. They are subsumed under the domain called '*découvrir le monde*' (discovering the world), ranked 4th in the 1995 and 2002 curricula and the 5th in the 2008 curriculum; while in the 2014 proposed curriculum it has acquired separate domain status ('*Organiser et prendre des repères*' for maths; and '*Explorer le monde du vivant, des objets et de la matière*' for science and technology). The weight given to language in the *école maternelle* is interesting, and Sweden may give more equal weight to language, maths and science in preschools.

In the 1995 curriculum, children’s socialisation within the school context was listed first among all the domains of activities. The domain ranking went down to second in the 2002 curriculum and slipped further to third place in the 2008 curriculum; however, it has been transformed into a cross-cutting aim permeating all experiences at the *école maternelle* in the 2014 proposed curriculum. The changes of title given in the different curricula are symbolic: it was ‘living together’ in the 1995 and 2002 curricula; ‘becoming a student’ in the 2008 curriculum; and ‘learning together for living together’ in the 2014 proposed curriculum. These changes can be interpreted in different ways but there is evidence to suggest that the title of the 2008 curriculum, ‘Becoming a student’ conveys an image of the child shaped in response to meeting the requirements of a school institution, rather than the child seen to have multiple identities, including that of school (see discussion in the section below). While a closer reading of the curriculum is said to provide a much more nuanced meaning anchored in the state of ‘becoming’ (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 61), the title can be interpreted as the government wanting to schoolify the *école maternelle*. By contrast, the 2014 proposed curriculum seems to intend reviving the sense attached to the 1995 and 2002 curricula. Yet, it remains distinct in that it is learning which is placed at the forefront.

Table 5.2: The order and names of the domains of activities in the 1995, 2002, 2008 and 2014 (proposed) curricula for the *école maternelle*

The Programme 1995	The Programme 2002	The Programme 2008	The Programme 2014 (proposed) [5 domains, 3 poles]
Vivre ensemble	Le langage au coeur des apprentissages	S’appropriier le langage	<i>Apprendre ensemble pour vivre ensemble</i> [cross-cutting aim, not a domain]
Apprendre à parler et à construire son langage, s’initier au monde de l’écrit	Vivre ensemble	Découvrir l’écrit	Mobiliser le langage dans toutes ses dimensions
Agir dans le monde	Agir et s’exprimer avec son corps	Devenir élève	Agir, s’exprimer, comprendre à travers les activités physiques

Découvrir le monde	Découvrir le monde	Agir et s'exprimer avec son corps	Agir, s'exprimer, comprendre à travers les activités artistiques
Imaginer, sentir, créer	La sensibilité, l'imagination, la création	Découvrir le monde	Organiser et prendre des repères
(une rubrique importante intitulée « Des instruments pour apprendre » complète cette liste)		Percevoir, sentir, imaginer, créer	Explorer le monde du vivant, des objets et de la matière

Specific pedagogy

While in practice, the pedagogical model of the *école élémentaire* was often observed, especially in the last year of the *école maternelle*, the official curricular texts make reference to the *école maternelle* as having specific pedagogies distinct from the next stage of education (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 58). It is in the 2002 curriculum and 2014 proposed curriculum that the particularity of the pedagogy is emphasised. For example, the 2002 curriculum states: 'it is through play, action and search for autonomy and sensory experience that the child constructs her/his basic skills... being the first stage of fundamental learning calls for a pedagogical framework specific to the *école maternelle*' (my translation, the 2002 *Programme*). The 2014 proposed curriculum states: 'the *école maternelle* is characterised by situations rooted in young children's interests... It is based on language in all its dimensions, on play, proposes structured activities and solicits participation in projects. In this way, it supports and promotes children's holistic development – affective, social sensorial, motor and cognitive – and introduces them to different means of expression and various cultural forms, while contributing to the construction of shared values' (my translation, p. 4).

5.2.2.3. Workforce

The post-1989 policy developments regarding the workforce training and working conditions have done little to change the relationship. The initial education of the *école maternelle* and

école élémentaire teachers has been unified since the end of the 19th century: they are trained as teachers of children aged 2/3 to 11. The *école maternelle* teachers gained the same status and working conditions as their *élémentaire* counterparts in 1921. Meanwhile, the training needs of *école maternelle* teachers have always been less addressed than those of *élémentaire* teachers. Teacher education in France has been more likely to cover disciplinary didactics, which are not always appropriate for use in the *école maternelle* (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 181). Thus, seen from the workforce perspective, the relationship has been based on the *école maternelle* regarded as an 'appendix' to the *école élémentaire*, with less recognition as a field built on specific professional knowledge and practices.

The 1989 law (*loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*) stipulated the establishment of the IUFM (*instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres*), a teacher training institution that replaced the *écoles normales*. IUFM was attached to one or more universities, unlike the *écoles normales*. With this reform, the qualification of the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers was raised to 'bac+3', i.e. they became qualified as teacher when they obtained the baccalauréat (university entrance qualification) and *licence* (award following a three-year university degree course), and were successful in the teacher recruitment examination. They were now called *professeurs des écoles*, instead of *instituteurs/institutrices*. The reform was to 'universitise' the training institutions, but the balance between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* training contents was not an issue. The 2008 reform of 'masterisation' of initial teacher education raised the qualification requirement even higher: from 'bac+3' to 'bac+5', while doing away with IUFMs and asking universities to house initial teacher education. Again, the equilibrium between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* training contents was a non-issue. The lack of recognition and knowledge concerning the *école maternelle* was symbolic in the communication made by the then Minister of Education in 2008: Responding in the Senate to the issue of the government's decision to reduce the enrolment of under 3s in the *école maternelle*, he questioned the use of public funds to have teachers educated at master's level while their function is essentially to make children do naps and change their nappies.³⁶

From 2009 until the present, developments in the area of the workforce have had some positive tones for the *école maternelle*. As mentioned in the section above about inspection, the circular of 2009 opened the way to strengthening the supervision and continuous training offered to *école maternelle* teachers through its announcement of creating positions for inspectors specialised in the *école maternelle*. Another official text (*instructions pédagogique*) issued by the Ministry of Education in 2009 defined the specific competencies required for being teachers in the *école maternelle*. Through the adoption of the 2013 education law (*refondation de l'école*), *écoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation* (ESPE), a body

³⁶ See for example http://www.lexpress.fr/education/sur-la-maternelle-darcos-en-remet-une-couche_569391.html

in charge of initial teacher education which is internal to the university structure, have been set up. But an indication regarding the place of the *école maternelle* component within the new setup and initial teacher education remains absent.

5.2.3. Influences

Four major forces have influenced the post-1989 policy changes to the relationship between the *école maternelle* and the *école élémentaire*. First is the ongoing government concern with inequalities. As the problem of inequality has persisted after 1989, the government sought to tackle it by strengthening the continuity of learning between the *écoles maternelles* and *élémentaires*, preparing all children well for taking up the challenges in the *école élémentaire*, and enrolling disadvantaged children at the age of 2 instead of 3. The *Cycles des apprentissages* introduced in 1989 were intended to facilitate continuity by deliberately placing simultaneously the *grande section* of the *école maternelle* in both the first and second cycles, although the result was a schoolified *école maternelle*, particularly its *grande section*. The notion that language is an essential tool enabling all learning, and that gaps in language acquisition are at the heart of school failure and inequalities, also propelled an increasing emphasis on language learning in the curriculum for the *école maternelle*. This could be understood to reflect a concern for nurturing a capable and competitive future workforce equipped with good literacy skills fundamental for lifelong learning.

In addition, strengthening the school identity of the *école maternelle* was considered to help improve the continuity of learning between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* – a key to tackling inequalities in school. As in the *élémentaire*, the *maternelle* came to have a curriculum, and became subject to evaluation that uses written records of achievement. ‘Becoming a student’ as an important aim of the *école maternelle* symbolizes an affirmation of its school identity: the child is considered an individual to be formed – to be a student knowing the expectations of the school and embodying its rules – rather than a person participating in the life of an early childhood institution (see IGEN and IGAENR, 2001: 23). The OECD Country Note (2003) pointed out that in the *école maternelle*, children are ‘viewed as students who are responsible for achieving pre-determined outcomes’ (OECD, 2003: 125).

Second is the increased government pressure on augmenting the effectiveness and efficiency of the *école maternelle*. This is evident in the developments in the area of evaluation, as mentioned above. The notion of time management to maximise learning that appeared in the *école maternelle* reflects the efficiency concern. Also, the 1998 report prepared for the government, entitled ‘Improving the efficacy of the *école primaire*’ (*améliorer l’efficacité de*

l'école primaire) indicates the establishment of efficacy as a key concern for the *école maternelle*. The fact that the government has become faced with a budgetary crisis – necessitating budget cuts and savings, and requiring justification for education spending in concrete terms – probably accentuated the importance of evaluation and accountability. Also, with the *école maternelle* becoming universally accessible for children aged 3-6 at the end of the 1980s, attention now turned to its qualitative aspects (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011). A specific communication on the *école maternelle* was issued by the Senate in 2009, noting the lack of reliable statistical tools as well as instruments to measure performance.³⁷ The expanded interest in questions of evaluation, efficiency and reliable measurements may also be interpreted as reflecting neo-liberal tendencies that are observed in globalisation.

Third, in addition to the internal pressure to halt the schoolification of the *école maternelle*, attention to the experiences of other countries may have played a role in changing the policy orientation in 2013, with the adoption of the education law (*loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République*). In this regard, the report prepared by IGEN and IGAENR (2011) on the *école maternelle* is emblematic. The first part of the report places the French *école maternelle* within an international context, drawn from reports developed by international organisations such as OECD, UNICEF, EU and UNESCO. The second part is a critical assessment of the *école maternelle*, which included examples of different approaches adopted by other countries (notably Denmark). It also refers to the critical observation about the *école maternelle* made by the OECD expert team at the occasion of the thematic review on ECEC in 2003. This can be considered a sign of France being outward-looking, taking lessons from other countries' experiences, which are often made accessible through the work of international organisations, whose role is becoming more and more important in the globalizing world.

5.3. Sweden

Policies bearing on the relationship between early childhood and primary education in Sweden have changed considerably since the inception of daycare and early education services in the late 19th century. Though these developed into separate services with different purposes, they both became the responsibility of the National Board of Health and Social Welfare in 1944. The evolution of early childhood services as a distinct, coherent sector was strengthened due to its integration within the social welfare sector for 52 years, facilitated by the adoption of a common term, 'preschool' in 1975, and by the gradual expansion of preschools over the decades. Thus, early childhood was essentially seen as a social welfare

³⁷ <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r08-096/r08-0965.html#fn4>

activity, separate from the education system, albeit with a pedagogical identity (i.e. not only 'childcare').

While the shift of ECE from welfare to education was already well underway due to the decentralisation policy from the late 1980s, a decisive turn in policy concerning the relationship came in 1996 with the decision to transfer the responsibility for preschools to the Ministry of Education. Importantly, the decision reflected the government's desire to nurture a 'knowledge nation' based on lifelong learning beginning in the early years. At the same time, it placed value in keeping holistic pedagogy as a central feature of preschool, and explicitly embraced the vision of a preschool influencing compulsory education. This reform was followed by a series of important measures that intended to bring preschool closer to compulsory school, such as the introduction of the preschool curriculum and preschool class in 1998, the integration of initial teacher education for preschool and school teachers and leisure time pedagogues (who work with school-aged children in after-school childcare, generally provided in the same school premises) in 2001, the introduction of the maximum capped fee in 2002 and free preschool for all 4- and 5-year-olds in 2003. Although the government's intention was to forge a close relationship while preserving preschool pedagogy and extending its influence through transforming the practices of the first years of compulsory school, an opposite trend – schoolification of preschool – was beginning to appear at the level of practice.

The early 2010s were marked by key policy changes: the separation of initial education for preschool and school teachers in 2010, the revision of the preschool curriculum in 2010, and the adoption of the new Education Act in 2011. These changes have resulted in a relationship built on stronger governance and curricular integration on the one hand, and on a separate approach to teacher education aimed at reinforcing the professional and pedagogical specificity of preschool and school, on the other. This relationship seems to embody simultaneously a schoolification dynamic and the equalisation of partnership between preschool and compulsory school.

5.3.1. Historical background

A fundamental influence on the relationship in Sweden comes from the construction of early childhood education and care services as an integrated social sector in the 20th century. As mentioned earlier, two different types of early childhood services emerged in the 19th century: full-day childcare services for children of poor working parents; and part-day kindergarten, based on Frobel's philosophy that provided enriched education mainly for children of affluent

families (Martin Korpi, 2007: 13). It was Alva Myrdal, the social democratic politician, who invented the term *storbarnkammare*, or 'bigger nursery', which welcomed children of all social classes for part- or full-days, staffed with well-educated persons providing high quality service – different from the home, daycare and kindergarten which she considered as excessively authoritarian. Her proposals helped bring about, around 1932, the emergence of government debate on preschool and further developments in the field of preschool (Martin Korpi, 2007: 16-18).

A key step was taken in 1945, when the National Board of Health and Social Affairs was assigned responsibility for daycare services and kindergartens. Thus, services for young children became part of social policy. Coordination strategies between ECEC services and compulsory school became obligatory in the 1940s, for example judging children's maturity level for starting compulsory school and teaching them school-related skills, such as sitting still, taking turns to speak, hand-raising in group settings (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 13). The economic boom of the 1960s created demands for services that could provide childcare, and prompted an expansion in early childhood services that would continue into the following decades (Martin Korpi, 2007; Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 9).

In 1962, the initial education of preschool teachers was assigned to Preschool Teacher Training Colleges, which were later transferred to the higher education sector in the 1970s (Martin Korpi, 2007). The first Preschool Act of 1975 brought together the traditions of daycare and kindergarten into a new, shared service termed 'preschool' that operated both full- and part-time and employed a holistic pedagogy combining care and education (Engdahl, 2004: 2).³⁸ The Act also promoted preschooling for 6-year-olds offering these children 525 hours per year free of charge (Martin Korpi, 2007: 26). Another important result of the Preschool Act was to make municipalities responsible for preschool and its expansion (Martin Korpi, 2007: 26).

In the context of increasing preschool participation (Martin Korpi, 2007), the 1980s witnessed policy changes that impacted on the relationship. First was the passage of the 1985 Bill on the right to preschool for all children, from the age of 18 months age one and a half, whose parents were working or studying (Bill 84/1985:209) (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 15; Martin Korpi, 2007: 45). A second policy change was the pedagogical programme for the preschool in 1987 issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The programme replaced the emphasis on one-to-one dialogue pedagogy with theme-oriented activities and working with

³⁸ This was drawn from the recommendation of the Commission on Child Care proposing new ideas such as preschool as a single concept and institution, dialogue pedagogy, work teams, and groups of mixed-aged children (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 9).

groups of children – an approach that reinforced a long tradition in the Swedish preschool (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 12; Martin Korpi, 2007). Thirdly, the strengthening of a policy of decentralisation that had begun in the mid-1980s led to many municipalities taking the initiative to address preschool issues as part of their school board and administration (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 15). Therefore, administrative integration of preschool within education actually started at the municipal level, albeit in a dispersed way, before the 1996 reform that transferred responsibility for ECEC from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science.

Thus, the relationship between early childhood and primary education in Sweden was initially influenced by the integration of childcare and early education services within the social sector, an integrated policy for young children and families considered as ‘a cornerstone of the welfare society’ (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 7). The fact that the services were brought together as an age-integrated provision called ‘preschool’, and that they were administrated as part of social policy for more than five decades gave rise to the preschool as a specific and coherent field, distinct from compulsory school and other educational institutions, yet with a recognised pedagogical identity. Meanwhile, the movement toward bringing preschool and compulsory school closer together surfaced from the mid-1980s.

5.3.2. Policy changes since 1989

5.3.2.1. Changes in administration and governance

The decentralisation process that had begun in the mid-1980s culminated in the revision of the 1991 Local Government Act, which transferred a greater level of decision-making power to the municipalities with the aim of increasing economic efficiency and democracy. A new mode of steering was introduced: there was a shift from ‘governing by rules’, involving detailed laws and regulations, to ‘governing by goals’, enabled by frame laws and goals (Jönsson et al., 2012: 52). Municipalities became responsible for preschool, compulsory school and leisure time centres (providing out-of-school care and activities); and were free to organise them as long as they fulfilled the goals laid down in the national curricula (Jönsson et al., 2012: 52). Preschool and school teachers and leisure time pedagogues came to have a common employer, i.e. municipalities – which was a significant change for school teachers who had been employed by the state. Furthermore, the state grant system changed from earmarked to block grant funding for all ‘soft’ activities, allowing municipalities to decide how to spend the grant (Jönsson et al., 2012: 52).

The age of starting compulsory school was a recurrent political issue debated in the 1980s and 1990s in Sweden as well as in other Nordic countries (Marin Korpi, 2007: 49), given that all had set the school entry age at 7 years, unlike France and most other European countries. In 1991, the legislation on flexible school starting age was introduced (Bill 1990/91:155) that allowed parents to choose to put their 6-year-olds in the first grade, in a newly-established 'preschool class'. In the legislation, the Minister of Education urged the use of a holistic perspective with young children as well as further coordination between preschool and compulsory schools (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 13). Furthermore, the legislation stipulated the integration of leisure time centres within schools, both physically and administratively (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 14). This initiative created space and the possibility for school teachers to meet, work with and learn from leisure time pedagogues, who had been working in separate buildings and whose approaches to children were more similar to those taken by preschool teachers.

The first step toward a joint curriculum for preschool and school was in the government investigation (SOU 1994:45) published in 1994. The researchers observed that the school was not sufficiently 'mature' to adopt a holistic view of the child and offer an appropriate learning environment that meets the needs of all individual children (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 14). For the school to become more 'child-mature', responsive to each child's learning style and needs, the investigation recommended the integration of preschool and advocated intensive teamwork that would enable preschool and school teachers and leisure time pedagogues 'to exchange methods and ways of understanding children's needs' (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 15). Referring to the report commissioned to inform the investigation, Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar (2003: 15) write:

The foundation for a new way of working in the lower ages of schooling was to be established through the merger of two different traditions, with the child seen as a co-constructor of culture and knowledge (Dahlberg & Lenz Taguchi, 1994).

The year 1996 marked a crucial development for the relationship: the responsibility for preschool was transferred from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science. The shift was made from preschool as an area of social policy to that of education policy, marking 'a new epoch in the history of the Swedish pre-school' (Martin Korpi, 2007: 62). Underlying the intention of the reform was Sweden's aspiration to become a knowledge nation (*kunskapsnation*). This would be achieved through reforming, in a lifelong learning perspective, the entire education system from preschool to university. The integration of preschool within education was to be a natural first step in that direction. Persson, the then Prime Minister, also stated that preschool should be an instrument for improving the crucial

first years of compulsory school (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 16). Identifying lifelong learning as the third pillar of his policy engagement, his speech at the Riksdagen in 22 March 1996 stated:³⁹

Sweden will compete with high skills, not low wages. The idea of lifelong learning is to be realised. The school, preschool and leisure time centre are to be integrated to improve the first crucial years of compulsory school (my translation).

What is noteworthy is the vision of integrating preschool within education based on an upward dynamic, i.e. preschool is to influence compulsory school. It reflects the spirit of the 1994 investigation recommending the making of the Swedish school as 'child-mature' – taking a holistic approach to the child and being responsive to the needs and style of each individual child – through the integration of preschool and compulsory school.

The next few years witnessed a series of major policy changes for preschool education that further altered the relationship. Those related to the area of administration and governance are: the introduction of preschool class in 1998, and entitlement reforms undertaken between 2001 and 2003. The preschool class, although part of the compulsory school system catering for 6-year-olds, is a voluntary form of school attendance. It was conceived as a bridge between the two distinct cultures, i.e. preschool and compulsory school, that uses pedagogical approaches drawn from both preschool and school practices while keeping the child's holistic development as its overall aim (Kaga, 2007). Thus, the policy placed 6-year-olds in school without making it compulsory, while opening possibilities for preschool pedagogy to enter and permeate the early years of compulsory school (see the section below on workforce for further discussion).

Meanwhile, the successive entitlement-related measures not only enabled the preschool sector to become widely accessible and affordable, but also gave it a greater recognition (Martin Korpi, 2007: 70). Universal entitlement to a place in preschool for children over the age of 12 months became legislated in 1995. In 2001, children of unemployed parents received the right to a place in preschool for three hours per day; this right was extended in 2002 to children whose parents were at home taking care of another child. Also in 2002, the introduction of a maximum fee made preschool properly affordable; and in 2003, universal free preschool for 4- and 5-year-olds was legislated. Consequently, the preschool enrolment

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https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/Central/dokument/pdf/tal/regeringsforklaring_mars_1996.pdf

rate for children ages 1-6 increased from 68% in 2004 to 77% in 2005; it was 95% for children ages 4-6 (Martin Korpi, 2007).

By the mid 2000s, the relationship, as understood from the various policy developments, was that of preschool and compulsory school belonging to the same 'family', i.e. the education system, and the former strengthening its position in that system, even influencing pedagogical practices in school. However, in its 1999, 2000 and 2001 studies, *Skolverket*, or the National Agency for Education, in charge of supervising, supporting, following up and evaluating preschools and schools in order to improve their quality and outcomes, found evidence of traditional school-oriented practices and a traditional view of knowledge reflected in the preschool, for example, the organisation of learning activities into set subjects and time periods in the preschool classes (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 23). In addition, Skolverket's evaluation of the 1996 reform that integrated preschool within education, published in 2004 and 2008, identified a schoolification tendency in preschools, rather than the opposite tendency intended by the government (Skolverket, 2004 and 2008).

An administrative and governance milestone was reached when the new Education Act (Bill 2009/10:165) was adopted in 2010 and entered into force on July 2011. With this, preschool has become formally part of the school system, 'with the aim of consolidating its status as the first step of the education system and of enhancing its quality and equivalence' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c: 1). Preschool officially became a distinct form of school, sharing common overall goals and the concepts of 'teaching' and 'education' with other forms of schools, and being subject to new provisions for systematic work on quality as well as joint supervision to be undertaken by municipalities and the School Inspectorate. The aim of preschool as stated in the new Act retains the holistic view and approach to the child and the important place of parents, but it explicitly refers to preschool as preparing for continued education and laying the foundation of lifelong learning. Concepts of 'education' and 'teaching' are also applied to preschool. 'Teaching' is defined as follows:

'those goal-oriented processes which, under the direction of preschool teachers, are aimed at development and learning through the acquisition and development of knowledge and values. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c: 2)

The concept 'education' is defined as 'the activities within which teaching takes place based on defined goals' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c: 2). In the past, the use of the term 'teaching' – as well as 'pupils' – in the context of preschool was considered problematic due to its connotation of favouring the 'hegemony of school culture' (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 28). In its explanatory note, the Ministry of Education and Research

(2011) clarifies, with care: 'The fact that preschool is covered by the concept of teaching does not change the task or activities of preschool, nor does it call into question the pedagogy or working methods that have been used within the preschool system for many years' (p. 2). Thus, while explicitly recognizing it as distinct from other school forms, the new Education Act reinforced the school identity of preschool. Not only is the same language used simultaneously about preschool and school but preschool is made subject to the common goals and requirements of the school system.

5.3.2.2. Curricular changes

In the context of recent decentralisation in Sweden, national curricula are very important steering documents that enable the 'governing by goals' of preschools and compulsory schools. The following curricular changes were made in the post-1989 period in Sweden, which impacted on the relationship between preschool and compulsory school:

- The development of the curriculum for preschool in 1998 (Lpfö 98)
- The revision of the curriculum for compulsory school (Lpo 94) in 1998 to include preschool class and leisure time centres
- The revision of the curriculum for preschool in 2010 (revised Lpfö 98)
- The development of the new curriculum for compulsory school, preschool class and leisure time centres in 2011 (Lgr 11)

5.3.2.2.1. Preschool and revised school curricula (1998)

For preschool, Lpfö 98 was the first real curriculum with legal provisions that established pedagogical content in an ordinance. It was received with great enthusiasm by preschool staff: preschool had finally achieved the status of 'education' that it had long aspired to (Martin Korpi, 2007: 64). Preschool was clearly stated as the first step in lifelong learning, and was to be enjoyable, secure and rich in learning for all children. Preschool was to provide care and stimulate development and learning, and its activities were to be organised in a way that supported working parents. The curriculum is founded on the assumption that children are competent and constantly seeking to improve their understanding of the surrounding world (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 19). The image of the child as competent, which invites an approach that takes listening to children seriously, builds on traditional preschool pedagogy but was also inspired and reinforced by the Reggio Emilia approach, which has had great influence on the Swedish preschool (Martin Korpi, 2007: 64-66).

In the same year, 1998, the compulsory school curriculum (Lpo 94) was revised to incorporate preschool class and leisure time centres. The revised version embraced a new view of children, knowledge and learning; and the concept of teaching became replaced to a large extent, but not entirely, by learning, reflecting the notion of children as active in their own learning processes (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 19). Other new features included the emphasis on alternative ways of self-expression and learning, apart from reading and writing, such as music, drama, body movement, drawing, painting and multimedia; and inclusion of new concepts such as learning through play, creative activities, experimental and investigative learning, and care (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 19).

The two curricula have the same structure (see the table below), and have shared views on fundamental values, learning and knowledge (Martin Korpi, 2005: 11). They are short framework documents and similar in length. They both stress the same fundamental values, notably democracy, care and consideration toward others, solidarity and gender equality.

Table 5.3: Summary of contents Lpfo 98 and Lpo 94

Curriculum for preschool (Lpfo 98)	Curriculum for compulsory, preschool class, leisure time centre (Lpo 94)
1. Fundamental values and tasks of the pre-school	1. Fundamental values and tasks of the school
Fundamental values	Fundamental values
Understanding and compassion for others	Understanding and compassion for others
Objectivity and comprehensiveness	Objectivity and open approaches
--	An equivalent education
--	Rights and obligations
The task of the pre-school	The task of the school
2. Goals and guidelines	2. Goals and Guidelines
2.1 Norms and values	2.1 Norms and values
2.2 Development and learning	2.2 Knowledge
2.3. Influence of the child	2.3 Responsibility and influence of pupils
2.4 Pre-school and home	2.4 School and home
2.5 Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the leisure-time centre	2.5 Transition and co-operation

--	2.6 The school and the surrounding world
--	2.7 Assessment and grades
--	2.8 Responsibility of the school head

However, there are differences. In the preschool curriculum, the term ‘children’ is used throughout, whereas the compulsory school curriculum almost always refers to ‘pupils’. The former refers to the use of ‘a pedagogical approach where care, nurturing and learning form a coherent whole’ (Lpfö 98), which is not found in the latter. The preschool curriculum has ‘goals to strive for’, without grades or individual child assessments, while the compulsory school curriculum has ‘goals to attain’, i.e. prescribed goals and outcomes for individual students. The emphasis of preschool is to nurture in all children a desire and curiosity for learning and confidence in their own learning, rather than acquiring a pre-defined level of knowledge (Skolverket, 2004: 11; Martin Korpi, 2005: 11). Moreover, the preschool curriculum does not address individual teachers, as in the compulsory school curriculum, but emphasises team work between teachers in preschool and between teachers and childminders to reflect the inseparability of care and education in preschool pedagogy (Martin Korpi, 2005: 11).

5.3.2.2.2. Revision of the preschool curriculum (2010) and the new curriculum for compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure time centre (2011)

The preschool curriculum was found to necessitate some revision. In 2008, Skolverket was given the mandate (U2008/6144/S) to revise the preschool curriculum by ‘raising the ambition of preschool towards a more pedagogic task’ (p. 2) (Pramling Samuelsson and Sheridan, 2010: 221). When presenting the task in the media, the Minister of Education stated ‘We will get more numeracy and literacy in preschool’ – which was interpreted by some as the government intention to turn preschool into traditional school (Pramling Samuelsson and Sheridan, 2010: 221).

The philosophy of the curriculum has remained the same; and the distinction between preschool and school curriculum in terms of ‘goals to strive for’ and ‘goals to attain’ respectively has been maintained. However, there have been important changes. Firstly, the curricular goals related to language and communicative development as well as mathematics were clarified and extended; the goals for natural sciences and technology were also clarified and increased in number. Secondly, a new section on follow-up, evaluation and development was introduced. It defined the aim of evaluation as obtaining ‘knowledge of how the quality of

the preschool... can be developed so that each child receives the best possible conditions for learning and development' (revised Lpfo 98, p. 14). This would entail, according to the curriculum, monitoring, documenting and analysing each child's learning and development, and obtaining knowledge of the experiences, knowledge, participation, interest and areas over which the child has influence. Thirdly, preschool teachers were given the main pedagogical responsibility for children's development and learning within the working team, which consists of preschool teachers and nursery nurses. Fourthly, a new section on the responsibility of the preschool head was added, clarifying her position as the pedagogical leader and head of staff within the preschool (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c). The revised curriculum gave the preschool a strengthened school identity by the increased visibility of literacy, mathematics, science and technology in terms of content and goals; the addition of the new sections on evaluation and the responsibility of the preschool head – which were missing in the earlier version vis-à-vis the compulsory school curriculum; and the clear assignment of pedagogical responsibility to preschool teachers compared to assistants or childminders.

Table 5.4: Summary of contents Lpfo 98 and revised Lpfo 98

Curriculum for preschool (Lpfo 98)	Revised curriculum for preschool (Lpfo 98)
1. Fundamental values and tasks of the pre-school	1. Fundamental values and tasks of the pre-school
Fundamental values	Fundamental values
Understanding and compassion for others	Understanding and compassion for others
Objectivity and comprehensiveness	Objectivity and comprehensiveness
The task of the pre-school	The task of the preschool
2. Goals and guidelines	2. Goals and Guidelines
2.1 Norms and values	2.1 Norms and values
2.2 Development and learning	2.2 Development and learning
2.3. Influence of the child	2.3. Influence of the child
2.4 Pre-school and home	2.4 Pre-school and home
2.5 Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the leisure-time centre	2.5 Co-operation between the pre-school class, the school and the leisure-time centre
--	2.6 Follow-up, evaluation and development
--	2.7 Responsibility of the head of the preschool

While preschool had its curriculum revised, compulsory school, preschool class and leisure time centres received a new curriculum (Lgr 11) in 2011. The main purpose of developing a new curriculum was to have a clearer curriculum document with new syllabuses and knowledge requirements for compulsory school (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008: 1). Specified goals were reduced in number; the goals were made clearer; and centralised teaching content was prescribed. These were to strengthen central control over the education system and not to leave too much scope for choice and decentralisation.⁴⁰ The new curriculum (Lgr 11) has become longer due to the addition of syllabuses of 242 pages (in the English version); but the first part of the curriculum retains the structure and orientation of the previous curriculum Lpo 94, and its length largely remains the same.

5.3.2.3. Changes regarding the workforce

Among the post-1989 policy changes with regard to the workforce, the following stand out: (1) the legal provision of 1998 allowing preschool teachers to be able to teach and work in compulsory school; (2) the introduction of an integrated initial teacher education in 2001; (3) the Ordinance stipulating government support for preschool teachers to undertake a higher degree in research schools; and the Preschool Boost, an in-service training scheme in 2009; and (4) the separation of initial teacher education in 2010. In terms of the workforce, the relationship between early childhood and primary education became close in 2001 with the introduction of the unified teacher education system for preschool and school teachers. However, the relationship became separated in 2010 when the new teacher education system instituted separate degrees for becoming preschool and school teachers, with the former subject to less credit requirements.

Integration of initial teacher education (2001)

Prior to 2001, preschool and school teachers were trained separately, with the former requiring lower qualification than the latter. The separate systems of teacher education were integrated into a single framework in 2001. The recent reforms around preschool, compulsory school and leisure time, such as the administrative integration of preschool within education, the development of the curricula and the introduction of the preschool class, gave support to collaboration and joint planning between the three categories of professionals – working on equal conditions – as ‘natural forms of work’ in the school system (Bill 1999/2000:135). Moreover, being the first step in lifelong learning, preschool was considered to form part of society’s collective education and to improve children’s opportunities to achieve the goals of

⁴⁰ <http://www.thelocal.se/20101011/29540>

primary education (Bill 1999/2000:135). Therefore, integration of initial teacher education aimed to equip preschool and school teachers and leisure time pedagogues with a common set of skills that lay the foundation for cooperation in the school system (Bill 1999/2000:135).⁴¹

There was a common admission of students to this teacher education programme – they were to decide their area of specialisation during the course of the programme. The programme comprised four parts (Johansson, 2003: 15-16). First was the ‘general field of education’ dealing with areas of knowledge (e.g. philosophy, ethics, psychology, special needs education, child and youth development) regarded as important for all teachers and pedagogues, regardless of their eventual specialisation. This part consisted of 60 credits, with at least 10 obtained in practice in preschool or school. Second was the ‘field of study’, involving the study of a particular subject or subject area that a teacher intended to teach and that would be appropriate for the age of children she or he would wish to work with. This part consisted again of 40 credits, with again 10 linked to practice. Third was the ‘specialisation’, involving deepening the knowledge acquired so far. This comprised 20 credits. Last was the production of a thesis, giving 20 credits, carried out within the framework of the three previous parts of study.

Preschool and school teachers and leisure time centre pedagogues had a three-and-a-half-year education (with the exception of students planning to work with older children of ages 14-16 and 16-19) (Johansson, 2003). In the new system, they would share the professional identity with each other and also possess a common base of knowledge and skills. It should be noted that this system differed from the French initial teacher education, which trains teachers of ages 2/3 to 11 without ample opportunity to gain a certain degree of specialisation in the *école maternelle* for those intending to teach this level.

Research schools for preschool teachers and ‘Preschool Boost’ (2009)

The following policy measures cover in-service training of preschool teachers. One was the research school initiative for preschool teachers as well as school teachers, introduced by the Ordinance on government grants for postgraduate studies for teachers and preschool teachers (2009:1036).⁴² The purpose of the research schools initiative was to strengthen research in the field of preschool education and to improve the quality of preschools by allowing preschool teachers to undertake research in order to earn a *licentiate* degree⁴³ while

⁴¹ <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c4/26/45/df80f045.pdf>

⁴² http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Forordning-20091036-om-stat_sfs-2009-1036/

⁴³ a degree between master’s and PhD degrees.

retaining their salary (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). 80% of the time of participating teachers was to be spent on research and further education, and the remaining 20% on working in preschool or school as usual. The government provided grants to preschool principals for 75% of the salary costs during the time a member of staff participated.⁴⁴ The initiative was to continue until 2014; and those who obtained a licentiate or higher degree in a preschool-related area, and who demonstrated excellent teaching skills in service for at least four years, could be appointed as senior preschool teachers (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c).

The 'Preschool Boost' is an in-service training initiative initiated in 2009 and currently carried out with the support of the government. Its aim is to reinforce the task of preschool and promote the fulfilment of the goals of the preschool. Through the scheme, in-service training is offered to preschool heads, preschool teachers and childminders on the areas specified in the curriculum, particularly children's development in language, mathematics and evaluation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011c). Together, these two policy measures contribute not only to improving the quality of preschools, but also to strengthening the field of preschool with higher expertise and establishing it as a legitimate research field.

Augmenting the responsibility of preschool teachers and heads (2010)

As touched upon in the above section on curricular changes, the revised curriculum for the preschool (2010) clearly placed pedagogical responsibility in the preschool on preschool teachers – a break away from previous preschool practice in which preschool teachers and nursery nurses (*barnskotare*) were all considered equally responsible for pedagogical activities with children, grounding the notion that 'care' and 'education' were intertwined and of equal importance. In addition, the new section on the responsibility of the preschool head clearly spelled out increased responsibilities in terms of pedagogical and management leadership, and served to elevate the vital importance of the position which now was to equal the position of school head, as stated in the respective curricula.

Separation of initial teacher education (2010)

With this major reform, initial education for preschool and school teachers and leisure time centres became separated, thus returning to the pre-2001 system of education and qualification. Fully integrated teacher education was considered insufficient. A reform was needed that would provide a 'world-class education for preschool and school teachers' –

⁴⁴ <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/14484>

which would help Sweden 'to regain its position as a leading knowledge-based and industrialised country' (Ministry of Education and Research, 2010: 1). The government interpretation was that integrated teacher education was one cause leading to Sweden's bad results in PISA and PIRLS; therefore, a policy interest emerged in reforming it (Pramling Samuelsson and Sheridan, 2010: 223). For this reason, the Bill 2009/10:89, entitled 'Top of the class – new teacher education programmes', proposed the replacement of the current degrees in education with four new professional degrees aimed clearly at strengthening specialisation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2010):

- Degree in preschool education (210 credits): acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to meet the learning and care needs of the youngest children, and having very good knowledge of how reading, writing and basic mathematical skills are acquired
- Degree in primary school education, with the following three specialisations:
 - o Preschool class and years 1-3 (240 credits): acquiring a broad range of knowledge, including knowledge and skills to follow children's development and teach most subjects
 - o Years 4-6 (240 credits): acquiring a broad orientation and in-depth knowledge of subject studies, with higher requirements and a well-defined identity as teacher oriented towards years 4-6
 - o Leisure time centres (180 credits): focusing on knowledge in the field of out-of-school teaching and one or more practical or artistic subjects
- Degree in subject education with the following two specialisations:
 - o Subject education directed to work with years 7-9 of compulsory school (270 credits)
 - o Subject education directed at work in upper secondary school (300 or 330 credits, depending on the choice of the subject)
- Degree in vocational education (90 credits), requiring basic eligibility for higher education studies and advanced and relevant vocational knowledge as the conditions for taking up the degree.

The new degree structure for preschool and school teachers and leisure time pedagogue thus became hierarchical, with the leisure time centre specialisation at the bottom followed by the preschool teacher degree, then the degrees for compulsory school teachers. The same duration of initial education period was retained for the preschool teacher degree as before, i.e. three and a half years, though it is shorter than the four years or more assigned to the new primary school related degrees (except for pedagogues specialised in work for leisure time centres). Although many university academics were critical about and opposed the proposal (Pramling Samuelsson and Sheridan, 2010: 224), in particular the shorter duration

of the degree proposed in preschool teachers' education, the measure was supported by the government partly as a way to counter the problem of the current shortage of preschool teachers in Sweden.

5.3.3. Influences

One powerful influence on the policy changes, relevant to the relationship between preschool and compulsory education since 1989, is undeniably Sweden's desire to be a knowledge nation and its recognition of education as important for economic growth and competitiveness. These underlay, for example, the government decision to transfer the responsibility for ECE from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education in 1996, which sought to lay a better ground for promoting the continuity of learning and achieving the vision of lifelong learning. According to Skolverket, when considered from an international perspective, the 1996 reform was prompted by increasing emphasis on 'the importance of education as a factor promoting economic growth and competitiveness' (Skolverket, 2004: 6-7). Similarly, Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar (2003) state that '[f]rom a wider, global perspective, the decision to integrate at the level of ministries can be understood as a response to increased global competition for knowledge and skills' (2003: 16). The subsequent steps taken to reinforce the pedagogical tasks of the preschool as well as the quality of the compulsory school – from the curricular changes and the teacher education reform to the adoption of the new Education Act – were all to contribute to making Sweden a knowledge nation.

A symbolic publication in this respect was the final report of the Globalisation Council:⁴⁵ 'Beyond the crisis: How Sweden can succeed in the new global economy' issued in 2009 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009). This report states:

Knowledge in the broad sense is a key factor in a country's bid to stay high on the value chain or move up the chain. This is why research and education policy is absolutely crucial to a country wishing to hold its own in an era of globalisation. (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009: 33).

Referring to its effect on educational preparation for compulsory school, the report recommends an earlier school start, i.e. making the preschool year for 6-year-olds

⁴⁵ In December 2006, the Swedish Government appointed the Globalisation Council to 'examine the question of how Sweden can best assert itself in an era of continuing globalisation, and to make appropriate recommendations' (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009: preface).

compulsory. Furthermore, recognizing that 'language skills are essential in a globalised world', and that '[a]s early as preschool level, the need for language training should be addressed' (p. 35), the report also recommends the introduction of targeted state grants to encourage municipalities to establish and/or expand 'language preschools' – not only for children from immigrant families whose mother tongue is not Swedish, but also for other children to promote the development of skills in other languages besides Swedish.

Another important force that has influenced the course of the policy is OECD's PISA, which is a part of the globalisation phenomena. Sweden's ranking has declined continuously since the first round of PISA in 2000, which placed the country 10th in literacy, 16th in mathematics and 11th in science out of 41 countries; in the 5th round of PISA in 2012, Sweden ranked 36th in literacy and 38th in mathematics and science out of 65 countries and economies. The latest performance in the international assessment exercise prompted the government to request from the OECD an in-depth review of their school system for the first time since it began cooperation with the organisation.

As mentioned earlier, the 2010 teacher education reform was undertaken with the aim to improving student outcomes in international assessments. The curricular alignment by subject area introduced in the revised compulsory school curriculum and in the revised preschool curriculum of 2010 may also have been undertaken due to the government concern for raising the student performances in school. Meanwhile, the PISA exercises seem to have so far spared the preschool sector from blame for Sweden's poor results. Internationally, the Swedish preschool is very well regarded, not least for its holistic pedagogy combining care, upbringing and learning, for example, in the *Starting Strong* reports (2001, 2006) that emanated from the OECD thematic reviews of ECEC. In fact, it could be said that the high international opinion about the Swedish preschool serves to support its tradition and position vis-à-vis compulsory school and to maintain a balanced relationship between the two.

The fact that the curricula for preschool and for compulsory school, preschool class and leisure time centres are conceived with a common view of the child – that is, the child as active participant and citizen, influencing others and his/her surroundings, and having democratic rights and responsibilities in accordance with their evolving capacities – reinforces the conceptual coherence between preschool and compulsory schools. However, an aspect that makes a fundamental difference between them is that the preschool sees 'the child' while the compulsory school sees 'the student'. As pointed out earlier, the terms 'the child' and 'children' are used in the preschool curriculum while the compulsory curriculum uses the terms 'the pupil' or 'pupils', except in few places that refer to, for example, children with special needs. A possible consequence of the terminology usage is that preschools have

goals to strive for whereas compulsory schools have goals to attain. In other words, being a pupil or student is to become subject to pre-defined school outcomes. This understanding is not dissimilar to 'the image of the child as nature' in preschool and 'the image of the child as reproducer of knowledge and culture' put forward by Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994). Moreover, the influence of the Reggio Emilia approaches in the Swedish preschool, mentioned earlier, may serve to set apart the preschool from the compulsory school by strengthening the conception of the child as rich and competent, the importance of all forms of senses and multiple ways of expressions, and the pedagogy of listening and thematic projects – which are unfamiliar in many compulsory school contexts.

Chapter 6: The views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the relationship

6.1. Introduction: an examination of views and experiences

Having analysed the relationship in terms of policy documents, the second component is an empirical study focused on collecting and examining the views and experiences of key stakeholders in the fields of early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden with regard to the relationship between these two sectors. This chapter offers an analysis of their views and experiences, particularly with respect to how the relationship has changed over time, what they felt about the changes in the relationship, what they thought brought about these changes, and how they saw the relationship developing in the future. The present chapter builds on the previous one in that it considers common themes, such as impacts of changes in governance, curricula and workforce, and influences on the relationship. The chapter uses the interview data collected through semi-structured interviews in France and Sweden, as noted in Chapter 4.

Additionally, the present chapter includes short descriptions of the settings and flows of the day in the French *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* and the Swedish preschool and preschool class. This data, collected as part of the pilot study, allows a deeper appreciation of the different environments in which children spend their time and therefore, of the kind of relationship that exists in each country. In sum, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first part briefly explains the sample of stakeholders who were interviewed. The second part presents short descriptions of the settings and flows of the day in the French and Swedish preschool and primary school. The third and fourth parts present the analyses of the views and experiences regarding the relationship in France and Sweden respectively.

6.2. The sample of interviewees

The methods and sources of data used for this chapter have been described in detail in Chapter 4. The interview guide can be found in Appendices 8 and 10. To reiterate, the main source of interview data was interviews with 51 key stakeholders in the field of early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. Of these, 24 are from France and 27 are from Sweden. As mentioned in Chapter 4, convenience sampling was used to establish the sample of interviewees. It was important to draw similar numbers of interviewees per stakeholder category (i.e. teacher, principal, inspector, teacher educator, policymaker, trade

union representative, school psychologist and professional association representative) from France and Sweden. Efforts were made to access interviewees with working experience in the field of education since 1989 or longer.

Table 6.1: summary of stakeholders interviewed in France and Sweden

Type of stakeholder	FRANCE Pilot and main fieldwork	SWEDEN Pilot and main fieldwork
National government officials	N = 1 covers both the <i>école maternelle</i> (EM) and <i>école élémentaire</i> (EE)	N = 3 specialised in preschool N = 2 specialised in primary school
Researcher-Teacher educators	N = 1 specialised in EM N = 3 covering EE but with some specialisation in EM	N = 3 specialised in preschool N = 1 specialised in primary school
Inspectors	N = 2 (1 specialised in EM)	N = 2 (1 specialised in preschool)
Principals	N = 1 principal of EE N = 2 principals of <i>école primaire</i> N = 4 principals of EM	N = 2 principals of preschool-primary N = 1 principal of resource centre N = 1 assistant principal of primary N = 1 assistant principal of preschool
Teachers	N = 3 EE teachers (1 is teacher of class MS-GS-CP) N = 3 EM teachers	N = 3 preschool class teachers (1 qualified as preschool teacher; 2 qualified as primary school teachers) N = 4 preschool teachers
School psychologist	N = 1	N = 1
Teacher union	N = 2	N = 1
Professional association	N = 1 (association for EM)	N = 2 (association of local authorities)
SUB TOTAL	N = 24	N = 27
TOTAL	N = 51	

Among the French interviewees from schools, most worked in public *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*; there was only one interviewee – a school principal of a private school that combined the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* – working in the private sector. The Swedish interviewees from schools all belonged to municipal preschools and schools, although one *rektor* interviewee and one preschool teacher interviewee had experience working in private preschools and schools. The majority of interviewees in both countries were female, though the proportion was lower in France (17 out of 24) than Sweden (25 out of 27).

In terms of working experience, more than half of interviewees in both countries had more than 30 years of experience: 13 out of 24 in France, and 17 out of 27 in Sweden. It was a deliberate choice to seek interviewees with more than 25 years of working experience in the field of education, since the policy document analysis – the first part of the empirical study – was focused on developments since 1989 (see the table below for a summary of interviewees according to the number of years of working experience). All the French teachers interviewed had experience working in both the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, while only 1 out of the 7 teachers interviewed has worked and taught in both preschool and school in Sweden.

Table 6.2: Number of years of experience of the stakeholders interviewed

Number of years of experience	France	Sweden
1-9 years	2	3
10-19 years	3	6
20-29 years	6	2
30+ years	13	16
	Total: 24	Total: 27

6.3. Descriptions of early childhood education and primary school settings and the flow of a day

This section presents descriptions of selected ECE and primary school settings and the flow of a day in these settings in France and Sweden. The data is drawn from the observation carried out as part of the pilot study in both countries. The photographs of the settings described below can be found in Appendix 11. The purpose of this section is to illustrate, by written and visual means, the similarities and differences across the French and Swedish settings as well as those between the ECE and primary school settings, which can help enrich the understanding of the relationship as experienced by children and constructed by

teachers. The reasons for choosing to present the settings were that (1) the recordings that I made in these settings consistently contained key information (e.g. schedule and flow of the day, number of children, interactions between children and adults), and (2) photographs that convey well the physical characteristics of the settings were available.

6.3.1. France

6.3.1.1. A class of 4-year-olds in the *école maternelle*

The selected *école maternelle* class is situated in a city adjacent to Paris, with 55,250 inhabitants in 2009. The city has an ethnically diverse population. The class is part of the *école maternelle* with a total of 290 children grouped in 12 classes. All the classes are single-age classes except for one, which has children of the *moyenne* and *grande sections* (the second last and last years of the *maternelle*). The *école maternelle* is designated an establishment of the Network for School Success (*Réseaux de réussite scolaire*).⁴⁶ Due to this designation, the class size is limited to maximum 25 children per class, and they receive additional resources. Children from 38 nationalities are enrolled in the *école maternelle*. The *école maternelle* to which this class belongs is a little exceptional in that it starts the activities at about 09:00, which is later than many other *écoles maternelles* in general, which usually start at 08:30 or 08:40; and is located beside an *école élémentaire*.

There are 25 children in this class, with one teacher and one assistant (*Agent Spécialisé des écoles maternelles* or *ATSEM*). The teacher leads and directs the activities, and the ATSEM provides assistance so that the activities can be undertaken smoothly (e.g. accompanying children to toilets; helping to prepare materials on the tables; assisting children with painting activity). Most activities take place in their main classroom (Photo 1), but some take place in other specialised rooms within the *école maternelle*, such as physical and musical activity. Children call the teacher *maîtresse* (a popular term for 'teacher'). The day starts and ends with the circle time in a designated corner of the classroom (Photo 2); and children are seated in groups of about six to undertake various activities in the classroom (Photos 3, 4, 5). When the morning session finishes, the teacher takes a break, and it is the *animateur/animateur*

⁴⁶ *Réseaux de réussite scolaire* (RRS) is a programme that provides greater resources (e.g. funds, teacher hours) and a better learning environment (e.g. reduction of class size) to schools in disadvantaged areas, and that encourages the development of new educational projects and partnerships with local actors that would help enhance academic achievement (see for example http://www.ac-paris.fr/portail/jcms/p1_401235/reseaux-de-reussite-scolaire?cid=p1_321901, accessed 7 August 2012). Until 2006, RRS was formally called *Zones d'éducation prioritaire*, or *ZEP*, which had started in 1982 (Bénabou et al, 2009).

who takes care of children going to lunch and recreation straight after. The teacher comes back to the children after 13:15.

Table 6.3: Timetable of a class of *moyenne section* (4-year-olds) in the *école maternelle*

	Monday	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday
Reception (<i>accueil</i>) 08:50 – 09:10	Arrival of children in the class; free <i>atelier</i> and free play			
Circle time (<i>regroupement</i>) 09:10 – 09:35	Indicating children's presence and absence on the board Ritual: calling the names, checking presence/absence, putting up the date, weather, the word of the day			
Morning snack 09:35 – 09:55	Educational and convivial moment of the morning snack (language, numbering, <i>savoir-vivre</i> , discovery of food)			
Going to toilet, washing hands	Hygiene – washing hands			
<i>Atelier</i> 10:00 – 10:25	<i>Rondes et jeux chante</i>	Gymnastic activity	Collective play	Athletic activity
<i>Atelier</i> 10:30 – 11:10	<i>Atelier</i> working on all the 5 curricular domains: free play in different activity corners of the class			
Recreation 11:15 – 11:45	Recreation outside with others; if raining, showing a 15-minute video inside			
Circle time (<i>regroupement</i>) 11:45 – 12:00	Summary / evaluation of the morning Story reading Parents coming to pick up children who are going home for lunch			
Lunch				
Reception (<i>accueil</i>) 13:20 – 14:20	Resting / taking a nap Children coming back from home			
Free activity 14:20 – 14:45	Calm play and activity: Clay work, making collage, free drawing, puzzle, board games (<i>jeux de société</i>)			

Circle time (<i>regroupement</i>) 14:45 – 15:00	Listening to music, songs, playing instruments
<i>Atelier</i> 15:00 – 15:30	Flexible atelier according to the project of the class (oral or written language, “discovery of the world” for teaching mathematical notions)
Recreation 15:30 – 16:00	Recreation outside with others; if raining, showing a 15-minute video inside
Circle time (<i>regroupement</i>) / going home	Free language Story reading Parents arriving

6.3.1.2. A class of 6-year-olds (the first year, or *classe préparatoire*) in the *école élémentaire*

The *école élémentaire* is situated in Paris in an ethnically mixed area, and is also designated as part of the Network for School Success. There are approximately 300 children in the school, grouped into 12 classes. Each class has 23-25 children, staffed with one teacher. The classes are single-grade classes, with the exception of one class where children of age 6 and 11 are grouped together. The city of Paris provides all *écoles élémentaires* with teachers (called *professeurs de ville de Paris*) in certain subjects such as music, art, physical education and foreign language – which is not the case in many other localities in France. To support children with learning difficulties, there are specialised teachers coming to work with them two to three times a week.

There are 25 children in this class, with one teacher. Children are from different nationalities (e.g. Mali, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Romania, Haiti). Most activities take place in their main classroom, but some take place in other rooms, such as physical and musical activity. There are small activity corners, such as library and technology corners, at the end of the classroom. There is a teacher's desk, where she sits often to correct students' exercises. Much of the teaching is whole class, with the teacher in front of the classroom facing the students. Students call the teacher '*maîtresse*' (as the teacher is female; if it is a male teacher, he is called '*maître*'), just like in the *école maternelle*. Apart from the main teacher, there are specialised teachers in sports, music, art and English (the Paris region is one of the very few if not the only region that has these specialised teachers).

Table 6.4: Timetable of the 6-year-olds class (first year) of the école élémentaire

	Monday	Tuesday		Thursday		Friday
08:30	Reading	Visual arts (group 1)	Reading	Music education (group 1)	Reading	Physical education and sports
09:15	Physical education and sports	Reading	Visual arts (group 2)	Reading	Music education (group 2)	Writing practice
10:00	Oral language					
10:10	Recreation					
10:30	Mathematics Numbers, calculation	Mathematics Size, measurement		Mathematics Numbers, calculation		Mathematics Geometry
11:10	Summary / evaluation of reading					
11:40	Mathematics					
12:00		Personalised support				
12:30		Personalised support				
13:00	Lunch break and <i>ateliers</i>					
14:00	Writing					
14:30	Debate / physical education and sports	Computer (group 1)	Library (group 2)	Computer (group 2)	Library (group 1)	Civic and moral instruction
15:10	Recreation					
15:30	Lessons + preparing school bag + evaluation	Lessons + preparing school bag + evaluation		Lessons + preparing school bag + evaluation		Lessons + preparing school bag + evaluation
15:45	Discovery of the world (space / time)	Discovery of the world (living beings)		Discovery of the world (material and objects)		Mathematical games / reading games
16:15	Story	Poetry		Story reading		Poetry

	reading			
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6.3.2. Sweden

The preschool and school settings described below are located side by side, in a municipality with commuting distance of Stockholm, with a rapidly growing population of over 30,000. It is a young community in a countryside environment where farming and small industry are found. Most families living in the municipality are middle class, and the percentage of foreign-born residents (14% in 2004) is lower than the whole Stockholm region (Bäck, 2004). The preschool and primary school in which the selected settings are located are overseen by the same principal, and each has an assistant principal. Normally, children completing the preschool would go to the primary school.

6.3.2.1. A preschool group of mixed ages

In the preschool where the selected group is located, there are 100 children of ages 1-5. Children are mostly Swedish; one of them has a Brazilian mother and a Swedish father. The preschool group is a mixed-age group: out of the total of 21 children, 5 children are aged 4-5, 7 children are aged 3-4, 6 children are aged 2-3, and 3 children are aged 1-2. The preschool group is staffed with one preschool teacher and 2 nursery nurses (*barnskotares*), therefore, the child:staff ratio in this group is 7:1. The preschool setting is like a home, with a kitchen and comfortable furniture (Photo 9), and much space to move around for children (Photo 10). The group has different rooms in which to stay, play, learn, eat and rest (Photo 11): one room with books, cushions and carpet, one room with a carpet to do circle time and nap (Photo 12); there is one big room with a dining space and activity corners; a kitchen with space for painting and drawing activity. There is a large playground with many materials and facilities to play with (Photo 13). The preschool is open the whole day: parents may have their children in preschool from 06:30 until 18:00, while the core hours are between 08:00 and 14:00. There is much free play during the day. The teacher and *barnskotare* do not necessarily actively get involved in children's play and activities. The preschool is adjacent to the primary school, but does not share the same playgrounds.

Table 6.5: Timetable of the preschool group

06:30	Preschool opens, children coming to the preschool group
07:30	Going into respective group
08:00 – 08:30	Breakfast

09:30	Outdoor and various group activities
11:00	Announcements, tales, songs (<i>samling med upprop, saga, sang</i>)
11:15	Lunch
12:00 – 12:30	Sleeping, rest; older age group
12:30	Free play
14:00	Children’s songs, story time
14:15	Snack
15:00	Outdoor (<i>ute el innevistelse</i>)
17:00	Fruit for children who are still in preschool
18:00	Preschool closes

6.3.2.2. A preschool class for 6-year-olds

The primary school in which the selected preschool class is located has a total of 155 children, from the preschool class to 5th grade. The preschool class has 24 children, including one special needs child, and one child who speaks Portugese. There are two preschool class teachers – one qualified as a preschool teacher, the other as a school teacher – working together with a third teacher, with a specialist qualification, who supports the child with special needs. The preschool class has a great deal of space at its disposal: three large rooms plus one small one. Two of the big rooms have carpets in front of which there is a white board each (Photo 14). Children often sit in a circle on the carpets, in their socks, with the teacher when doing activities (Photo 15). There are tables around, and children can choose where to sit and do individual or group activities (Photos 16 and 17). There is also a kitchen, and sofas. There are activity corners, with books and various play and learning materials. The class is divided into two groups for some parts of the day, each group taught by one teacher. The teachers do not stay at their desks: they go around the group to talk to and support children. There is more interaction between teachers and children in the preschool class compared to the preschool group visited. There is a spacious schoolyard (Photo 18) which has an ice-skating area and a large slide. The day starts at 08:00, and ends at 14:00, after which it is leisure time centre activity, conducted within the same school premises until 18:00 and staffed with leisure time pedagogues, trained in providing children with out-of-school care activities.

Table 6.6: The flow of the day of the preschool class

08:00	Preschool class starts with circle time
08:15	Split into two groups, each group has one teacher
08:20	Literacy activity – whole group activity followed by individual activity
09:15	Recreation – going to the playground
09:45	Split into two groups
09:50	Mathematics activity; then writing ‘contact books’ (a book for communicating with parents on activities, important events, etc.)
10:30	Free play inside
11:20	Free play outside
12:00	Lunch at the canteen
12:50	Going out to the woods (on the day I visited the preschool class)
13:55	Circle time, alphabet songs, giving out contact books
14:00	End of the day

The table below provides a comparison of some of the key aspects of the above-mentioned ECE and primary school settings.

Table 6.7: Comparison of some characteristics of the settings visited in the pilot study

	France		Sweden	
	<i>École maternelle</i>	1 st grade	Preschool	Preschool class
Opening hours	09:00 - 16:30	08:30 - 16:30	06:30 - 18:00 (core preschool hours: 09:00 - 14:00)	08:00 - 14:00
Staff	1 teacher + 1 assistant	1 teacher only	1 teacher and 2 nursery nurses	2 teachers (1 preschool teacher, 1 school teacher)
	Lunch time and recess after lunch: social	Lunch time and recess after lunch: social	Teachers stay with children during lunch and	Teachers stay with children during lunch and

	worker (<i>animatuer</i> or <i>animatrice</i>) takes care of children, not the teacher	worker (<i>animatuer</i> or <i>animatrice</i>) takes care of children, not the teacher	recess after lunch as well as after the core preschool hours (i.e. 14:00)	recess after lunch
Number of children per class	25	25	24	24
staff:child ratio	1:12.5	1:25	1:8	1:12
Age of child	Single age group (4 years)	Single age group (6 years)	Mixed age group (1, 2, 3, 4 years together)	Single age group (6 years)
Environment	1 classroom in principle	1 classroom in principle	Spacious, consisting of several rooms	Specious, consisting of several rooms
	Activity corners within single classroom	Very marginal and few activity corners	Activity corners spread in different rooms	Activity corners spread in different rooms
	School-like	School-like	Home-like, equipped with kitchen and dining space; children take off their shoes at entrance	Between home and school, equipped with kitchen; children take off their shoes at entrance
	Courtyard with concrete floor	Courtyard with concrete floor	Large garden	Large garden
Pedagogy	Circle time combined with 'ateliers'	Frontal teaching facing blackboard, combined with a small amount of groupwork	Much free play combined with use of specific groupwork	Split into two groups guided by teacher for each, whole group, individual and group work combined
	Teacher talks much	Teacher talks much	Teacher talks little, more one-	Teacher talks to group from time

			to-one interaction	to time, interaction with group, one-to- one interaction
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6.4. France

6.4.1. The current relationship

There were three views on the current relationship that emerged from the interviews. First was no-relationship, according to one interviewee (*école élémentaire* teacher), finding the two schools separate and emphasising that teaching in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* were two distinct professions. Second was a two-way relationship in which the *école maternelle* looked to the *école élémentaire* for guidance on how to develop its activity to meet the latter's requirements; and the *école élémentaire* looked to the *école maternelle* to build its activity based on children's experiences in the *maternelle*. This type of relationship was expressed by one interviewee (*école maternelle* teacher). Third was schoolification, or *primarisation*, of the *école maternelle*, reported by the great majority. A few interviewees pointed out that the *école maternelle* had a strong school-like character from its inception onwards – except around the 1970s. But most felt that schoolification was really set in motion in 1989 with the adoption of the *loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*, reaching its peak around 2008, and then toning down in 2013 with the passage of the *loi sur l'orientation et le programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République*.

6.4.2. The relationship prior to 1989

Many interviewees – particularly teachers and directors – thought that pre-1989 the two sectors were quite separate. Bridges did exist, they acknowledged, notably at the local level where transition projects were undertaken at the initiative of individual schools. Some interviewees – government officials, researchers and teacher educators – pointed out that the *école maternelle* was already school-like from its establishment in the late 19th century, stressing the mastering of three operations, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic.

The *école maternelle* imitated the *école élémentaire*, despite the pioneering concepts and efforts of Pauline Kergomare, the general inspector for the *école maternelle* in the late 19th

century and early 20th century who had wished for an institution, distinct from the *école élémentaire*, based on the holistic attention to the child. Four interviewees referred to the 'glorious years' of the *école maternelle* – around the 1970s – whereby it asserted its specificity vis-à-vis the *école élémentaire* and provided an environment in which children lived their childhood. Subsequently, the *école maternelle* had become framed in school terms, and gradually strengthened its preparation-for-school mission due to the 'discovery' in the 1980s of the potential of the *école maternelle* for reducing dropouts, repetition and learning difficulties in school, especially for disadvantaged children. The curricular changes and the unification of inspection for the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* were among the measures that reinforced its unity to the school system.

6.4.3. The relationship since 1989

There was strong consensus on the significance of the education law adopted in 1989 for the relationship between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*. The *Cycles d'apprentissages* inscribed in the law were understood by many interviewees as the first official policy on the relationship. The *Cycles* reflected the government vision of how the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* were to link with each other. The 1989 education law also stipulated the change to initial teacher education by making the teacher training institutions part of the university system – which, without intention, contributed to weakening the *école maternelle* component of the initial teacher education.

Several interviewees felt that there were more official discourses on transition and liaison between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* since 1989, stressing the importance of continuity of learning between different levels as well as the promotion of progression in students' learning from one level to the next. It was the beginning of a less positive period for the *école maternelle*. The *école maternelle* rapidly adopted the school-like form (*forme scolaire*), started to become more and more like the *école élémentaire*, and increasingly reinforced its mission related to the preparation for school.

Schoolified practice spread, particularly to the last year of the *école maternelle* - the *grande section*; interviewees talked of the making of the *grande section* as a *petite CP* or a *pre-CP* (*cours préparatoire* is the first year of the *école élémentaire*). Schoolified practices in the *école maternelle* that were reported included:

- Decreased number of activity and symbolic play corners
- Much more writing activity and less activity involving manipulation

- Having individual tables and arranging them facing the blackboard, especially in the *grande section*
- More use of *fichiers* (worksheets), photocopied or downloaded from the internet
- Increased expectation vis-à-vis children to sit still, listen for a long time, and understand the *consignes* (instructions) of the teacher right away
- '*Faire le cours*' (dispensing teaching to children) instead of '*faire la classe*' (carrying out activity with children)
- Placing too much emphasis on academic learning, and ignoring other aspects of child development

6.4.3.1. Cycles d'apprentissages

The main purpose of the *Cycles* was to improve the continuity of learning between different levels of the school system. Learning was to be organised in the space of each three-year *cycle*, which was, in part, to involve flexible adaptations of pedagogical approaches to suit each child's progression. One interviewee said that behind the *Cycles* was the idea of the *école maternelle* pedagogy influencing the *école élémentaire* practice – particularly in the second *cycle* that comprised the last year of the *école maternelle* and the first two years of the *école élémentaire*. Schools became obliged to hold the *conseil des maîtres de cycle* (teacher meeting on the *Cycle*)⁴⁷ once every trimester.

The *Cycles* were found to be positive in that they drew attention to the importance of linking the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, and enhanced communication and cooperation between certain schools, notably to encourage children's smooth transition from the *grande section* (GS) to *cours préparatoire* (CP). However, many were critical about the *Cycles*, not only because they were implemented variably due, to a large extent, to the lack of training and pedagogical support provided to teachers. The *Cycles* were seen to have encouraged *primarisation* of the *école maternelle*, especially its last year, by placing the GS simultaneously in the first and second *cycles*. The fact that the GS belonged to both *cycles* confused teachers: it made some think that the GS was to address learning objectives attached to the second *cycle*, and prompted them to import the *école élémentaire* methods in their classrooms, as mentioned earlier. One interviewee mentioned:

⁴⁷ The *conseil des maîtres de cycle*, or a teacher meeting on the *Cycle*, gathers teachers who are teaching within a *Cycle*. The meeting takes stock of children's progress in acquiring the competences defined for the *Cycle*. It formulates proposals concerning children's passage from one *Cycle* to another or their retention within the *Cycle* (see <http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid225/les-structures-de-concertation.html>).

[Placing the GS with the first two years of the *élémentaire*] gave rise to schoolifying the GS; this is to say, introducing faster and earlier the work of the *élémentaire* and losing the spirit of the *maternelle* such as autonomy, manipulation and spatial organisation of the class. There are certain GS classes which are organised as in the CP (the first year of the *élémentaire*), meaning arranging the desks facing the blackboard. In my opinion, it is a pity. Here, in our *école maternelle*, we have few tables. Because we have seen that children need to move very much, there are problems of attention and concentration. Some children still need to do activities on the floor, or standing at the table. Children know better in what posture they can work better, feel well and concentrate.

6.4.3.2. Evaluation

Many (15/24 interviewees) found that *primarisation* of the *école maternelle* was caused by the changes with regard to evaluation. This view was particularly strong among teacher and director interviewees. The *livret scolaire* (school report card) per *cycle* was introduced in 1989; and soon, the *livret scolaire* for the first *cycle* – comprising the three years of the *maternelle* – became modelled after that of *cycles* 2 and 3. The evaluation at the end of the *école maternelle* became compulsory in 2008, with the aim of creating better continuity of learning by informing the *école élémentaire* what the child has acquired or not.

The entry of school-like evaluation into the *école maternelle* was opposed by the *maternelle* teachers and directors, especially the experienced ones. It was understood as grading and sanction, which was found inappropriate for young children. The current requirement is to evaluate the child three times a year, to be noted in the *livret* – which can lead teachers to spend more time evaluating than teaching, and to create an unhealthy condition whereby teachers constantly watch over children to judge what they can and cannot do instead of focusing on providing them with appropriate support. The use of the *livret scolaire* projected a very different image of the child, i.e. the child as a sum of competencies ticked off by teachers. The child was ‘dissected’ into competencies, sub-competencies and sub-sub-competencies neatly catalogued. Two teacher interviewees said that affective and social development did not enter into the evaluation undertaken at the end of the *école maternelle*, and that the focus was heavily on academic learning. Thus, the *livret scolaire* conveys a cognitive child, a reductionist view of the child. In the words of one teacher interviewee:

I think the drama of evaluation in the *maternelle* is that we evaluate on the sum of the competences, while what we should be doing is rather observation, one that is quite

rigorous, of the child at a given time. [Observation] is the best way ... to be able to say, look, look, we made it... it is like writing a monography, meaning, the child was there at that moment, and at the end, he/she reached there. That's what I like to do. Like a story, a monography. We should be doing this in the *maternelle*. But, we don't. We have boxes to tick, like 'make a sentence', 'the child should be able to say which are the principal characters of the story', we have things like that. There are children who can do it from the age of 3, others still cannot do it at an older age.

Evaluation tools that were ill-adapted to young children were introduced, according to six interviewees. The use of paper-and-pencil (*papier-crayon*) evaluation and worksheets (*fiches*) began in the *école maternelle*. This was a convenient tool that left visible track and that could be bundled into a portfolio to be shown to parents. Worksheets induced a particular answer to the child, and entailed learning through exercises, instead of learning through experiences and experimentation.

Instead of evaluating through observation, ... little by little teachers came to use the paper-and-pencil mode of evaluation, even though they were not asked to do so. Because it's easier to evaluate, [even though] there is less learning taking place. It is easier to evaluate because there is a trace. Instead of inventing new ways of recording, for example, through photographs, people prefer to use the paper-and-pencil mode. This also contributed to *primarisation*.

Teachers union and school director interviewees referred to the invasion of the culture of writing in the *école maternelle*, especially in the last 10 years, due to evaluation requirements. Before, the *école maternelle* had an oral culture, whose evaluation practices used to be centred on observation and interaction with children. By contrast, the *école élémentaire* had a writing culture. The *école maternelle* was required to enter into this culture of writing, and started the practice of recording and passing written evaluations to the *élémentaire* teachers as well as parents, which was unfamiliar to the *école maternelle*. The lack of training and pedagogical support provided to teachers was seen as largely responsible for this phenomenon.

Evaluation ... we shifted to the culture of writing. We need to always, always show, show, show, what we did to parents, the inspector... justify all the time, while, in the *maternelle*, there is a lot that does not leave tracks ... so we find ourselves using evaluation sheets and written things that are of no interest.

Three sources of pressure were reported to exist. The first was the national evaluation exercise conducted at the third grade of the *école élémentaire*, according to two interviewees. Certain inspection practices vis-à-vis the *école maternelle*, especially the *grande section*, became strongly based on anticipation of results to be obtained at the third grade, so that students would produce good scores in the national evaluation. The second was the demand for the *école maternelle* to become a real school in everyone's eyes. One school director interviewee commented:

After 1968, there were liberating movements on education ... things became freerer, also on the status of children. The impression was that children [in the *maternelle*] were playing for three years ... it was not really a 'school'. This criticism was not entirely true; but there emerged the idea that we needed to do something about it. We needed to find [a way to] justify the idea of the *maternelle* as a school... this was important in order to guarantee its existence, because there were moments where we said that training teachers for the *petite section* was a waste and doubted whether very young children needed a 'teacher'.

The third came from parents and the wider society, to be accountable about what the *école maternelle* offers to children and to help produce good results in later schooling. One teacher interviewee stated:

As a matter of fact, the school is under pressure. But it has been so since the 80s. It is not new. So, I am not afraid to say that it is due to the government's ultraliberal policy ... It is a big philosophical question: is the school for the advantaged, or for all including the most disadvantaged? There is much pressure on the school, I find. And we forget its essential role. Well, parents have such high expectations vis-à-vis their children and project them already to having good careers; but we must let children grow.

6.4.3.3. Curriculum

Curricular changes were less frequently referred to in the interviews. But when they were, it was because of their perceived important effects on the relationship between schools. Three interviewees recalled the particularity of the 1977 curriculum in the history of the *école maternelle*, as it symbolised the flourishing of the *école maternelle* culture based on the whole child perspective, encouraging creativity, imagination and discovery and allowing the full blossoming of childhood. There was no, or only a little, notion of preparation for school. Then,

the 1983 curriculum was seen as changing the balance in the relationship between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*, with the first signs of demands made on the *école maternelle* to align itself with the rest of the school system. In the 1990s, the emphasis on reading and writing became strong in the *école maternelle*. From 1995 onwards, the *école maternelle* curriculum came to be organised by competences, as for the *école élémentaire*, rather than by domains of child development. The 2002 curriculum was interpreted as balancing toward a slightly more equal relationship between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*, as intended by the government.

The 2008 curriculum for the *école maternelle* was most frequently cited among the recent curricula in the interviews. For seven interviewees, this curriculum promoted the most schoolified *école maternelle*, due to pressure from parents, the *école élémentaire*, and the wider society, including that created by France's poor PISA results. It accentuated its mission and role of preparing children for the *école élémentaire*, leading to a dysfunction of the *école maternelle*. A teacher educator interviewee even argued that it possibly contributed to increasing educational failure and students who rejected school. In his words:

[The school readiness tendency] existed already more than 20 years ago, but was strongly accentuated through the 2008 policy, which led to ... the disfunctioning of the *école maternelle*. There were very strong trends among teachers in being obsessed by preparing children for school. So we will do things too fast too early, in ways that are too framed, with too young children. I hypothesise – and I am not the only one to do so – that this is one of the causes of school failure in later school years, but also of children's rejection of school. If there were maltreatment at the age of 3, children would carry the effect during the whole school career.

What appeared most remarkable was the transformation of the 2008 curriculum domain called 'living together' (*vivre ensemble*) into 'becoming student' (*devenir élève*). This was a contested change. It gave an image of a passive student submitting to school and transmission pedagogy – which was an image of the child held by the *école élémentaire*. The '*vivre ensemble*' embraced both the individual and collective aspects of socialisation, while the '*devenir élève*' centred on transmission of particular values of the school and not on development as a person. This was understood as the result of countering a growing questioning of the efficiency of the *école maternelle*.

Devenir élève, however, was taken positively and supported as an important feature of the *école maternelle*, viewed as a step in between the world of family and that of 'big' school. The *école maternelle* is not a prolongation of the family. One *maternelle* teacher interviewee

described it as her principal task vis-à-vis her class of 2- and 3-year-olds to form the children into a coherent group and to facilitate learning a range of skills. Being successful in learning to 'become student' is a condition for success in the school system. She said:

Becoming students – it is to talk, express, exchange with others, learn vocabularies, being able to listen to stories, sing, create things, observe, experiment ... My work is to orient children toward 'becoming a student' from an early age ... it is necessary to work in the direction of school, because we need to prepare children to become students, we need to have in mind what we will be expecting them to do, in the MS, GS, CP... secondary school and then university.

The *école maternelle* is a school of pleasure, and at the same time, a school of frustration – children are expected to be able to accept and manage constraints arising from group organisation and dynamics particular to the *école maternelle*. In the words of a teacher:

It is a school of frustration. There are lots of labels in the school. Sometimes I am unhappy for the children ... [but] personally, as teacher, I cannot do otherwise. They learn by habit, by repetition, that things are not arbitrary. There are reasons behind them. If you cannot do what you want to do today, it does not mean that you cannot do it because you are punished. It is because [there are many children besides and so] not everyone can do it at the same time.

Some interviewees pointed out that '*devenir élève*' in the 2008 curriculum was sometimes wrongly interpreted, as the concept stressed the 'becoming' or 'learning to become' intended to help children find their place in the *école maternelle*. According to a government official interviewee, the link between the 2008 curriculum and *primarisation* made in some people's head was due to the message conveyed by the politics and the media when the 2008 curriculum was released: that 'we will learn in the *école maternelle*, it is finished with play, we are fed up, we need to get to work in the *maternelle*'.

6.4.3.4. Workforce

France has a unified framework for qualification, training and working conditions for the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers. In fact, upon passing the national competition, teacher students become *professeurs des écoles*, qualified to teach children aged 2/3-11, and are trained at master's level. They all enjoy the same status, salary and working condition; and

are able to move from the *école maternelle* to *élémentaire* and vice versa at any moment in their career; there is no obligation to undertake additional training. The 'polyvalence' of *professeurs des écoles* is certainly a source of pride, which enables them to create continuity of learning across the different levels. Indeed, six interviewees defended the unified scheme, sometimes very passionately. A teachers' union interviewee was explicit about this point:

Not only do we agree [on the unified training for the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers]. We advocate it. We ask teachers to be continually trained to talk about the link [between the two levels] and to understand what is expected for each of the levels. To understand what the teaching of 3-year-olds is like, until the last grade of the *élémentaire*. It is necessary to know the schooling in its entirety, and not to separate out the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers.

They thought that having teaching experience in both the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* was enriching for individual teachers, children and the entire teaching profession. Having separate schemes would be unthinkable and even undesirable, as it was seen to engender routine work, compartmentalisation and stagnation. A director of an *école élémentaire* mentioned:

I think it is a pity that, by the system, we end up staying in the same level of class for 30 years. Perhaps, they excel in their level of class. But at the same time, we should have a perspective from a different level while teaching. Having experience in the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* would enable them to be better aware and adjust things in teaching. I think it is very, very bad to be specialised in one single level for too long a time. Teachers should accept to move [from one level to the other]. In this school, teachers stay for three to four years in the same level. It prevents monotony, routines, repetition ... It's beneficial for children that we can propose other things, and also it's better simply for oneself. It's fundamental to be able to change and face new challenges.

However, several interviewees admitted that teaching in the *école maternelle* was very different from teaching in the *école élémentaire*. One of them said that, in practice, these were distinct professions. An *élémentaire* teacher with a nine-year experience of working in the *maternelle* mentioned:

I don't regret having gone to the *élémentaire*, but would probably go back to the *maternelle* one day. It is good to experience something on the other side of the fence. I think, and other people also confirmed that *élémentaire* and *maternelle* teachers are completely different professions. Really, really, really ... it is not the same relation

with children, with parents, not the same pedagogy, the days are not organised in the same way.

Even if the system allowed teachers to work for different age groups, the tendency was rather to stay teaching similar age groups. There was general agreement that the training needs specific to the *école maternelle* were insufficiently met, both in initial and continuous teacher education; and that the tendency was worsening. One interviewee described it thus:

I cannot tell you an exact date [from which the diminishing of the *maternelle* component within the teacher training started]. I think that it's at the end of the 1990s... that's it ... That's it ... It was the pressure coming from the famous school failure and the idea that the *école maternelle* needed to start preparing children earlier. This left less space for the training regarding children's needs, creativity, identity, socialisation, and we reformatted the training for the *école maternelle* based on what was linked with 'fundamental learning', meaning literacy and maths, without saying that that was what we were trying to do... at the same time, there were less teacher educators [knowledgeable about the *école maternelle*].

Compared to previous times, there was no longer antagonism between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers, and among teachers the work in the *maternelle* was considered to be as serious and important as that in the *élémentaire*. This being said, some level of tension was reported by five interviewees: the *école maternelle* teachers blaming the *élémentaire* teachers for ignoring the work done in the *maternelle*, and the *école élémentaire* teachers blaming the *maternelle* teachers for not having sufficiently prepared children for the *école élémentaire*. Some interviewees pointed to the fact that the lower status attached to teaching in the *maternelle* was still held by some parents and government officials. One director interviewee heard parents asking whether the teacher was punished upon her announcement of leaving the *école élémentaire* to work in the *maternelle*. The professional image of the *école maternelle* teachers was degraded when a former Minister equated the work with very young children in the *école maternelle* with changing nappies and making children take naps.

Therefore, despite the unified qualification and training for the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers and the equality of status and working conditions between them, the relation between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers is hierarchical and unequal, with the latter accorded more prestige as well as attention to training needs than the former. It is difficult to say that there is a firm sharing of a common identity among them. The dominance of the *école élémentaire* is further suggested in the responses of some teachers with experience in both sectors. For example, one first grade teacher interviewee recalled her

experience of moving from the *école maternelle* to *école élémentaire* to become a teacher of first graders. When she started teaching the first graders, she was able to 'be in the mould of *élémentaire* teacher' right away, and adopt a style very different from that she adopted in the *école maternelle*. After some time, she was reminded during a refresher training on playful pedagogies that she had used such methods earlier in the *école maternelle* but had completely forgotten about them once she was in the *élémentaire*. That was the moment when she thought that she could use play-based approaches also in the *élémentaire*.

Another example is the response from two *maternelle* teachers with previous experience of being an *élémentaire* teacher. Both said that when they came to teach in the *école maternelle* for the first time, they had very high expectation vis-à-vis young children in terms of silence and order, as they had been used to demand the same thing of older children in the *élémentaire*. They later realised that it was too difficult to impose such things on young children because of their tender age. Both examples suggest the dominant images of 'teaching' in the minds of teachers that prompted them to act accordingly.

The interviews suggested that the diminishing offer of training that addressed the specific needs of working in the *école maternelle* was not intentional on the part of the government. It was seen to be linked to (1) the general impoverishment of initial and continuous teacher training over the years, affected by decreasing expertise in the *école maternelle* among teacher educators as well as inspectors and pedagogical advisors, who plan and provide continuous training for teachers working in their school districts; (2) 'universitisation' of initial teacher education which strengthened training along disciplinary subject lines; and (3) general disinterest in research related to the *école maternelle*.

Prior to 1989, the initial teacher education provided by the *École Normale* lasted longer, was staffed with a better pool of teacher educators knowledgeable about theory and practice in the *école maternelle*, and openly called upon outside experts to offer lectures to student teachers. With the 1989 reform, initial education was offered by IUFM, in place of the *École Normale*, and became part of the university system. As teacher educators with the *maternelle* expertise retired, their positions were not filled by people with the same profiles. Furthermore, IUFM gathered teacher educators who were specialists in disciplinary subjects, and therefore, the training catering to the needs of the work in the *école maternelle* was given as part of teaching different disciplines, such as French language, mathematics and science.

According to one interviewee, there was an intention to enhance the rigorousness of the *école maternelle* work by strengthening its disciplinary outlook and giving much importance to how to ensure progression of learning. Apart from child psychology and development theory,

there was little offered on the *école maternelle*; how to work with young children and meet their needs was largely put aside. The 2008 reform of *masterisation* of initial teacher education that limited its scope and duration was seen to further worsen the situation for the *école maternelle*.

The poor offer of the *école-maternelle*-related training was understood to be linked to the general disinterest in research on the *école maternelle* and the weak linkage between research and practice in the field. Three interviewees found that there were fewer and fewer researchers interested in the *école maternelle* as well as teacher educators with *école maternelle* expertise; the few universities conducting research on the *école maternelle* focused on issues that related to writing, such as phonology. Research on the *école maternelle* was not something that was encouraged and valued in France. People wanting to undertake such research are often dissuaded, as ‘the subject would not attract too much attention’.

6.4.4. Primarisation

As touched upon earlier, most interviewees were critical about the *primarisation* of the *école maternelle*. Schoolified practice in the *école maternelle* was considered inappropriate for young children, subjecting them to a ‘student’ posture too early, limiting opportunities for activities that would stimulate physical, affective and social development, and risking the nurturing of negative feelings that might grow into rejection of school in later years.

However, though in the minority, two interviewees – one director of a public *école élémentaire*, and one director of a private *école primaire* (joint *maternelle-élémentaire* school) – did express support for *primarisation*. For one, *primarisation* made the work of the *école élémentaire* more efficient by teaching young children how to sit still, listen, understand and follow the teacher’s *consignes* or instructions. He also considered that it was important for the *école maternelle* to emphasise literacy acquisition and transmission of French culture in the context of growing inequality and diversity in France. He said that the problem of violence in school was serious, particularly among immigrant children. It would be helpful to try to equip these children, from early on, with the ability to communicate and sufficient vocabularies so that they would have ways to deal with anger and conflict other than reverting to violence. Also, having a common knowledge of French culture was considered vital for getting future employment, thus, the *maternelle* had a role to play in transmitting that knowledge to them.

The other dissenting interviewee, who worked in the private sector, asserted that the *école maternelle* was to prepare children for the *école élémentaire*, and praised the French *école maternelle* for generally doing a good job in that task. Referring to recent research on child and brain development, she considered early childhood as a key age during which a solid base for learning could be installed, and support for the notion of incessantly challenging children with higher levels of learning for the maximisation of opportunities and results. In this sense, she was positive about the *primarisation* of the *école maternelle*. Therefore, although those in support of schoolification comprised the minority among the interviewees of the study, these may be more widespread than the sample suggests.

6.4.5. The images of the child

Many French interviewees seemed puzzled at how to respond to the question regarding the image of the child in the *maternelle* and *école élémentaire*. Some asked me to clarify and elaborate on what the question meant. Some others paused for a long time before responding. The question about the social construction of the child held in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* came across generally as unfamiliar. Also, several stated that there are different images of the child held by different people, just like the image of the teacher, which differs from person to person. An inspector interviewee stated:

I try to be vigilant about the fact that a student is first and foremost a child, it's a fully-fledged individual in his own right. The child should not be reduced to what he or she knows... it is not because the child did something naughty that he is naughty (*bête*). He did something naughty at a certain moment but at other moments he did other things, and even if he did good things we don't tell him that he did good things. Therefore, we need to be vigilant about the fact that teachers catalogue children very quickly in relation to his acts, but his acts are the tip of the iceberg, and we don't know what's beneath them. I believe that it's very important to take the person where he is and see how we can help him evolve. So, it's true that very important work is needed in France, I want to reinforce this point... it's to ... give the child the opportunity to really learn while considering him as a participant, as soon as he is in the *maternelle*, because he learns a lot of things then and of course before that as well. No to the image of *l'entonnoire* (funnel) [when viewing the child]! ... [but] this, not all teachers have understood...

Nevertheless, there were two more common responses. Firstly, the image of the child held in the *école maternelle* was a 'student in the making', or 'becoming a student' (*devenir élève*),

and that held in the *élémentaire* was a 'student'. As highlighted in the earlier section on curriculum in 6.4.3.3, one of the curricular objectives called '*devenir élève*' that appeared for the first time in the 2008 curriculum for the *école maternelle* was contested by many as projecting an image of a passive child receiving teacher's talk, submitting to transmission pedagogy, being prepared for being an efficient, full-fledged student in the *élémentaire*. Mostly, therefore, the child is not viewed as the child, but as a student.

However, there were people who positively evaluated the notion as suggesting attention to the process of 'becoming', conditions for success in the school system, and learning about what a first school was about and encouraging children to find their place within that particular environment. To quote one interviewee:

Today, the image of child in the *école maternelle* is '*devenir élève*'. The child needs to learn, integrate, appropriate elements of the school institution in order to be able to find his or her place gradually in school. This is the condition of success in school. We would have an interest in renovating the education model of young children in the French *école maternelle*, perhaps, by situating the *école maternelle* in the context of the contemporary world. But today, the school is determined by the image of child who is attentive to adults, who listens, who obeys, who realises tasks he or she is asked to realise, in order to receive a positive reaction by the teacher. We are in the mode 'I suggest to you, you need to do, you need to enter into the frame that I suggest' both in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*. The school is quite normative in France. It develops little the initiative of the child and a sense of responsibility in the child.

Another interviewee stated:

The educational model of the *école maternelle* is the school institution, supported by 'we are there, living together, because we need to work together, we need to become students', so it is quite peculiar. The *école maternelle* is not a prolongation of the family.

The second most frequent response was the image of the child as projected by child development theory which considers all children going through universal stages of development, as put forward by Piaget. Those who provided this response stated that because the child is at a different stage of development in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, the image of the child held by each sector naturally differs. A teacher of the

école maternelle would have a different view of and relationship with the child from a teacher working in the *élémentaire*. This idea is similar to the first type of response in that the emphasis is on the 'becoming', which can be interpreted to convey the notion of young children not yet 'good enough' and undergoing socialisation and learning processes to reach a certain legitimate status as student.

6.4.6. Influences

The main influences on the relationship, as viewed by the interviewees, included (1) the societal pressure on children to be successful learners and future adults; (2) the concern to combat inequalities and reduce school failure in the context of a diversifying French population; (3) the political pressure on the *école maternelle* to prove its efficiency against the background of the decreasing public budget.

Many interviewees deplored the increasing societal pressure on children to be successful learners and future adults, which affected the *école maternelle*. Those with long experience in the school system all said that this pressure did not exist before, and that it translated into pressure from parents, the *école élémentaire* teachers, inspectors and the government. *Primarisation* of the *école maternelle* was seen as a product of this mounting pressure, driven by the notion of 'the more, earlier and faster, the better it is'. This was understood to be linked to the 'diploma disease', which prompted people to seek the highest diplomas so as to ensure a good career in the future. Parents demand that their children are able to read and write from the first year of the *école élémentaire*, making the teachers frantic toward the end of this year with high anxiety about ensuring children master the skills. Some even said that there were parents who expected their children to write from the end of the *grande section*.

The persisting concern about social and educational inequality was also felt as a driving force for the *école maternelle* to strengthen its 'preparation for school role' and to focus on the acquisition of the fundamental skills, i.e. reading, writing and arithmetic. As mentioned earlier, the growing immigrant population in France has accentuated the language issue in the school system, particularly in relation to the progression of learning, risk of school failure and violence. This was seen to give support to placing immigrant children in the 'bath of language' from a very young age so as to immerse them in numerous and diverse vocabularies, and to favour adopting the pedagogical approaches of the *école élémentaire* in order to give a head start. Some of the interviewees were aware that the problem of social and educational inequality was one of the major weaknesses of the French education system, which was revealed repeatedly in the PISA results. Although there was a sense among the interviewees

that PISA did not affect the practices, and that teachers and school directors did not care that much, PISA seems to have entered into people's minds, especially those in a formal inspection position.

The concern for efficiency of the *école maternelle* was considered as another factor that transformed the *école maternelle* practice and its relationship with the *école élémentaire*. It was seen to link with the larger economic situation and the shrinking public budget, which placed the *école maternelle* under scrutiny with regard to efficiency. There is great pride in the French *école maternelle* for having achieved universal, free access for children aged 3 to 6, despite its non-obligatory status, staffed with teachers educated at masters' level. The *école maternelle* was a significant cost to the government, and questions started to be raised as to whether the *école maternelle* was an efficient continuation of the investment. It became essential that the *école maternelle* justified itself in order to maintain its place in the system. The efficiency issue led to calls for teachers to track children's learning, enter immediately to learning as soon as children came to school, to maximise the time for learning, and to evaluate children all the time using methods akin to those in the *école élémentaire*.

The *école maternelle* was pressured to be subject to the logic of productivity – a paradox in an institution catering for young children. This was found to be counterproductive, giving the *école maternelle* an orientation which did not correspond to the needs of young children. Three interviewees referred to the ultraliberal government policy that emphasised the economic efficiency of the *maternelle*. One of them spoke of France being under pressure regarding the utilisation of public funds from the larger context of Europe and the globalising market, though the current left-wing government had a more moderate policy stance compared to the previous right-wing government. Another interviewee saw the phenomenon as devaluation of the *école maternelle*, leading to an ever-increasing requirement to justify its work. However, from the interviews, it did not appear that the *école maternelle* had simply been infected by efficiency fever: there were some within the sector who supported it, as it strengthened its image of being a school and a place for learning, not for providing custodial care and allowing children to play and have fun.

It can be said that all these factors, affected by some of the features of globalisation – such as the neoliberal tendency and enlarged role of international organisations in shaping the national agenda – favoured the strengthening of the school-like identity and character of the *école maternelle* that comes from the *école élémentaire*. It favoured the adoption of a particular image of the child, 'the child as student' in a narrow sense, rather than the whole child with his or her personality, interests and cultures, encouraged to discover, explore, nurture creativity and curiosity, and make meaning of the surrounding environment and

worlds that opened up to them – upheld in the *école maternelle* culture. Two interviewees said that the *école maternelle* primarily viewed the child as a child, and the *école élémentaire* as a student, but the former had been gradually overtaken by the image of the latter.

In the image of 'becoming a student', the child is to learn, integrate and appropriate elements of the school institution, the child is to be attentive to adults, listen and obey, and realise tasks that generate a positive reaction by the teacher – which would lay the basis for success in her or his school career. The French schools – including the *école maternelle* - were seen to normalise children strongly, and not sufficiently develop the child's initiative and his or her sense of responsibility. Whatever the discourses, deep down, the image of the child in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* was considered to be the same: the child as a student – school was not there for children to flourish, develop harmoniously and nurture competencies in all domains, but to engage in school learning, i.e. how to read, write and count. Therefore, the child in this definition of school is passive, taking information provided by adults, and learning by exercises. However, some said that the 2013 reform embodied a different kind of image of the child – not a passive child who was undergoing pedagogy of transmission, but an active child constructing knowledge and relationships with others. One interviewee said that one of the forces that contributed to this turn of orientation might be critical international reviews, e.g. OECD *Starting Strong* (2006), pointing to the rigid, framing and normalising nature of the French *école maternelle*.

6.4.7. Conclusion of the French empirical study

Among the French interviewees, there were three views on the current relationship: (1) no relationship, (2) two-way relationship, and (3) schoolification, or *primarisation*, of the *école maternelle*. The third type was reported by the great majority of interviewees. A few pointed out that the *école maternelle* had a strong school-like character from its inception onwards – except around the 1970s. But most felt that schoolification was really set in motion in 1989 with the adoption of the *loi d'orientation sur l'éducation*, reaching its peak around 2008, and then toning down in 2013 with the passage of the *loi sur l'orientation et le programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République*.

While most interviewees were critical about schoolification, there were interviewees with a favourable opinion about *primarisation*. Main influences on the relationship were the problem of social inequality and school failure, growing societal pressure on children to be successful learners and future adults, and increasing concern for the efficiency of the *école maternelle*.

The interviews have suggested that the effect of globalisation is manifested in the growing pressure on children to do well and to be successful learners and future adults, and increasing attention to the question of efficiency and a growing requirement for particular kinds of evaluation in the *maternelle* which would normally be observed in the *école élémentaire*. These can be considered as evidence that support the hypothesis that globalisation has a tendency to lead toward a school readiness relationship. Also, globalisation affects work roles differently: those who operate at higher levels in the national education system, i.e. policymakers and inspectors, made reference to PISA and other work of international organisations as providing important yardsticks against which to know more or less how France was doing in relation to other countries. These concerns were not expressed by those who work at the school level; a director interviewee said that no one working at the practice level really cared about PISA.

Furthermore, the interviews suggested that the dominant image of the child as upheld in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* reflected that of wider society as well as that of the traditional school institution. At the same time, different people held different images of the child that corresponded with their views of education and learning. People's own ideal images of the child seemed to direct them to seek out and try to realise, at their level or workplace, particular kinds of relationship. However, the weight of the dominant culture and tradition (including the school tradition) – which has given rise to the institutional frameworks and environments of the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* as described in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 – framed the possibilities of constructing the relationship.

6.5. Sweden

6.5.1. The relationship before 1989

Prior to 1989, the Swedish preschool was the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Preschool and school were like two separate islands, said one interviewee. Preschool was largely known as daycare, catering for young children before the age of 7. Some interviewees stated that preschool was understood to focus on parents' needs rather than children's, on care rather than learning, and on social and fine motor skills development. Preschool activities then included much free play, going to the woods, going shopping, doing arts, etc. and placed great emphasis on routines. The teacher would let children play; however, the teacher interrupted them according to the routines, and was the one who knew best. There was little room for dialogue and listening to children, the teacher was giving the right answer

to children without encouraging them to explore. The image of the child was that of the child having her or his own rhythms of development but passive and less capable in front of adults. Working on pre-reading and writing in preschool was frowned upon by school teachers. It was important to have nice pictures on the wall in preschool, and beautiful artwork to show to parents. There were less children enrolled in preschool. With regard to primary school, in the past, students were reproducing knowledge; teachers were serving children, and talked about what children should learn. There was little freedom to move and less play in the classrooms.

In the 1970s, and then in late 1980s and early 1990s, many development projects on making connections between preschool and school were funded, according to two teacher educator interviewees. This reflected the existence of great interest in the question of a preschool-school relationship at these times. One teacher educator-researcher interviewee commented that preschool had a stronger voice in the 1970s. The pedagogical task of preschool came to be strengthened, notably through the 1986 pedagogical programme issued by the agency of social affairs. Also, preschool came closer to school with the administrative integration of preschool within education that began in the late 1980s at the municipal level.

6.5.2. The relationship since 1989

The beginning of the 1990s saw the creation of 'part-time preschool' for 6-year-olds in schools in some municipalities with the intention to free up some places in preschools which were then in full expansion. Two interviewees said that, at that time, the influence of Reggio Emilia grew, changing the pedagogical practices of a growing number of Swedish preschool teachers who adapted a more constructivist approach observed in preschools today.

The 1996 transfer of the responsibility for preschool to the Ministry of Education was a turning point in the relationship. Preschool became part of the education system as the first step in lifelong learning. The change in the conceptualisation of preschool as a social welfare issue to an education issue was significant. One policymaker interviewee stated that the reform ensured a series of policy measures – such as the introduction of preschool curriculum and preschool class in 1998, the integration of teacher education in 2001, and entitlement measures in the early 2000s – which aimed at expanding and strengthening preschool and to reinforce connections between preschool and school.

Two interviewees (one policymaker, one trade union representative) referred to a quiet shift of government orientation regarding the relationship: from the upward extension of preschool influence into school in the 1990s and early 2000s and then the downward extension of

school influence into preschool from around 2006 onwards, which is the year when the conservative government took power in Sweden. A policymaker interviewee remarked:

Until 2006, we said that school should be ready for children. But since then, the government changed and talks more about school readiness - that preschool is an important part of further education and being ready for school. But we still don't have any test. There are pretty strong forces to have tests in preschools – to see that they are ready for school. Usually it is given to detect special needs. It is an issue coming up more and more.

While some trends toward schoolification were reported, some interviewees observed that the preschool sector has largely maintained and even moved to a further development of its specific identity and pedagogical approaches in recent years. In fact, the changes in the policy positions reported above do not coincide with the observation – explicitly stated by three interviewees – that the relationship has shifted from the school readiness approach, dominant before 1998, to the ready school approach, observed in practice today. One assistant principal said:

Maybe it took about 10 years to see some differences after the policy of preschool class in 1998. ... I always heard that 'children must be ready', 'children must be ready'. Now, a preschool teacher would say, 'how you will organise activities for children... they are interested in astronomy, how will you pick it up and take over the responsibility for children...' so it's become like this. ... you talk more and more 'what we can do for children' instead of 'children should do this and that or should say this and that'. It's a great development.

Interviewees described developments in preschool practice: there is a stronger pedagogical focus in preschools today. Preschool teachers listen to children more than before, and look at them as much more part of learning, i.e. children as active participants who contribute to shaping the process of learning. There is more dialogue and discussion between teacher and child, based on the view that they can learn from each other, rather than the teacher teaching the child. The child is understood as curious, active and competent, even 1-year-olds are capable of things. Thematic work that interests children can last for a week, a month, or even a year, nurtured, extended and transformed by exchanges and discussions from children and teachers around the particular theme. Unlike the past, preschools also deal with language, mathematics and science – the school subjects – but proposed to children in ways that are playful, concrete and appropriate to young children. One preschool teacher noted:

Now the focus [in the preschool] is on pedagogy and more preparation for society. And we are trying to do in a way that children are learning. So, it is pedagogical and playful at the same time. For example, the circle time, before, it was me who was teaching things, for example, about a flower, but now we trying to learn together, so we have a different way of learning. [Before] children were quiet, teacher was talking; but now we are talking together. Children ask together, if I don't know, we look it up together, ipad, go to library... it is more fun to work like that. Before, we did the same thing all the time. Now it is different, always try to learn from children's perspectives. The curriculum is always the same but they try to do from children's perspectives.

Meanwhile, school practices have also changed, according to interviewees, in the following ways: now, it is important to use play in learning; and there is certain openness and space for children; there is more learning together through conversation and interaction; and there is not only the transmitting of knowledge but also the producing of knowledge and how to learn so that application of acquired knowledge is possible.

Next, I take a closer look at changes in governance, curriculum, workforce and research that impacted on the relationship as accounted for by interviewees.

6.5.3. The current relationship

What comes across from interviews is a complex picture of the current relationship. Given the preschool's inclusion in the education system and successive policies to reinforce its pedagogical task, the dynamic has been that of preschool being brought closer to compulsory school, rather than the other way round. However, preschool and school are almost in equal relationship, with the former's position being strengthened over the years. A policymaker interviewee engaged in compulsory school education said:

The current relationship is very good. As you probably know, preschool is a school form of its own, it's part of education system, really since the new Education Act of 2011. So there is a clear link between preschool and compulsory school. Preschool education got a revised curriculum but it's quite similar to the curriculum of compulsory school, for example, there is now focus in the revised curriculum on literacy, maths, natural science. So, preschool education has come closer to compulsory school. So, it is the preschool education coming closer to compulsory –

and... no, not that compulsory school has come closer to preschool – a bit more like education, even more now. Yes, even more. That's very good. Because the quality of preschool is really great. I wish the quality of schools in Sweden was as good. Preschool teachers are very well educated, and they have in pedagogy nowadays in literacy and maths and natural science, at least they know more on these now. So, I find it's important to have start early in preschool and continue in school, it is good for children and students.

Furthermore, interviews suggest that two different forces operate: schoolification of preschool, and preschoolification of school. Possibly, the former tendency is slightly stronger than the latter, notably because of preschool's articulation in terms of school subjects and evaluation of individual children that seems to be spreading in the preschool class as well as in preschool. However, most interviewees thought that schoolification will not invade preschool, given the strengthening of preschool's position and 'voice' enabled by a dynamic research community and expertise in preschool. In the past, preschool was subordinate to school, saying 'yes' to what the latter needed; but now preschool was more confident, and school was expected to be ready for children, meeting them where they were. School readiness, though an important function, was not to be overemphasised; the experience of 'here and now', 'having fun', 'having a good time' for its own sake was equally important. In the words of a psychologist interviewee:

I think in Sweden we don't like to think about the preschool as preparation for schooling, that's my opinion. We want preschool to be important per se, that children are learning something about themselves in collaboration with other children. We love preschool not so much because preschools prepare children for schooling but because they help their development. And I think that there has been a change maybe for 6-years-olds that we are starting to think about their education as preparation for school, and we are starting to teach reading and writing to 6 year olds, and we are starting to have lessons on such things. But we don't like preschool as preparation for school because we think they learn for life, learning to learn, learning to want to learn, and maintain the joy and collaboration with other children and social interaction and communication. That's important not for school but for children.

6.5.3.1. Governance

As mentioned earlier, interviewees believed the 1996 reform to be decisive for the relationship. The underlying vision of lifelong learning that embraced preschool as part of the

educational continuum was significant. Some interviewees found that having political clarity about the importance of lifelong learning was positive, though regretted that the 'red thread'⁴⁸ was not yet made into reality. Apart from a very few people, interviewees did not seem aware of the government support for an upward dynamics spearheading into the first years of primary school that dominated in the years around 1996. The maximum fee and other entitlement reforms introduced in the early 2000s led to high preschool enrolments, and are understood as contributing to strengthening preschool's position vis-à-vis other areas in the education system.

From the point of view of government official interviewees, the adoption of the new Education Act in 2011 was seen to mark another milestone in the relationship; though none of the practitioner interviewees referred to it in their accounts. This Education Act was understood, by these officials, as a big accomplishment for preschool, lifting and consolidating its status within the education system. The link between preschool and school has become clearer with this Act, which asserted that the terms 'education' and 'teaching' – which had been strongly resisted in the past by preschool stakeholders – now applied to preschool as well. Preschool coming to use and share the same language as other levels of education was symbolic, considered as bringing it closer to the rest of the education system. When asked what they thought of it, teacher interviewees found it rather positive, but with the precision that they preferred their own way of 'teaching' children (e.g. listening to children and encouraging children to be researchers). One preschool teacher commented on the official application of the term 'teaching' in preschool:

I am glad to hear that! I think it's good... what do I think.... Of course I like our ways of teaching, and I think it's good. An example: they are out in the forest. Oh, there are squirrels! What do we know about them? Long tail? Live in forest? But what else do we know? But then we can take a look and say, this is the mouth, they can do this and that ... discover knowledge by yourself, find out... maybe... research! That's the word I was looking for.

6.5.3.2. Curricula

Developments in the curricula for preschool and school were considered key, especially by teacher and school director interviewees. Preschool had its first curriculum in 1998, which

⁴⁸ In Sweden, education is viewed as a lifelong journey in which there is a thread connecting all aspects of one's life from the early years through old age. When Swedish people talk about lifelong learning, they often speak of the 'red thread' (Catlett et al., 2008).

was welcomed by preschool teachers: they were proud of having a curriculum and felt that their work came to be recognised as important. It was regarded as the most influential policy document for the relationship, and greatly contributed to strengthening the pedagogical task of preschool. One interviewee said that the curriculum embodied the image of the child as active and competent, constructing knowledge and relationships. Two interviewees spoke of the influence of the Reggio Emilia approach in this curriculum, such as the image of the child and the democratic basis of preschool.

Another relevant development in the early days of the 1996 reform was the revision of the school curriculum in 1998. In response to the transfer of responsibility for leisure time centres to education and to the creation of preschool class in 1998, the curriculum was revised in order to include these provisions. As in the preschool curriculum, it indicated the importance of cooperation between preschool, school and leisure time centre, the common fundamental values to be shared between preschool and school, and explicitly stated play as part of school approaches to learning in school, preschool class and leisure time centres. One interviewee commented that this curricular change was one of the ways in which the government intended to implement the vision of preschool pedagogy influencing school.

About ten years later, the preschool curriculum was revised. According to interviewees, the major reason for the revision was to further reinforce the pedagogical task of preschool. The main changes, which were largely welcomed by interviewees, were: clarified goals for language, mathematics and science, and the introduction of new sections on evaluation and follow-up, and on the responsibility for preschool teacher and head. There was a general feeling that the philosophy of the 1998 curriculum remained intact, and that the revised curriculum was an expansion of what was there before, including further details that were deemed helpful for teachers. The revised curriculum maintained the 'goals to strive for'.

Interviewees were unanimously positive about the clarification of the responsibilities of preschool teachers and preschool head. While the previous version is understood to capture, in a sense, the 'original' and democratic approach in the Swedish preschool of teamwork – consisting of preschool teachers and *barnskotares*, with both types of workers sharing responsibilities – some interviewees interpreted it as causing low self-confidence on the part of preschool teachers. Therefore, the articulation of their responsibility meant a clear recognition of their higher educational qualification vis-à-vis that of *barnskotares* and the importance of their role in shaping the pedagogical tasks. It is seen as a necessary step, which, for some though, introduces a hierarchical relationship between preschool teachers and *barnskotares*.

Regarding the increased visibility of school subjects, many teacher interviewees acknowledged that it was good, and that the revised curriculum was being more explicit about what they had already been doing with children in preschool. In the words of an interviewee:

[The goals related to language, mathematics and science in the revised preschool curriculum] is more visible, but this is not new. Just more visible... It's something we have been doing anyway... I wouldn't say it is a new assignment. It's just more clear, clearer assignment.

However, they also said that there were preschool teachers who understood it as paving the way for a schoolified practice in preschool, divided by subjects. One interviewee observed that the clarified language, mathematics, science and technology goals reflected the government intention to improve the continuity of learning between preschool and school, which would help better the Swedish scores of PISA. A policymaker interviewee saw that these goals attracted attention from teachers at the expense of the others:

The only thing I feel which was not that good was that they only saw the new goals in the revised curriculum. They forgot a little that the old goals... the old goals are no less important, but the focus was on reading and writing and maths and natural science. Of course this is what happens when you have something new, but you shouldn't forget the other goals. So, I think it will take some time before it balances them out.

The views about the new section of evaluation in the revised curriculum were rather divided. Five found it positive, because it gave certainty that teachers were supposed to evaluate the child – the point which had not been clear in the previous version – and that the child's progression was not to be measured against a set standard or compared with those of other children. Some others said that, while it was good to clarify that there was a need for teachers to be aware of the child's progression, it led certain teachers to misunderstand that the focus of evaluation was the individual child, rather than preschool activities and environment. Testing of children was starting to be observed in some preschools. One interviewee referred to the 'contradiction' between goals to strive toward and evaluating each child, which caused confusion, and that it officially – but subtly – allowed the entry of the practice of evaluating the individual child into the preschool. A teacher educator interviewee said:

Before, we have always said that preschools shouldn't evaluate each child in a simplified way, we should look more into what is actually going on in the activities in

relation to the child.... [The preschool has] entered in a new system of evaluation focused on individual children.

Another teacher educator interviewee made a similar point:

[A] big difference between preschool and school today is that in preschools you don't have goals for every child, as in primary school. But many preschools ... assess, in practice, children's abilities. It's a bit of a misunderstanding. ... So, that's something that I stress very much for the students, in my work now, that it is written in the curriculum that you shouldn't really assess the child. But of course, you should also follow each child's development - you should ... assess each child's development to be able to see if preschool is doing enough for them. And that's now, I think that's a lot of assessment in preschools.

Taken together, the revised preschool curriculum does appear to increase the chances of preschools becoming schoolified by virtue of its design. In addition, two interviewees pointed out that people were so much focused now on the goals on language, mathematics, science and technology because they were new, that they forgot the 'old' goals which were equally important. This is another possible source driving the schoolification tendency. However, the new curriculum for compulsory school, leisure time centre and preschool class developed in 2011 (Lgr 11) was not seen to affect the relationship between preschool and school.

6.5.3.3. Workforce

Two workforce-related reforms that had a profound impact on the relationship were the integration of initial teacher education in 2001, and then its re-separation in 2010. The integrated system established in 2001 brought together different teacher professions, including leisure time pedagogues, into a common scheme. This did not mean an identical initial education for all, but having everyone following the same core courses for about 1.5 years, while the remainder of the duration was for specialisation in one particular field, such as preschool education. One interviewee characterised this reform as very 'courageous', saying that it was the first of its kind in the world. The fact that it allowed different teachers to learn about education for all levels of school was found positive. The 'red thread' running through various stages and areas of education was made more visible.

The 2010 reform that separated teacher education again was understood as regressive by some, as it reverted to the old system of having separate tracks for receiving initial teacher education, and also as it contributed to lessening the possibility of ensuring continuity of learning and realising the vision of lifelong learning. However, most interviewees were of the opinion that it was good to separate. The previous training was too broad, and so there was some satisfaction that this reform had enhanced specialisation. It enabled going much deeper into questions and giving relevant examples of theory and practice from a particular area – it was more interesting for everyone.

One interviewee pointed out that behind the reform was the impact of PISA and concern for competitiveness in the global economy: some politicians questioned the effectiveness of the integrated teacher education where school teachers were trained together with preschool teachers. Their concern was ‘will we have enough quality in our schools’?. So, in the name of strengthening teachers’ competences and professionalisation, this reform was deemed politically appropriate and attractive. For another teacher educator interviewee, not all was ‘lost’: she said her university would continue working together with those concerned with compulsory school as they had become accustomed to do thanks to the previous system.

In particular, the interviewees engaged in supporting teachers, teacher education and research said that preschool had found itself in a low position, a loser in the integrated system; many teacher educators were not knowledgeable about preschool and did not talk enough about it. Those studying or working for preschool felt marginalised, and found it difficult to have a voice. One interviewee commented that the integrated system was weakening preschool instead of allowing it to build itself up; and that it would be difficult to work with school as an equal partner as long as preschool did not have a position by itself vis-à-vis the politicians, government and researchers.

[Preschool teacher students] in the combined teacher education... found themselves in a very low position. And the professors never really talked about preschools, they only talked about compulsory schools. So, there were a lot of feelings among becoming preschool teachers [that] they were marginalised in that system. ... [I]t was very hard for trainee preschool teachers to have a voice. And ... my analysis is actually that, as the preschool has got such a low position in the educational system ... it will be very hard to be combined with compulsory school teachers. So, as long as we do not have a position of our own, vis-à-vis the politicians and government and researchers, it will be hard to start working together.

One interviewee said he was worried about the separation of initial teacher education as he thought that there might not be many people wanting to enrol in initial education to become a preschool teacher. But his worry had been proved wrong; it turned out that the preschool teacher degree was more popular than the school teacher degree. This popularity was attributed partly to the positive image of the field of preschool, which is held in high esteem by the public, motivating people to work in preschools. Attribution was also made to the shorter duration of the initial education for preschool teacher, and the current shortage of preschool teachers, which helped subsequent employment possibilities. Given the shortage, competition between municipalities to attract good candidates was raising preschool teachers' salary,⁴⁹ resulting in a situation where certain preschool teachers were equally or even better paid than school teachers. Yet another factor was the recent negative image of compulsory school prompted by the media reportings on the PISA ranking. An interviewee stated:

It is really nice to see that so many people want to be preschool teachers, it is really really nice. I think it was a really good reform that there was one exam and you could choose direction, but... it didn't work. So now we are back having a separate preschool teaching degree. ... As preschool teacher, you can very easily find work. And of course, there are differences between being preschool teachers and compulsory school teachers; that so many more want to be preschool teachers. What the media portrays about school is so negative, it is chaos, PISA result. If you are twenty years old, who would want to work in chaos? But when you hear about preschool, it is one of the best in the world, best profession you have, you can use music interest or whatever, of course twenty year olds want to become preschool teachers if there is a positive image of the field. A lot of people want to become preschool teachers.

But the interviews conveyed a general sentiment about the inequality of the relationship between preschool teachers and school teachers. Preschool teachers were generally considered to have less prestige and a lower salary compared to school teachers; they spend more time with children per day and have less time for planning compared to their counterparts in school. The unequal status was understood to translate into preschool teachers having lower self-confidence than school teachers.

⁴⁹ In Sweden, municipal school and preschool teachers are not paid according to a centrally fixed scale of seniority as in France. Each municipal school and preschool are free to set the salary of their own teachers, which is the practice dating back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, according to a few interviewees.

The preschool culture of teamwork between preschool teacher and *barnskotare* was also seen to contribute to low self-confidence of preschool teachers. One teacher union interviewee said:

Maybe, teachers have been afraid of saying 'this is how it works' to *barnskotares*, because democracy is very important in Sweden preschool, or, they felt the need to find the lowest common denominator and create teamwork building on the strengths and competencies of each.

This feeling of low confidence on the part of preschool teachers was found to be negative for the entire preschool field – as well as for its relationship with school. Therefore, the clear indication of teachers' pedagogical responsibility in the revised curriculum for preschool was viewed very important and necessary, as it was an official recognition of teachers having an elevated status vis-à-vis *barnskotare*. Three interviewees specifically expressed support for staffing preschool with only preschool teachers.

The relationship between preschool and school teachers was interpreted as weak, partly because there exists a sense of antagonism between them; school teachers are critical of preschool teachers who they see as 'playing' with children, and preschool teachers accuse school teachers of being rigid, directive and insufficiently understanding the work of preschool. It was also because the level of communication and cooperation was found insufficient; and where it existed, it was concentrated on improving the transition of 5-year-olds moving from preschool to preschool class. Some interviewees felt it was necessary to expand the communication and cooperation beyond the transition issue, to reflecting and discussing together their values and having confrontations so as to create better understanding and opportunities for cross fertilisation of practices. But they found it hard to realise this because they were too busy to find time to do so.

However, two interviewees referred to a network initiated by the Reggio Emilia Institute in Stockholm, launched 6 years ago, connecting preschool and school teachers in order to confront the idea of schoolification and to spread the idea of more dialogue with each other, of listening to children in school as well as preschool, and of encouraging project approaches rather than relying only on transmission pedagogy.

Eight interviewees said that school had been influenced by preschool pedagogy in Sweden. School was seen to be learning from preschool about other ways of learning, teaching and assessing, such as the inclusion of play and interaction in learning, the use of thematic work,

formative assessment, and combining individual and group learning. Asked how this preschool influence was made possible, some were not able to answer. Two interviewees working at the practice level responded that it was not due to preschool teachers 'teaching' school teachers. One of them said that it was the research articles and seminars that spread these words, and that the preschool way of doing things rather suited the Swedish way of being very democratic, which was upheld also in schools. The other replied that no one in the school sector would say that the influence came from preschool – they would say that it came from the US research, such as visible learning by John Hattie (2008) and James Nottingham⁵⁰, or from the field of higher education that nowadays talked much about entrepreneurial skills.

One remarkable development in the Swedish context is the phenomenon of preschool teachers undertaking research in a higher education institution. An increasing number of preschool teachers are studying, with the support of government funding, to obtain 'licentiate' degrees in 'research schools' – which are a network or consortium of universities formed on a particular subject – specialised in ECE. The idea of research schools, as commented on by one interviewee, was that preschool teachers conduct research and then go back to municipalities to work on raising the quality of preschool. Being a totally new government undertaking, this practice enhances optimism in the field of preschool.

Furthermore, one interviewee said that there were quite a few preschool teachers who have obtained a PhD. Along a similar line, another interviewee said that the number of researchers working on preschool had actually given the sector a voice vis-à-vis the politicians. She described the creation of a discipline called 'preschool didactics' within Stockholm University – the first of its kind – that runs through to PhD level. This, in her view, would allow a building up of preschool's own identity and position, which would in turn facilitate working with others. The newly opened 'preschool didactics' would invite researchers from other fields to talk about the work of preschool in terms and conditions that are defined by themselves, and not by the other fields, which had usually been the case. For her, it was important to have your own ideas because you were always questioned, with the risk of being named and defined by others:

...we need our own position, in order to be able to work with others. You have to have an identity before you can open it up. But everyone is naming you, and not you having your own way of naming yourself, it is difficult for others to open up. ... the idea behind [establishing the 'preschool didactics'] is to have our own discipline all

⁵⁰ Information about visible learning can be found in the website of James Nottingham <http://www.jamesnottingham.co.uk/about/visible-learning>

through the system from being teachers all the way through up until doctorate students. That in the continuation, because always, all the time, being thrown into other courses – up to doctoral level - which never relates to preschool. And, never relates to theories, not very often related to theories that are connected to our own history what we are struggling for... we can invite researchers in the didactics of maths working with upper level grades and so on, and listen to them, and we actually bring them in, but on our own conditions. Earlier, we have worked through their goals and conditions; now we have our own goals. We can decide by ourselves. [If] we need to know more about mathematics, then we can invite them – instead of us going to their courses where they never talk about young children.

6.5.3.4. Preschool class

Many interviewees referred to the preschool class, catering for 6-year-olds, as a 'bridge' between preschool and compulsory school. It is a voluntary form of school; playful; and where preschool and school cultures meet. It shares the same curriculum as compulsory school, and uses much of preschool methodology. One government official said that preschool class was intended to modernise school pedagogy through moving preschool pedagogy into school by having preschool teachers work in these classes. He maintained that the preschool class was one of the policy vehicles through which the government vision of preschool influencing school was to be implemented.

Being part of school, interviewees understood that children started school today at the age of 6 with preschool class, and said that 6-year-olds in preschool class were now called 'students' instead of 'children'. The focus generally shifted from transition of 6-year-olds from preschool to compulsory school to that of 5-year-olds from preschool to preschool class. One preschool teacher interviewee was positive about preschool class since she had the impression that the cooperation between preschool and school greatly improved and that having 6-year-olds in preschool class located in school premises was found to be a better system for children.

But five interviewees said that preschool class has been interpreted and practised differently by different people. In some cases, preschool pedagogy, such as play and thematic work, was introduced; in some other cases, traditional school pedagogy was being used. Certain preschool teachers working in preschool class actively applied traditional school pedagogy as preschool class was for them 'school'. There is confusion about preschool class, which is a form of school, not compulsory, but not preschool either. One interviewee said that in order to

properly implement preschool class as intended, i.e. meeting the needs of 6-year-olds and combining it with play as well as the strong pedagogical leadership of teachers to guide children, teachers needed to have proper knowledge about young children. There was also a view that children in preschool class needed to be guided more strongly by the teacher so that they would learn to accept teachers' guidance.

Even though preschool classes do not officially have goals to attain, it is now expected to work toward the goals set for the third grade of primary school – which is new. Also, the adoption of a school-like evaluation in the classroom was reported. One school teacher interviewee working in a preschool class said that children were not to be 'judged' – or evaluated against a set scale – like in preschool. However, she said she and her colleague working in preschool class were using tests to know individual children's achievement in language and mathematics for their information. She stated that tests were useful for teachers to know how they should work with children, but they often revealed what she already knew from daily interaction with and observation of the children. She mentioned that testing was a new practice that was spreading, and that she would start reporting certain results of their tests in the computerised data of the municipality – even though there was no obligation to do so.

6.5.4. Image of the child

Compared to the French interviewees, the Swedish interviewees were in general more at ease with the question concerning the image of the child in preschool and school. Some acknowledged that there have been changes in the image of the child held in preschool. Prior to the 1980s, preschool used to hold the image of the child as passive and not competent, with the preschool teacher telling or teaching children. Teachers of very young children in the past would say 'they are too small, they cannot do it' as opposed to teachers of today who see children as active and able to try to find out for themselves, and the child and teacher learning together and from each other. One interviewee stated that, earlier, the emphasis was placed on play and socialisation, but today, it is more on learning.

The most frequent response regarding the situation today was that preschool had the image of the child as active, competent and curious, constructing her or his understanding and knowledge, and as a researcher. One interviewee stated that this view of the child was reflected in the preschool curriculum and was connected to the image of the child held by Reggio Emilia. Preschool teachers are keen on following the perspectives, thoughts and

philosophies of children and building their activities based on those. Another response frequently given was that the view of the child in preschool was more holistic than in school.

A response from an assistant preschool principal was the view of the child as 'becoming' - as opposed to 'being'. It is different from the way in which the term 'becoming' is used in the French context. French interviewees used 'becoming' in relation to *devenir élève* (or 'becoming a student'), or the dichotomy 'becoming = child' versus 'being = adult', whereby childhood is defined in view of adulthood and the child being regarded as being in the process of becoming a fully-fledged adult subject. The sense conveyed in this Swedish response was that everyone, regardless of age, is not a fixed 'being' but ever-changing and 'becoming'. This perception avoids being judgemental about who the child is and what he or she can do, based on information from limited observation and interactions with him or her. In her words:

We know the differences between being and becoming. Usually, we don't talk like 'children are...' but they are becoming... we all change... [The earlier approach was to say] 'could or could not, could or could not...' Just like scissors ... But now, [we say that] when he feels comfortable, he can do it ... we view children as resources.

Interviewees thought the image of the child in school had changed over time, as with preschool. Before, school children were to sit at their own desks to learn, but today, teachers give them opportunities to sit together with other children, interact and talk with each other. In most part, the image of the child found in today's school was thought to be not too different from that found in preschool. Both preschool and school regard the child as competent, someone who should have the possibility to investigate and develop her or his own possibilities. An interviewee shared his observation regarding the changes in school practice:

It is really changing, because it is learning from preschool about other ways of learning, to be aware of how to learn, individually and group learning. So [teachers] are more using the traditional methods from preschool now in compulsory school. Yes, more and more. It is not as much teachers teaching out, it's more like teachers discussing and talking with students with phenomena, how they think, how they solve problems. [Regarding the influence of preschool methods in school] I don't think preschool teachers have been teaching school teachers ... but ... I think research and the articles and seminars have spread the word... It's also that it suits the Swedish way of being very democratic. So, many teachers have used the preschool way, the preschool method, being equal with students. It's like, preschool teachers going down the same level to students, go down and sit on the knees for children. It is the same nowadays in school.

Five interviewees felt that it was more challenging to practice according to the image of an active and competent child in school than in preschool because: (1) school has a different mission, and has goals for children to attain – as opposed to preschool having goals to strive for – and if the school child is not attaining these goals, it is her or his fault; and (2) school has a strong culture (e.g. sitting still, distributing knowledge to children, children listening to teacher, facing the blackboard, having ‘book-steering teaching’, play belonging to breaks and not part of ordinary lessons and activities in school), different from preschool’s. One interviewee shared an episode in which a male intern came to her preschool for three days – he said ‘you don’t teach anything!’ and the interviewee (who is a preschool teacher) said ‘but we learn a lot!’ Another interviewee – a teacher educator involved in working with schools on the Reggio Emilia approach – commented:

It’s much more challenging to work with such questions [e.g. listening to the child; using pedagogical documentation as a means of assessment] in primary school.... You have different curricula. You have to learn to read and write and maths and science and you have to assess every child. And, you have a longer tradition in school than preschool in that everyone has been to school and has strong images about school, and every parent in school has the same experience. That makes it harder to make changes in [primary] school. Many people have strong images in their head. But, I think it’s possible. It will take a much longer time.

One interviewee referred to the difficulty arising from the differences between preschool and school:

The difficulty in this is that the preschool are free to set the goals, they can look at the children and see what they need. But the school is compulsory. They have goals ... they have to force children to work towards some goals. I think that the cultural difference between preschool and school we have not been able to resolve. There are lots of forcing rules in schools that we don't have in preschool in the same way. So, I think also that it has something to do with [teachers'] self-confidence. But also I think that school teachers feel a bit haunted that we are measuring what children have achieved at certain point, year 1, year 2... we don't have that way of looking at children when they are small ... We are in the first class and second class, and teachers are forced to make something that we can measure. That’s the difference in the two systems that we have to deal with, but we are not good at it, I think. We don't have the same forcing rules in preschools and that’s a fact. We say children are

different. But at some point, they reach school. That's little bit a problem. I don't know a better way of [dealing with] the differences between the two systems...

6.5.5. Influences

The views of interviewees on the main influences on the relationship can be summarised in three strands: (1) concern for building a knowledge nation and being a competitive player in the global economy; (2) influences of the work of international organisations, particularly the power of PISA; and (3) a strong tradition of the Swedish preschool, backed by a dynamic research community.

There is a strong concern for making Sweden as a knowledge nation, capable of effectively competing against other countries in the globalised economy. This is seen to be made possible by implementing the vision of lifelong learning and by nurturing teachers who have good competences and are specialised in an area, subject or age group. Honing the specialisation of the teacher workforce is understood to raise the quality of education, which will transform children into competent adults. One interviewee commented that, after the adoption of the new Education Act in 2011, more and more preschool heads started to appear since it was felt that preschool had so much to achieve: having a *rektor* manage both preschool and compulsory school no longer seemed the best option, partly because preschool issues were perceived to be ignored in a jointly managed environment.

The concern for building a knowledge nation is also translated into a political will to realise lifelong learning by making visible common goals and content areas that run across different levels of the education system, starting from preschool education, and also by emphasising preschool's function of readying children for the next stage of education. The articulation of language, mathematics, science and technology goals in the revised preschool curriculum is a manifestation of this political will. The perception of whether a country is competitive is today greatly influenced by international assessments, particularly OECD's PISA.

PISA has had a great impact on Swedish compulsory school. The PISA results of Sweden have fallen sharply. This has contributed to a negative image of compulsory school – poor results, chaos in school, unpopularity of becoming school teachers. As mentioned earlier, PISA was a strong driving force that favoured the separation of initial teacher education for preschool and school teachers, and also supported an introduction of clear subject-related goals in the 2010 revised preschool curriculum. According to two interviewees, the role of the media was significant in spreading the negative image of compulsory school emanating from

the PISA results, and in prompting politicians to respond publicly with their analysis of reasons for the poor outcomes and what the solutions should be. One of them mentioned:

[T]he media around the world has been really really stressing the PISA study because it is simple to stress. It is simple, it is easy to say, look children in so and so country have so many points, and US, and Singapore... and it is a very fruitful area for the media to take care of... If the media talks a lot, then the politicians have to relate to that. Then, different politicians say, we are strong in this, we will take care of this, we will have a better teacher education, and so on. Then, [in Sweden] the discussion has not been on early childhood education, it has been on compulsory school.

Another effect of PISA, noted by policymaker interviewees, was the broadening of Sweden's international attention beyond the Nordic countries – notably to countries successful in PISA – to learn about different policy experiences.

Although the 'PISA shock' did not really extend to the preschool sector, some interviewees said that PISA would be likely to lead to closer attention to preschool in the near future. For one government official interviewee, PISA was rather 'good news' for the preschool field, since it showed that one year of preschool improved reading and mathematics, and boosted PISA results. There is already discussion, generated by PISA, starting to be heard about the role of education for younger children in improving learning achievements. One government official interviewee thought that there was a danger of schoolification in the PISA debate, which might motivate certain people to 'find' children at an earlier age, to provide special support to them, and to enable them to read by the start of the preschool class.

According to the interviews, the work by international organisations – especially OECD and EU – is understood to impact the Swedish preschool and its relationship with school in two different ways. One is the very positive evaluation of the Swedish preschool in international reviews (e.g. OECD's *Starting Strong*) of early childhood education and care policies and systems. Sweden is reputed internationally to have 'one of the best' preschool systems in the world (as put by one interviewee). This places preschool in a favourable position vis-à-vis compulsory school, which currently suffers from negative international reviews. Another impact of the international organisations' work is the gradual appropriation of the messages communicated from the international reports and studies on ECEC. Some of these messages emphasise the instrumental nature of preschool, sometimes expressed in economic terms, such as school readiness, human capital formation and investment return, according to some interviewees.

The image of the child as active, competent and constructing understanding and knowledge seems genuinely shared among preschools, which favours the use of pedagogies such as listening to children and an inquiry-based approach, which differ from the transmission pedagogy observed in traditional schools. Several interviewees recognise that this image of the child is also held increasingly in schools and that it was contributing to changes in how teachers approach children, knowledge and learning – although the strong school culture was considered an obstacle to making faster progress in this regard. The influence of Reggio Emilia in Sweden is notable, and has contributed to deepening and enriching Swedish preschool pedagogy in particular. The Reggio Emilia approach was described by interviewees as seriously exploring and experimenting with new ideas of learning as well as democracy, emancipation, empowerment and the notion of children as world citizens. The Reggio approach reflects an image of the child very different from that observed in the transmission pedagogy often found in compulsory school. The reason for the significant influence of Reggio in Sweden seems to reside in the fact that Sweden and Reggio share common values, such as democracy and emancipation, as the basis of preschools and schools.

Last but not least, the strong preschool tradition that had been cultivated over decades can be thought to keep the relationship in balance. With deep roots going back to social welfare, the adherence to play and a holistic pedagogy combining care, upbringing and education remains strong among preschool teachers today. Many interviewees stated that the child was viewed holistically and as the competent, curious child in preschools. One *rektor* interviewee said that ‘preschools live their own lives’, having pedagogical approaches quite different from those used in compulsory school. He stated:

Preschool has a strong identity. It has its own curriculum, which is used a lot and they try to apply it in everyday in preschool. I don't see much of the compulsory school methods in preschools. And I don't think anyone is asking for it either. I have seen some preschool teachers who try to imitate the compulsory school methods. But they haven't been successful really. Because, well... it suits some children but not most. So, in a way, they live their own lives. It is looked upon as very important activity. What the discussion since some years is, we know that it is very important what children do in preschool years, and for example we have seen that preschools that have pedagogy which is very conscious about maths – they use maths in different activities, they are aware that children use maths in different activities – these children learn more maths when they start school, a lot more. It is the same with language. So, what teachers and schools ask preschools for is to, in their own way, work with maths, and language and science. Methods are quite different. They are not asked to use them as subjects, but to be aware of and able to work with maths

and language, with the environment what you see, you look at, to have their own ideas, to talk with children to say what they see.

Moreover, the relationship between preschool and school is affected by the existence of strong expertise and research work on preschool, as mentioned earlier. This factor contributes to reinforcing the identity of preschool and its voice vis-à-vis compulsory school and other areas of education, increasing the possibility of forging an equal and constructive relationship with compulsory school.

From the Swedish interviews, the role of the research community appeared an issue worth noting in thinking about the relationship between preschool and school. When asked if there was research that had particular impacts on the work concerning the relationship, the non-researcher interviewees responded that they could not think of any specific research with such an impact. Some of them said that documents and reports emanating from international organisations, such as OECD and EU, have had an influence on the shape of the relationship, giving more weight to preschool education as a crucial stage in child development, boosting educational achievement and improving educational equity. One interviewee said that, more than researchers, politicians and teachers have had more influence on the relationship because of their desire to find and construct the 'red thread'.

However, comments from interviewees with a research background suggested a lack of research relationship between preschool and school. One interviewee said that researchers working in preschool and school were working in isolation, and that researchers working on school education really did not relate to the work undertaken by researchers on preschool education, and vice versa. She felt that preschool and school needed to be more open to interesting ideas highlighted and proposed by researchers in both sectors. She asserted that preschool education had interesting historical background and work (e.g. preschool practice in relation to the concept of *bildung* and to the valorisation of different 'languages', and toward combining art, science, culture, philosophy in the globalised world) around the world that were worth being shared and discussed, but that it was not really listened to.

6.5.6. Conclusion on the Swedish empirical study

The interviews showed that Sweden has a relatively equal and balanced relationship between preschool and school over the years. Having developed into a separate field residing in social welfare, with little in common with compulsory school, preschool has gradually come closer to school, culminating in the 1996 reform that placed preschool under the responsibility of the

ministry of education. Preschool became part of the education system and the first step in lifelong learning; and its pedagogical task was increasingly strengthened. The government intention of promoting upward extension was understood to be present in the 1998 preschool and school curricula and the introduction of preschool class. The integration of teacher education for preschool and school teachers of 2001 strengthened the 'red thread' that ran through the whole education system, starting with preschool.

However, schoolification tendencies started to appear in preschools; and there was a shift of government rhetoric to school readiness beginning in 2006. The 2010 revised curriculum for preschool reinforced its affinity to school to some extent, while the 2010 teacher education reform separated school and preschool teacher degrees and accentuated the specialisation of each area. Furthermore, the 2011 new Education Act elevated the status of preschool, considered a unique form of school with its own pedagogical traditions, but made explicit that the terms 'education' and 'teaching' – resisted for long time by preschool stakeholders – now applied to preschool as well. The general sense among the interviewees is that, while preschool is not yet an equal partner of compulsory school, it is in a relatively good position to continue its development without being strongly schoolified, due to its solid pedagogical tradition, good national and international reputation, and the existence of strong expertise and a dynamic research community working on preschool education.

The empirical study in Sweden has provided evidence that supports the hypothesis that globalisation has influence more on the policy than the practice level. Concepts and references that relate to globalisation (e.g. knowledge nation, competitiveness, Nobel laureate in economics Professor Heckman, PISA, international studies on early childhood disseminated by international organisations) were often referred to by policymakers, researcher/teacher educators and teacher unions and local authority association representatives as having an impact on the relationship, but rarely by *rektors* and preschool and school teachers, who are working on the ground.

Of note is that the concern to build a knowledge economy and competitiveness did not necessarily lead to a 'readying' relationship in Sweden: it appears to have strengthened a schoolifying tendency of the preschool, e.g. the increased visibility of subjects in the revised preschool curriculum; however, it also motivated the teacher education reform in 2011 through which initial preschool and school teacher education became separate, which has worked to strengthen the specific identity of the Swedish preschool. With regard to the image of the child, the fact that preschool and school increasingly share the image of the child as active and competent seems to contribute to a more balanced relationship between preschool and school. The evidence from the empirical study has pointed to the impact of the image of

the child as felt more at the individual level, and is framed by culture and tradition, as illustrated, for example, by the influence of Reggio Emilia on the Swedish preschool that arises from the sharing of common values such as democracy.

Chapter 7: Discussion of findings

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to compare and discuss the findings of the policy and empirical analyses, presented in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively. It is organised as follows. Firstly, it discusses the evolution regarding the relationship from 1989 until summer 2014 in France and Sweden. It will assess similarities and differences and highlight any evidence of convergence or divergence between France and Sweden. Also, it seeks to consider how far there are differences, or agreements and disagreements, within the countries. Secondly, the chapter discusses influences on the relationship in France and Sweden, and considers whether globalisation and the changes in the image of the child have influenced the relationship, as formulated in the hypotheses identified in Chapter 3.

7.2. Cross-national comparison of the evolution regarding the relationship since 1989

7.2.1. The evolution of the relationship

The analysis of policy documents (late 1980s - summer 2014) to understand the policy changes regarding the relationship in France and Sweden indicated a contrasting evolution. In France, the main policy since 1989 was the promotion of continuity of learning enabled by a schoolified *école maternelle* that prepared children for the *école élémentaire*. This peaked in 2008 but began to slow down afterwards. In 2013, the policy changed to that of halting schoolification and redefining the *école maternelle* as a sector independent from the *école élémentaire*. In Sweden, the policy has always been based on the definition of preschool as a unique form of school that applied holistic pedagogy. The government vision of integrating preschool in 1996 within education was that of preschool spearheading its approaches in compulsory school – an official position which would be unthinkable in France. The policy evolution since 1996 simultaneously embodied bringing preschool closer to school (e.g. strengthening the pedagogical task of preschool, clarifying subject-related goals in the preschool curriculum in 2010), and reinforcing preschool as a specialised field (e.g. separating the preschool teacher degree from the school teacher degree in 2011). On the whole, the Swedish policy provides for a more balanced relationship compared to the French policy.

The empirical study has shown that the views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the evolution of the relationship converge, to some extent, with the directions emerging from the policy analysis. Most of the French interviewees spoke of the schoolification and expressed their concerns and critical comments, such as the introduction of school-like evaluation in the *maternelle* and the diminished attention to training needs, especially those of the *maternelle* teachers. Also, there were other views, expressed by teachers, of the current relationship in France, for example, 'no relationship' by which the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers were de facto distinct professions; and 'two-way relationship, in which the *maternelle* programmed its activities in anticipation of the requirements in the *élémentaire*, and the *élémentaire* conceiving its activities based on children's experiences in the *maternelle*.

In Sweden, most of the interviewees expressed satisfaction about how the relationship has evolved - unlike the French interviewees - saying how pleased they were with the preschool becoming closer to school and nurturing its specific pedagogical identity. Rather than school readiness, the notion of readiness for life appeared to resonate better in the Swedish preschool. Two interviewees working at school level talked about their experience of the relationship shifting from being school-readiness-oriented (e.g. what children should be able to do) to being ready-school-oriented (e.g. how schools should build on children's prior experiences) in recent years. Also, there was acknowledgement that the relationship was not totally equal (e.g. preschool teachers usually having lower salaries than school teachers) and not as strong as wished for (e.g. teacher collaboration was mainly limited to the last year of preschool to prepare the ground for children's entry to preschool class). A few were concerned by the existing signs of schoolification and the making of a more schoolified preschool in the near future.

The views and experiences regarding the relationship do not necessarily coincide with the government orientation as indicated in the policy documents. For example, while the official policy was that of school readiness in France, there were people who described the relationship as two-way, with both the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* looking to each other for guidance on how to shape their practices vis-à-vis children. The Swedish practitioners saw the spread of practices inspired by the ready-school approach in preschools at the time where the school readiness discourse was being promoted at the political level, as reported by two interviewees working at the national level. This may be a signal of a complex relationship that exists between the policy and the people who are in the position to implement it.

Any discrepancy between what the policy says and what the practitioners experience may be due to a combination of the following reasons: there may be a time lag for new ideas inscribed in the policy to become embedded in practice, or there may be resistance to the

new ideas on the part of those who are to implement the policy. It may well have to do with the ways in which the policy ideas are 'interpreted' by policy actors at different layers within a system (for example, local administrators, inspectors, teacher educators, principals, teachers), or the ways in which their interpretations interact with the ideas of those accessing them (Ball et al., 2011). Also, it may be because of the independence and criticality of the practitioners themselves vis-à-vis the policy ideas in terms of what is appropriate for practices in their particular contexts.

7.2.2. The relationship informed by a settings comparison

The data from the pilot study, presented in Chapter 6, together with the photographs included in Appendix 11, has provided contrasting pictures of the French *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, and the Swedish preschool and school. The opening hours, staffing, learning environment and pedagogy of the French *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* convey the strong school tradition within which they evolved. Those of the Swedish preschool strongly reflect its 'daycare home' heritage, offering a home-like environment with abundant space and different rooms for children to explore and spend time in. The number of children to take care of, the learning environment and daily scheduling observed in the French settings seem to favour teacher-directed and -dominant approaches to teaching and learning. These institutional conditions themselves appear to support an image of the child as a passive, empty vessel to be filled in. On the other hand, the Swedish settings allow more movement, flexibility, freedom, choice for children, and individual attention and interaction with children. The image of the child conveyed by the Swedish preschool is that of the child living childhood, enjoying freedom to pursue her interests. The Swedish preschool class provides a more school-like environment and pedagogy, involving stronger guidance from teacher compared to preschools; but play, freedom and comfort are its visible features, akin to those of preschools.

7.2.3. Schoolification

A converging tendency in both countries – reflected in the policy changes to some extent, and emerging in the views and experiences of stakeholders – is the phenomenon of schoolification. The level of schoolification differs between France and Sweden. In the former, schoolification is a stronger, longer and more widespread trend, which began accelerating in 1989. In the latter, schoolification practice emerged in the 2000s but has not spread to the same extent as in France, although Swedish teacher educator-researcher interviewees and

some of the teacher interviewees were very sensitive to this phenomenon, opposing the encroachment of schoolified practices in the preschool.

In France, the schoolification trend was criticised for its inappropriate imposition of the *élémentaire* methods on young children, its overemphasis on academic learning, its favouring of written evaluation inducing the 'right answers', and the excessive pressure exerted on children to be able to read and write too early. However, a minority of interviewees openly supported schoolification, favouring the notion of stimulating children as much as possible and providing ever challenging tasks to young children – as supported by latest brain development research – and advocating the effective teaching of school-like attitude and behaviours (e.g. sitting still, able to listen to and follow teacher's instruction) in the *maternelle* so as to facilitate teachers' tasks in the *élémentaire*. The importance of acquisition of basic skills – reading, writing, counting – and transmission of culture and knowledge is ever increasing in the school system due to the growing immigrant population in France, which poses the issue of social and economic integration. The absence of comparable attention to basic skills acquisition in Sweden may be attributed to the existence of the smaller proportion of immigrant population in the country compared to France. Although no Swedish interviewees were in favour of schoolification as such, some acknowledged that the difference between preschool and school cultures posed pedagogical questions and challenges. One interviewee was strongly supporting more directed pedagogies from teachers in preschools through which to provide more guidance and direction to children than they actually receive.

The French and Swedish interviewees point out different forces that have led to schoolification in their own countries. The French interviewees stated (1) introduction of school-like evaluation, defined by a list of competences to be achieved by children, and requiring written evaluations to be made by the teacher, (2) increasing parental and societal pressure on children to be successful learner and future adults, (3) insufficient and diminishing offer of training and pedagogical support for the *école maternelle*. The Swedish interviewees referred to the preschool curriculum revision in 2010: it was considered to open up the possibilities toward schoolification through the introduction of more and clearer goals related to school subjects as well as clearer guidance on evaluation, which explicitly referred to the need for teachers to know individual child progress in order to be able to assess the quality of preschool environment and activities.

7.2.4. Preschoolification

Another, somewhat unexpected, convergence between the countries was that of the increasing influence of preschool pedagogy in school – or, ‘preschoolification’. The policy analysis pointed out that this was an interest and concern held in Sweden but not in France because of the vision of ‘spearheading the influence of preschool into school’ announced by the government in the 1990s – a rare example of government positioning on such a vision of relationship. However, through interviews, this issue came up in both countries. Some of the French interviewees said that the *école élémentaire* could usefully learn from the way the *maternelle* approaches the child and its pedagogical practices such as the use of group work, thematic projects, playful and experiential learning. Some also observed that the use of the ‘*maternelle* pedagogical approaches’, such as circle time and activity corners, was happening, but that this was due to the interest of particular teachers. In Sweden, preschool influencing school is considered to have happened through the curricular linkages, the actual work of some of the preschool classes, seminars and exposure to articles and reports, and the establishment of a Reggio Emilia network of preschool and school teachers. However, interviewees stated that school teachers would not admit that their pedagogical approaches were influenced by preschool, and would say that their practices have been influenced by experiences from other countries, higher education fields, or leisure time centres which are integrated in the school premises.

7.2.5. Workforce

What is intriguing is that the French workforce system offers more possibilities for the *maternelle* practice to be used in the *élémentaire*. Teachers are qualified to teach children ages 2/3 -11 and therefore those with prior experience of working in the *école maternelle* would be in a good position to make use of the *maternelle* approaches when they move to the *école élémentaire* to teach older children. Although working in both *maternelle* and *élémentaire* is not an obligation for teachers, the practice is considered favourably and is indispensable for teachers wanting to occupy higher levels of responsibility within the National Education hierarchy, such as inspectors and *maître de formation* (teacher trainers usually working at school level). In contrast, in Sweden, the workforce policy moved from separation to integration of preschool and school teacher degree in 2001 and went back to separation in 2010 on the basis of the need for sharpening the specialisation of teachers. Consequently, a minority of serving teachers are qualified to teach both in preschool and the first three grades of compulsory school education. The preschool classes for six-year-olds are mainly staffed with one qualified preschool teacher, and one qualified school teacher. So, in such cases,

preschool teachers are potentially a force for bringing in preschool influence in school, although their work is usually limited to the preschool class level.

The polyvalence of teachers, and the unified training and qualification system - which is actively supported by and gives a sense of pride to French people, as emerged from the interviews – does not seem to work in favour of a better positioning of the *école maternelle*. This is due to its lower status in relation to the meeting of training needs, inspection attention and support, and the availability of experts and recognition of the *maternelle* as a legitimate and distinct field of research and professionalization. The statement made by a former French education minister that questioned the necessity of highly educated staff in the *école maternelle*, whose work he opined was essentially to 'change nappies and look after young children' suggests the existence of negative perception and lack of understanding in society of the work at the *maternelle*. Interestingly, the question about whether the training needs of the *école maternelle* teachers were met through initial and continuous training did not seem to be a topic for interviewees with regard to the relationship. They all recognized that the *école maternelle* training needs were more marginalised (and increasingly more so) than the *école élémentaire* training needs when I asked the question; however, it hardly ever emerged spontaneously from the side of the interviewees.

Furthermore, the unified training and qualification system in France does not automatically translate into frequent movements of teachers between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* that would result in cross-fertilisation of pedagogical approaches. As revealed from the empirical study of interviews, *professeurs des écoles* do have a preference for working with certain groups and ages of children, and have the tendency to stay in either the *école maternelle* or the *école élémentaire*, or even stay with children of the same age group(s) within the *maternelle* or the *élémentaire*, since switching between the two levels is not a legal obligation unless there is intention to become inspectors or teacher trainers. The *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers are considered by some as distinct professions because of the different ways in which the two forms of school worked – which makes the unified system appear unsuitable and difficult to defend from a pedagogical perspective.

From the perspective of the workforce, the relationship in Sweden is not totally equal either. The interviews showed that preschool teachers generally receive less salary and work longer hours than school teachers; and there is the problem of lack of self-confidence in preschool teachers, which is not found in school teachers. Preschool teachers were said to shy away from exercising more leadership role vis-à-vis nursery nurses partly due to the emphasis in the previous version of the preschool curriculum on teamwork, favouring democratic approaches in the organisation of preschool. They were also said to be less assertive vis-à-

vis children, unlike school teachers. This lack of self-confidence – which has been addressed partly by the revised preschool curriculum issued in 2010, which clarified the pedagogical role of preschool teachers within preschool – was considered an obstacle to forging a more equal partnership between preschool and school. Moreover, the inferior status of preschool teachers has been accentuated due to the 2011 teacher education reform which separated initial education of preschool teachers from that of school teachers. Through this reform, preschool teacher degrees became ‘lighter’ than school teacher degrees, requiring fewer and a shorter period of study to qualify compared to a school teacher degree.

7.3. Cross-national comparison of influences on the relationship

7.3.1. Systems and governance of early childhood education and care

The structuring of early childhood education and care and its sub-systems has an impact on the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. As mentioned earlier, France has a split early childhood system in which the *école maternelle* has a strong school identity and link to the entire school system, while Sweden has an integrated system of early childhood education that belonged to the social welfare sector for over 50 years prior to the integration within education in 1996. In terms of sub-systems, France has a more unified system of teacher education and qualification and inspection – compared to Sweden, where teacher education and qualification and inspection are separate. Sweden places emphasis on nurturing a specialised teaching workforce while France places importance on the polyvalence of the teaching workforce across the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* founded on a unified teacher status, working conditions, qualifications and training.

The governance of the French *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* are centralised, structured around a hierarchical national education system with the presence of a very small private sector. The *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers are national civil servants whose salary and working conditions are determined according to a fixed scale. Meanwhile, Sweden has a decentralised system in which municipalities are responsible for the management and provision of preschools and schools, with their teachers as municipal employees. The Swedish government has actively promoted private provision in compulsory schools and preschools. The teachers’ salaries are decided locally through individual-level negotiations, unlike in France where they are centrally fixed. While some interviewees stated that there would be a range of views and experiences regarding the relationship due to the decentralised nature of governance in Sweden, the evidence from the empirical study was not

sufficient to confirm the statement. In France, some interviewees observed that there was relatively little difference between the organisation and practice of the *école maternelle* and the *élémentaire* among different parts of the country because of the centralised governance.

7.3.2. Politics

Politics was recognized as influencing government positions and policies on early childhood and primary education, which in turn affected the relationship between them; but there were no clear-cut tendencies. The 1989 education law, which introduced the *Cycles d'apprentissages* – which triggered accelerated schoolification tendencies – was introduced by a left-wing government. Between 1995 and 2012, when the Right was in power, there was heightened concern for efficiency of the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, readying children for school as the central function of the *école maternelle* was emphasised, and the 2008 curriculum for the *école maternelle* with its designation of a curricular objective 'becoming a student' - of which quite a few interviewees were critical – was adopted. Then, the 2013 education law, adopted after the left-wing government came into power, supported education policies that stressed the importance of well-being and that put a halt on schoolification.

In Sweden, the 1996 reform founded on the vision of preschool influencing the first years of school was undertaken when the left-wing government was in power. The interviews suggested that after the right-wing government came to power in Sweden in 2006, the government started adopting a school readiness discourse vis-à-vis the preschool, emphasising literacy and mathematics in ECE. One interviewee observed that left-wing political parties clearly opposed testing in preschool whereas right-wing political parties supported it. However, another interviewee pointed out that the neoliberal policy of promoting private schools began when the left-wing government was in power in the 1980s and not by the Right-wing government. Therefore, while the French and Swedish cases suggested similar party orientation concerning schoolification across the countries, i.e. the Right promoting it and the Left opposing it, there was no consistent overall party orientation in relation to neoliberal policies, such as the policies of increasing efficiency and promoting private schools.

7.3.3 Growing social pressure on children

Parental and societal pressure on children was most often mentioned as a force that encouraged a schoolifying relationship in the French interviews; this claim was absent from

the Swedish interviews. Swedish interviewees mostly took the view that people do not like to think of preschool as a preparation for school, but rather as preparation for life, centred on what is good for children. It could also be understood that the Swedish tradition of viewing childhood and preschool as a 'golden age' of free play and development (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2003: 26-7) is still alive in Swedish society today, shielding young children from the kind of educational pressure that exists in the French *école maternelle*. However, fear was voiced by some of the Swedish interviewees of the future possibility of preschool being subject to increased expectations to produce results due to the growing pressure on children coming from, for example, the results of PISA studies.

7.3.4. Social inequality and school failure

Unlike in Sweden, concern for social inequality and school failure constitute a major influence on the relationship in the French context. Its prominence was visible in both the policy documents consulted and the interviews. In France, this concern has been translated into the drive toward reinforcing the mission of the *école maternelle* as preparation for primary school, emphasising the acquisition of the 3Rs (i.e. reading, writing, arithmetic), and strengthening the school identity of the *école maternelle*. Problems of inequality and failure are particularly pronounced among poor, immigrant children in France. However, there is a possibility that this concern might become more important for the Swedish preschool. Given their influential role in the Swedish education policy discussions, the findings of the PISA studies pointing to the growing educational inequality as a key national trend may contribute to a heightened attention to the relationship between preschool and its effects on reducing educational inequalities. Also, as Swedish society expands its share of immigrant populations, this could possibly drive a tendency toward the emphasis on 3Rs and a stronger school identity for the preschool.

7.3.5. Efficiency

Concern for efficiency of the *école maternelle* was a driving force in the schoolification tendency in France, as stated in policy documents and commented on in interviews. This may partly have to do with the fact that the government is facing a budget crisis and that the *école maternelle* has also become a target of demonstrating its efficiency over cost, given that it is provided free of charge for all children from the age of three. Sweden in contrast has a decentralized education system, which already responds to efficiency requirements to some extent. The fact that the French *école maternelle* responded to the efficiency requirement by trying to maximize 'time for (academic) learning' (e.g. minimizing the time spent with parents

in the morning) reflects a particular conception of learning more familiar to the *école élémentaire*, and therefore the strong school-like character of the *école maternelle*.

7.3.6. Knowledge nation and competitiveness

The goal to build a knowledge nation and to make Sweden competitive in the global market was one major influence on the relationship, identified through the analysis of policy documents as well as in interviewees. It was the underlying motive of the reform to integrate preschool within education, the separation of initial teacher education that aimed to increase the specialization of different teachers, and even the revision of the preschool curriculum which clarified school subject related goals. The Swedish Ministry of Education – as well as other stakeholders including the media – reacted strongly to the country's declining PISA results, as it was understood as a sign of losing competitiveness in the global economy, which is measured by the performance of the country's human resources.

The concern for becoming a knowledge nation was hardly referred to in the French policy documents or by the interviewees, although the parental and societal pressure for being successful learners and future adults, described above, could be interpreted to embody the drive for being competitive in the global economy. The effects of PISA – which has ranked France constantly as a middle-level performing country, and has constantly highlighted the failure to address social and educational inequalities through education – have been relatively marginal. With regard to ECE, the French *école maternelle* received a critical review from an OECD team, mainly for its strong academic approach centred on teachers, but there was no particular reaction on the part of the French government. The extent to which the countries are influenced by external advice may be cultural: France has an inward-looking tendency and is resistant to outside influence; while Sweden is more open to external influence and keen on taking on new things from outside.

7.3.7. Tradition of early childhood education

The strong tradition of the Swedish preschool, backed by a dynamic research community, emerged as yet another major influence on the relationship in Sweden. Its roots in social welfare, and its strong adherence to holistic pedagogy combining care, upbringing and learning remain important today, keeping the relationship in balance between preschool and school. These are reinforced by the presence of a strong pool of expertise and a research

community in preschool education, benefiting from government support to nurture highly qualified preschool teachers.

This situation is different with France, which does not have a comparable pool of expertise nor a research community in the field. The French interviews revealed that research on the *école maternelle* was not encouraged, because it was not considered an important area, and that there was little interaction or cross-fertilisation between the world of practice and research on the *école maternelle*. The status of the *école maternelle* as a 'poor cousin' or an 'adjunct' to the *école élémentaire* can be detected also in the sphere of expertise and research community.

7.4. Reflection on the hypotheses concerning the influence of globalisation

As presented in Chapter 3, two hypotheses related to globalisation have been suggested: (1) globalisation impact is direct, felt more at policy level, and its impact is not uniform due to culture and tradition; and (2) globalisation explains the convergence of relationships in the two countries toward a readying relationship. These are considered in light of the policy and empirical analyses.

7.4.1. France

The policy and interview analyses regarding the relationship in France have shown that globalisation effects mainly operate in four possible ways. One is the positioning of literacy as the most important curricular domain. As discussed earlier, this arises from the notion of language as an essential tool enabling all learning, and the recognition that gaps in language acquisition is at the heart of school failure and educational inequalities. This line of thinking can be understood to reflect a concern for nurturing a capable and competitive future workforce equipped with good literacy skills, which should be started in the first stage of education.

Second is that the growing societal pressure on children to be successful learners and future adults can be understood as a manifestation of concern for human capital development, promoted through globalisation as a means to construct a competitive workforce capable of constructing a knowledge nation. This pressure - understood to come largely from parents but also from teachers, inspectors and the government – is considered to have resulted in

schoolification of the *école maternelle*, with more and more expectations for children to be able to read and write at an ever earlier age.

Third is the increasing concern for efficiency of the *école maternelle*. Pursuit of (economic) efficiency is a key concept promoted by globalisation, and the *école maternelle* is increasingly subject to the logic of productivity and maximisation of investment return. As discussed, this trend is evident, for example, in developments in the area of evaluation, the introduction of the notion of time management in the *école maternelle* to maximise learning and minimise time wasted on non-learning activities, and growing interest in measuring performance of the *école maternelle* for better accountability. It can be said that concerns for efficiency and performance measurement as a mechanism of accountability and control reflect neoliberal tendencies driven by globalisation. Furthermore, its discourse is made more powerful particularly against the background of the current budget crisis and of the *école maternelle* facing the new challenge of proving its efficiency and effectiveness after having achieved universal access. Moreover, the support for a more efficient and effective *école maternelle* was not something that was imposed. It also came from within the sector, as it was considered to help legitimise the *école maternelle* as a learning institution, and not merely a place for providing custodial care, socialisation and leisure.

Fourth is France's exposure and attention to international practices in ECEC, disseminated largely by international organisations, whose influence increases as globalisation progresses. OECD's critical review of the French *école maternelle* seems to have helped bring about a policy shift from schoolification to de-schoolification. PISA was not felt to be particularly significant in French policy as well as at practice level: it was understood to highlight what the French already knew from their own research and experience; PISA did not seem of any concern for French school directors and teachers.

7.4.2. Sweden

The policy and interview analyses showed that the effects of globalisation have been stronger in Sweden compared to France. The policy analysis pointed out that the Swedish government appropriated more actively some of the key concepts promoted by globalisation – such as knowledge nation, competitiveness, lifelong learning and specialisation – than the French government. This was evidenced in direct references made frequently to these concepts in the Swedish policy documents as well as in comments provided by the interviewees.

The Minister's statement to parliament regarding the 1996 education reform referred to the pursuit of a knowledge nation as an underlying motive, as well as to the importance of preschool influencing the first years of primary school. Interviewees stressed the vision of lifelong learning and the intention of strengthening the pedagogical task of the preschool as underlying this reform; and a few acknowledged knowing about the government's idea of preschoolification being part of the reform thinking. In any case, the policy did not embrace the school readiness model of relationship, as the hypothesis would have predicted.

Globalisation impacted the 2001 and 2010 teacher education reforms differently. The first – the integration of initial education for preschool and school teachers – was inscribed in a lifelong learning perspective – a key education concept associated with globalisation. The integration, however, did not attempt to homogenise the initial education for preschool and school teachers. It combined an offer of common courses for 1.5 years for all would-be teachers, with specialised courses for the rest of the initial education. The second reform in 2010 separated the initial teacher education in order to heighten teachers' specialisation. The integrated system was criticised for not having allowed sufficient specialisation and for being responsible for the falling Swedish performance in PISA. So, the separation of preschool teacher degree from school teacher degree served to consolidate the preschool specificity rather than schoolify the field.

The 2009 report of the Globalisation Council, set up by the Swedish government, explicitly positioned education and research as critical in the globalised world, and recommended the introduction of compulsory education for 6-year-olds and attention to developing language competences from the early years. These recommendations have the potential for primary school pedagogy and assessment methods to be pushed down to preschool.

The influence of the work of international organisations is also an indication of the degree of globalisation effects. The preschool sector seems to have benefited greatly from positive reviews by international organisations (e.g. OECD, EU), giving, in particular, the government stakeholders a source of pride and strengthening the commitment to furthering its development. The interviews suggested that this positive international reputation has contributed to a good positioning of the preschool sector in its relationship with the school sector, which was suffering from the negative image projected by the media in relation to the poor PISA ranking. Furthermore, the interviews suggested that international organisations were influential in promoting particular discourses of ECE, centred on notions of human capital formation and investment returns, using a certain body of research as evidence such as James Heckman's (2004; 2008). Also, the impact of international research – disseminated

by international organisations among others – was considered stronger in the Swedish scene than national research.

The impact of PISA on Sweden has been much greater than on France, partly due to the fact that the former has been showing a continuous decline in the ranking – unlike the latter whose position has been rather stable over the years. PISA has had a great impact on school education in Sweden, and, understandably, its impact was referred to mainly by government and researcher/teacher educator interviewees. As mentioned earlier, PISA-related considerations led to the curricular and workforce reforms in Sweden; and PISA also created a negative public image of compulsory school. Apart from one interviewee, interviewees working at the practice level did not see any actual impact of PISA. However, there was a view that PISA was partly responsible for making the school subjects visible and reinforcing the section on assessment in the revised preschool curriculum, and for the emerging political discourse on school readiness and emphasis on literacy and mathematics in preschool.

7.4.3. Discussion on the influence of globalisation

The policy and empirical analyses from the two countries support the hypothesis that the impact of globalisation is direct and felt more at policy level than school level. Policy documents make explicit reference to certain education ideas and concepts promoted by globalisation (e.g. knowledge nation, efficiency), and cite relevant research evidence and trends promoted by international organisations in both countries. However, interviewees perceived variable levels of connection between globalisation and the country's education policy and practice, with school-level interviewees least recognizing the relevance of globalisation.

The policy and empirical analyses from the two countries support the hypothesis that the impact of globalisation is not uniform due to each country's culture and tradition. The influence of education ideas and concepts as well as of education governance promoted by globalisation is stronger in Sweden than in France (e.g. more visible reference to notions central to globalisation in Sweden; stronger concern for the international work and research in education, and for how they are 'assessed' on a common international scale in Sweden). Some interviewees attributed this differential impact between the two countries to different cultural attitudes regarding external influence: Sweden is a small, relatively young country keen on absorbing new trends and practices from outside; while France is a big country proud of its own culture and heritage, and is traditionally disinterested or indifferent about new trends and practices coming from outside. However, the policy and empirical analyses have

shown that France is not unaffected by globalisation; indeed, it is being influenced by education ideas and concepts promoted through globalisation, such as efficiency and competitiveness, and by enlarged policy space that prompts France to widen its policy horizons and inspirations beyond its national borders.

There is some convergence between France and Sweden in that, in both countries, there is increased emphasis on literacy and language development among curricular domains, and trends toward making stronger policy alignments between the *école maternelle*/preschool and the *école élémentaire*/school (e.g. alignment of curricular domains, attention to evaluation). Also, the political support for talking about ECE as readying children for school – which was present in the past in France only – has recently emerged in Sweden.

However, there are important divergences. For example, increased societal pressure on children to achieve more and early so as to be successful learners and future adults in France – an effect of globalisation putting pressure on citizens' competitiveness – is absent in Sweden. The concern for strengthening national competitiveness has been translated into reinforcing specialisation and competences of the education workforce in Sweden e.g. through the workforce reform that separated preschool teacher training from that of school teacher; government support for preschool teachers participating in research schools. This has not been the case in France. What has been the one central concept driving education in France, which is associated with globalisation, is efficiency (e.g. notion of maximising time for learning in the *école maternelle*, concern for evaluating and measuring outcomes against inputs in the *école maternelle*) – which is absent from the Swedish analyses.

The relative absence of increased societal pressure on children in Sweden can be attributed to a societal consensus about safeguarding childhood as a golden age and the high regard in which preschool is held in the public's mind. Behind the policy of workforce specialisation in Sweden was the declining standing of Sweden in the PISA ranking (while France keeps its rank across the PISA surveys), but it is reflective of Sweden's recognition of preschool as a legitimate and unique field of education and professionalisation, which is not the case in France. The notion of efficiency as central in recent education policy and practice in France may be attributed to the fact that France traditionally has a centralised education system, heavily funded by the national government, and has had to face efficiency concerns when the budget crisis began to hit the country. The increased importance of efficiency questions in the *école maternelle* is also reflective of shifts in political attention from quantity to quality that began in the 1990s. In contrast, Sweden has a cultural preference for small governments, and had reformed its public system based on decentralisation and 'steering by goals' since the 1980s, where the share of financing of preschool and school is more evenly shared

between municipal and central governments, compared to France. So, efficiency concerns have, in a way, already been taken care of through municipal management of preschool and school.

The policy and empirical analyses from the two countries do not always support the hypothesis that globalisation explains convergence of relationship toward a readying relationship. Some of the data have shown that globalisation has contributed to a greater support for a school readiness relationship: in France, as globalisation advances, the purpose and function of the *école maternelle* as a preparation for the *école élémentaire* became dominant; the question of efficiency in the *école maternelle* became prominent, which gave rise to school-like methods of evaluation being adopted in the *école maternelle*; and the pressure on children to learn fast, better and from early on increased. In Sweden, with the advancement of globalisation, there recently emerged political discourses that emphasise preschool as important for school readiness; preschool as an integral part of lifelong learning became increasingly concretised through education law, which defined 'education' and 'teaching' as applying to the preschool sector; alignment of the preschool curriculum to the school curriculum along subject lines and strengthened attention to evaluation, including that of the individual child's progress; increased support for lowering the start of compulsory school to 6 years, which has a potential risk of introducing schoolified practices for children of that age; and more attention to investment and human capital formation discourses of ECEC, disseminated by international organisations.

However, even when globalisation was the underlying force, certain policy reforms did not give way to a school readiness relationship. For example, the 1996 reform to transfer the responsibility for preschool from the social to education sector, which aimed to strengthen Sweden as a knowledge nation, was framed in a vision of 'preschoolification' of the first years of compulsory school. The workforce reform that separated preschool teacher education from that for school teachers in 2010, and the government decision to finance preschool teachers' participation in research schools, were part of a pro-globalisation strategy to enhance the country's human resources, yet both supported a balanced and equal relationship in which the preschool sector stressed its specificity and integrity vis-à-vis those of the school sector. Furthermore, the impact of the work by international organisations is not always in the direction of countries favouring a relationship in which ECE is subordinate to compulsory education and its principal aim is to prepare children for receiving school education. Some of the analyses have shown that their influence was around a rethink of the current narrow and academic approach to early education in France (but at the same time, France is regarded as a good practice model for certain countries, who praise their universal access and classroom approaches), and encouragement of continuing the holistic approach to ECE in Sweden.

7.5. Reflecting on the hypotheses concerning the influence of the image of the child

This section considers the results of the policy and empirical analyses in the light of two hypotheses related to the image of the child: (1) the impact of the image of the child is more indirect, felt more at individual level, and framed by culture and tradition; and (2) the image of the child explains the divergence of the relationship, through individuals holding different images of the child.

7.5.1. France

As discussed above, *primarisation* or schoolification has characterised the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France for some time, particularly since 1989. When the schoolification policy was at its height in 2008, the *école maternelle* curriculum projected an image of the child who was 'becoming a student', who was to internalise the rules of the school and adjust to the school environment as essential conditions for successful schooling. However, through the adoption of the new education law in 2013, the image promoted by the government changed to accommodate a more holistic view of the child. Many interviewees described the relationship as schoolification, and expressed cautious optimism about the shift of government discourse regarding the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*.

Broadly, the empirical analysis pointed to two factors related to the image of the child that supported a schoolified relationship in France. These factors were: (1) developmental psychology as a dominant lens through which children in the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* are viewed; and (2) the culture and tradition that support a hierarchical adult-child relationship and authoritative child-rearing style.

Developmental psychology

The most frequent response to the question of the images of the child was that the images in the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* are different because the age and developmental level of children are different. What underlies this perception is developmental psychology that explains the child's growth in different universal stages of development. As discussed in Chapter 3 on the conceptual framework, developmental psychology typically projects an image of the young child as 'becomings', who are vulnerable and incomplete, vis-à-vis older

children who are closer to 'beings', like adults, who are defined as less vulnerable and more complete, according to the perspective of authors within the sociology of childhood (James and Prout, 1997; Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig, 2011). This hierarchical view of the child and her/his competences according to age fits well with the type of relationship between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, whereby the former is defined subordinate to the latter, and the former's task is to prepare children for the latter and facilitate their integration in the latter. Therefore, seeing from the perspective of the image of the child, there is, in a sense, a conceptual ground that supports a readying and hierarchical relationship between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*.

Another frequent response along this line was that, traditionally, the *école maternelle* sees the child as nature, and the *école élémentaire* the child as reproducer of knowledge and culture – which corresponds to the images described in the 1994 paper by Dalhberg and Lenz Taguchi concerning the Swedish preschool and school. Unlike the *école élémentaire*, which upholds a passive image of the child, listening to adults, learning through transmissive pedagogy, the *école maternelle* views the child holistically, learning by play and with the whole body, developing potential, curiosity, creativity, and desire to learn. Some interviewees gave similar observations by referring to the *école maternelle* as seeing the 'child', with the *élémentaire* seeing the 'student'.

Culture and tradition regarding child-rearing and adult-child relationship

There was the opinion that, even though there may be some disagreements on the surface regarding how the child is viewed in the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*, essentially, the two sectors hold the same image, i.e. they address the child as student, and not as the child. Children in the *maternelle* are learning by listening, which continues in the *élémentaire*. The school is not there for the child's flourishing and harmonious development and competence development in all domains, but its role is essentially to engage children in basic skills learning, meaning reading, writing and arithmetic. There, in the idea of learning, the child is passive and receives information provided by adults; if the child studies well and does the exercise well, he or she will succeed.

Some interviewees observed that the image of the child as passive and listening child – which fits well with the relationship of schoolification – finds expression in the French societal expectation vis-à-vis children. For example, in the family, it is not 'laisser-faire' but framing, with the expectation that children have to accept certain frustrations and constraints in life in living and interacting with others. It is not quite the image of the child as featured in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the country. So, even if the *maternelle* has the image of the child as 'nature', the emphasis on learning rules and integration into a group

were cited as the fundamental pedagogical features of the *école maternelle*, which are conditioned by the physical features of the settings.

The data on the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* settings and the flow of the day presented in Chapter 6 reflect a certain image of the child that is conducive to a schoolified practice. The settings frame or limit the extent to which teachers can provide care and learning experiences according to their ideal image of the child and what is 'good' for children. The French *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* settings are reflective of the strong school identity of these establishments: having a main classroom for 25 children per classroom⁵¹ in both the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*. There is one teacher and one assistant in the *maternelle* classroom while there is one teacher in the *élémentaire* classroom.⁵² Although the furniture and activity corner arrangements are different between the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* classrooms, the space is limited in both classrooms. The timetables of both settings are quite regimented, again, a reflection of a strong school identity in the organisation of activities. The available space, staff and timetable organisation in the French settings are not conducive to a child-centred approach enabling individual and diversified responses to individuals' interest and needs in their learning. They rather call for well-behaved child who listens to the teacher, who needs to manage a large number of children at once. It can be said that the institutional settings reflect the culture and tradition regarding child-rearing and adult-child relationship.

One remarkable difference between the French and Swedish interviews is that the latter spoke of teachers learning from and with children, which was unheard of in the former. This can be interpreted as arising from the cultural differences: the cultural expectation held by the French people is that the adult-child relationship is hierarchical, with the adult having the authority over the child; while the Swedish people see the adult and the child in a more equal relationship, and support democratic participation of both children and adults in the shaping of actions and environments.

⁵¹ Usually, there are on average 27 children per class in the *école maternelle* and the *école élémentaire*. The settings from which the data is presented are designated as 'ZEP (*zone d'éducation prioritaire*) school', i.e. schools with the status of being in the education priority zone. The ZEP schools are obliged not to surpass 25 children per classroom, and receive extra funding aimed to assist disadvantaged children's learning, development and wellbeing. Most recently, the ZEP policy has been renamed as REP (*reseau d'éducation prioritaire*). <http://www.metronews.fr/info/education-prioritaire-adiou-zep-bienvenue-rep-qu-est-ce-qui-va-changer/mnlpls1cw8Mr7h0kes/>

⁵² As presented in Chapter 1, there are two types of staff in the *école maternelle*: *professeur des écoles* (teacher), and ATSEM (assistant). *Professeurs des écoles* are state employees, whereas ATSEM are municipal employees. The staffing of ATSEM depends on the financial means of the concerned municipal government. ATSEMs are working side by side with *professeurs des écoles* in the *maternelle* classroom, especially for younger age groups. ATSEMs are increasingly absent or available only during a part of the school week due to the weakened financial base of municipal governments in recent years.

Apart from the ones described above, the empirical study found other images of the child held for both the *maternelle* and *élémentaire*. For example, one interviewee talked of the importance of seeing the students first and foremost as a child, as a person, who cannot be reduced to a sum of behaviours, results and grades she or he shows in school. Other images include: the child as researcher, always curious of the surrounding and interested in exploring further; the child as an active person interacting and constructing with others, which call for different kinds of pedagogy from the transmission model. The people who held these views were concerned about the schoolification tendencies in France, and supported a different kind of relationship.

7.5.2. Sweden

The policy and empirical analyses pointed to three factors related to the image of the child that supported a balanced relationship in Sweden. These factors were: (1) the strong preschool tradition that supports holistic pedagogy and preparation for life as its purpose; (2) the Swedish culture that supports democracy, equality and safeguarding of childhood; and (3) familiarity with the question of the image of the child.

Safeguarding the preschool tradition

The image of the child that underlies the policy regarding the relationship is most discernable in the 1996 reform integrating preschool within education, the curricular developments in 1998 and the education act in 2011. The 1996 reform took inspiration from the 1994 government investigation recommending a 'child-mature' Swedish school, i.e. a school that considers the whole child and that addresses the individual child's learning needs and style. This lent support for the government vision of bringing preschool influence into the first years of compulsory school. In terms of curricular development, the 1998 preschool curriculum and the revised school curriculum in 1998 share a common view of the child – the whole child, as active, competent, constructing learning and understanding in interactions with others and the surrounding environment – and sharing some of the traditional preschool approaches, such as play and emphasis on different ways of self-expression. This is observed to have been influenced by Reggio Emilia, which shares with Sweden the notion of competent child and democratic values of education.

The 2010 revised preschool curriculum maintains the same image of the child as the original one. However, the new emphasis on subject matters and evaluation can pave the way to a less holistic understanding and approach to the child. Concerning the legal changes, the adoption of the new Education Act in 2011 was significant from the viewpoint of the image of

the child. Although the Education Act stresses preschool as a distinct form of school and supports the continuation of the traditional preschool approaches (e.g. holistic approach to the child, important place of parents in preschool), a symbolic change is that, officially, the concepts of 'education' and 'teaching' now apply to preschool – which has been resisted, sometimes fiercely, by preschool stakeholders. This could lead to possible interpretations that would support the adoption of schoolified approaches in preschool.

These suggest the existence of strong preschool tradition and consensus on safeguarding the uniqueness and strengths of the Swedish preschool, and on reinforcing its pedagogical task. The policy calling for a common view of the child for the preschool and school indicates a favourable view of cooperation between both levels of teacher. Thus, the policy analysis shows a close connection between the image of the child suggested in the policy documents and the preschool's culture and tradition. Moreover, the empirical analysis demonstrated that the curriculum was at the centre of teachers' consideration on the relationship, and that there is general agreement on the purpose of the preschool as preparation for life.

As presented in Chapter 6, the Swedish preschool and preschool classroom settings have a much less school-like character than the French settings. They are more home like, evident in the availability of larger spaces, comfortable furniture (such as sofas in both preschool and preschool class), large carpets on which to learn and play, different rooms in which children can choose to go and engage in activities of their interest. In the preschool group, there is one adult for 8 children aged 1-4. In the preschool class, there were two teachers – one qualified as preschool teacher and one as school teacher – having 24 children. Preschool is open from 6:30 until 18:00, enabling parents to bring children according to their work or study schedules, but the main preschool hours are between 9:00 and 14:00. Preschool class is from 8:00 until 14:00, and school-based care is offered outside of school hours, staffed by leisure time pedagogues. Compared to the French settings, the Swedish preschool and preschool classes have more open and flexible timetables. The Swedish settings project an image of the child as the child living and learning together with others, for whom comfort, freedom of movement, making choices and taking own initiative are important.

Strong school tradition

Interview responses suggested that the preschool and school are witnessing the same trend: from the image of the child as passive and empty vessel needing information to be poured into it, to the image of the child as active and competent, participating and constructing knowledge and learning and being investigative, as shown in Chapter 6. However, preschool is considered more capable of translating this image into reality, while school is constrained by its strong traditional school culture, where the teaching is teaching and having the

knowledge and not the student, using transmission pedagogy as the main approach. Also, it was considered due to the fact that the school sector is tied to the requirement that children have to produce results, unlike in preschool which has only goals to strive for. A possible factor with regard to the preschool sector is the influence of Reggio Emilia – whose philosophy and approaches have been disseminated to the Swedish stakeholders through various channels, including the work of the Reggio Emilia Institute in Stockholm established in the early 1990s – that gives inspiration to work with children in a manner faithful to the image of the rich and competent child.

Democracy, equality and safeguarding of childhood

The interview analysis suggests that culture and tradition exert a strong influence on which images of the child, learning and education (including preschool education) are held by individuals, which in turn affect the shape of the relationship they support. Democracy and equality are the fundamental values of Swedish society, which favours the ideas of cooperation and different groups being equal and deserving attention. This is reflected not only at the policy level but also at practice level: for example, the Swedish interviewees talked about teachers and children learning together and from each other. Also, comments from the interviewees regarding the relative unfamiliarity with the notion of school readiness suggest the persistence of the notion of 'golden childhood' (Lenz Taguchi and Munkhammar, 2002). Thus, altogether, this gives support for different kinds of relationship between preschool and school between Sweden and France.

Familiarity with the question of the image of the child

Compared to their French counterparts, the Swedish interviewees appeared more at ease when presented with the question of the image of the child in preschool and school. Most Swedish interviewees provided their own ideas about how they would represent children in preschool or school (e.g. a child as active and competent; a child as social; a child as nature; an investigative child and researcher; a child as being part of and constructing learning and knowledge). This gave the impression that there was more awareness among the Swedish interviewees about the relevance of the question in their own work with children. By contrast, the most frequent response from the French interviewees in relation to this question was that the image of the child in the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* were necessarily different because of their different developmental levels, which emphasises a thinking dichotomy of younger/older, less competent/more competent, less autonomous/more autonomous, etc.

7.5.3. Discussion on the influences of the image of the child

The above confirms the hypotheses suggested in Chapter 3 in relation to the image of the child to some extent. Both the French and Swedish policy and empirical analyses clearly showed that the image of the child was framed by culture and tradition. The impact of the image of the child on the relationship does seem to operate more on the individual level than the policy level, since people's accounts of the relationship are shaped by their particular world views and experiences, the positions from which they are engaged and the kinds of physical and institutional contexts in which they work. This is not to say that the image of the child as projected in policy is less important than the images held by individuals. The policy's image is one of the many influencing factors with regard to the views of the relationship; and the degree to which the policy's image has an impact may depend on a range of things including the extent of centralisation or decentralisation, the processes and frequency with which individual stakeholders are exposed to the policy, and the manner in which the image is interpreted for or communicated to them.

The images of the child can lead to the existence of diverse relationships at individual and local levels – which may be different from the one promoted by policy – and can open up possibilities for pursuing alternative visions of the relationship, which may be more constructive. The interview analyses showed that the Swedish interviewees were more at ease with the question about the image of the child in preschool and school than the French interviewees. Would having a better awareness about the social construction of the child and about the kinds of image of the child one holds possibly be of value? Reflecting upon the French interview analyses, a possible response is that it can free one from developmental psychology perspectives that prescribe the child as a developing or 'becoming' child – as opposed to the developed adult, or a full-fledged adult 'being'. Developmental psychology is the most dominant discipline in education, especially ECE (Woodhead, 2006), so, knowing other possible conceptions of the child may contribute to expanding one's horizon and give an opportunity to act and work otherwise.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1. Introduction

The thesis has examined the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. It employed a two-pronged design that combined an analysis of relevant policy documents and an empirical study consisting of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders engaged in early childhood and primary education at different levels in the two countries. The policy analysis focused on understanding the evolution of policy regarding the relationship, particularly since 1989. The empirical study consisted of conducting semi-structured interviews with a comparable range of stakeholders from the two countries in order to understand their views and experiences concerning the relationship. The results from the policy and interview analyses were complimented by selected information drawn from the observation of ECE and school settings conducted in the pilot study.

The thesis has reviewed relevant literature arising from early childhood and primary education research in order to understand the treatment of the issue of relationship between early childhood and primary education, with a particular emphasis on identifying the types of relationship conceptualised or identified. It has used a conceptual framework that has drawn concepts mainly from two fields of literature to inform the analyses, namely globalisation literature and sociology of childhood. It has adopted a historical perspective, given the importance of the historical roots and traditions in shaping the present-day policy, practice and future perspectives.

This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, it highlights the originality of the study and its contribution to the field of education. Secondly, it revisits the aims and objectives of the thesis stated in Chapter 1, and indicates how and where these have been addressed. Thirdly, it provides a reflection on the methodology employed in the study and aims to propose two alternative methodological options for this study. Finally, it terminates by drawing some broad conclusions.

8.2. The originality and contribution of the study

The study has attempted to address the gaps in the existing literature on the relationship and transition between early childhood and primary education.

The thesis focused on the relationship rather than transition. As mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2, there are numerous studies on transition between early childhood and primary education, but far less exists on the relationship between the two sectors. Transition literature largely focuses on the child's learning and experience, and does not necessarily involve careful and systematic attention to policy and contextual conditionings of the two sectors. In contrast, the focus of the literature on relationship is concerned with the 'context' of the individual child's transition. The 'context' here is understood to include the policy (e.g. administration and governance, curriculum, workforce), institutional (e.g. age-integrated provision, learning environment, staff:child ratio), societal and cultural (e.g. people's perceptions of ECE service and primary school; individualism; democracy), and international (e.g. the work of international organisations) context. It frames the actual local effort in providing for the child's smooth transition. Thus, the study on the relationship calls for a broader analytical framework than that employed generally in the studies on transition. It opens up possibilities to explore 'the values, goals, concepts, understandings and practices of education' (Moss, 2013: 2), which can contribute to the shaping of the whole education system and realisation of the vision of lifelong learning. It also lends itself to an analysis that is more aware of the question of relative influence between ECE and primary education.

The literature review has also shown that the existing literature on the relationship between early childhood and primary education is largely focused on individual countries. Thus, the study can be considered original in that it offers a cross-national comparison investigating two countries, i.e. France and Sweden, which highlights key issues for other countries. Moreover, among the existing literature on the relationship, there have been very few studies that investigated the topic from stakeholders' viewpoints. Such studies have largely been historical policy analyses, i.e. documenting and analyzing how the policy regarding the relationship has changed over time. They are not concerned with how stakeholders in practice, policy and professional training are actually perceiving the relationship, nor documenting their experiences, which may be different from the policy intentions put forward by the government. Thus, this is a rare study on the relationship that combines two types of evidence, i.e. policy documents (primary and secondary) and new empirical interview data, which offers a better understanding of the issues concerning the relationship. Furthermore, the study is unusual in using the social construction of the child as a conceptual lens through which to analyse the policy documents as well as people's perspectives regarding the relationship. As stated earlier, the inspiration came from Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) that provided a historical and socio-cultural analysis of the relationship between the Swedish preschool and school at the policy level.

Lastly, the study is innovative in that it crosses boundaries in many ways, allowing multiple comparisons and perspectives to emerge. In this study, there are crossings between (1)

national boundaries, i.e. France and Sweden, (2) sectors, i.e. ECE and primary education, (3) data sources, i.e. policy and empirical analyses, and (4) other boundaries, for example, crossing the French *école maternelle* and Swedish preschool, the French *école élémentaire* and Swedish school, French and Swedish policies, the French and Swedish stakeholders' perspectives and experiences.

8.3. Where and how the aims and objectives have been addressed

The thesis identified one general aim and three objectives. The general aim was to understand and compare the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. The objectives were:

- To conduct a literature review to identify types of relationship that have been found or conceptualised;
- To analyse policy documents since 1989 in France and Sweden to understand (1) changes in policy regarding the relationship, (2) whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the policy regarding the relationship;
- To undertake an empirical study to understand the views and experiences of stakeholders in policy, research and practice regarding the relationship, including (1) their views and experiences about the changes in the relationship, and (2) their views and experiences about whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the relationship.

The first objective was addressed in Chapter 2 (literature review), Chapters 5 (analysis of policy documents) and Chapter 6 (analysis of empirical study). The general aim and the second and third objectives were mainly addressed in Chapters 5 (analysis of policy documents), Chapter 6 (analysis of empirical study), and Chapter 7 (discussion of the findings).

8.3.1. Understanding and comparing the policy regarding the relationship

This objective included two specific parts: understanding and comparing (1) the policy changes regarding the relationship, and (2) whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the policy regarding the relationship in France and Sweden.

The policy changes were documented and analysed for each country in Chapter 5, and were compared in Chapter 7. In Chapter 5, featuring the policy analysis, the evolution in France was embedded in the split early childhood education and care system, which originated in the 19th century, while the evolution in Sweden was embedded in the integrated system for children aged 1-6 that belonged for a long time to the social welfare sector until 1996.

Prior to the 1970s, the issue of how ECE and school should relate to each other was not of major policy concern in either country mainly due to limited participation in ECE. The French *école maternelle* was largely an 'imitation' of the *école élémentaire*. In Sweden, ECE was defined as the cornerstone of welfare state, catering for the holistic attention to children's needs as well as parents' needs. From the 1970s onwards, attention to the relationship at the policy level emerged and increased. France 'discovered' the *maternelle* as a strategy for combatting educational inequality and school failure in the 1980s, which increasingly accentuated the preparation-for-school function of the *maternelle*. In Sweden, many projects on linking preschool and school were undertaken in the 1970s and 80s, and the first 'pedagogical programme' for preschool was issued by the ministry of social affairs.

Significant developments in the policy regarding the relationship have taken place since the late 1980s in both countries, with France adopting the new education law in 1989 that contained an explicit policy orientation on the relationship, i.e. the *Cycles d'apprentissage*. Schoolification, or *primarisation*, was the main French policy from 1989 until 2013, when the new education law was adopted, which put forward the policy direction that attempted to halt the schoolification process. In Sweden, starting from municipal level in the 1980s, preschool became officially integrated under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education in 1996. The government vision of integration was that of preschoolification, which was to be implemented through the curricula for preschool and school and preschool class. The policy regarding the relationship was founded on the preschool strengthening its pedagogical task, being part of lifelong learning, and keeping its pedagogical specificity vis-à-vis compulsory school. An integrative teacher education system, introduced in 2001, was replaced by separate teacher education for preschool and school teachers in 2011, which distanced the two sectors from each other.

Globalisation impacted directly on the French and Swedish policies regarding the relationship, with the impact greater on the latter than the former. The appropriation of the concepts of a knowledge nation, lifelong learning and competitiveness in the global economy in the education policy by the Swedish government was visible – which was relatively absent in the French policy documents. The work of international organisations, such as OECD's PISA, has had greater impact in Sweden than in France. However, the 'knowledge and competitiveness

pressure' coming from globalisation has not led to an explicit appropriation of school readiness perspective of preschool by the Swedish government, due to the strong preschool tradition and recognition of preschool as a distinct field backed up by strong expertise, and public opinion in favour of keeping the holistic pedagogical tradition in preschools. In France, globalisation has manifested itself by increased attention to the efficiency of the *école maternelle*, leading to the introduction of school-like evaluation inappropriate for young children and the greater emphasis given to readiness function of the *école maternelle*. Overall, globalisation has been a force in promoting preschool-school alignment and relationship in both countries, but its impacts have been variable.

With regard to the image of the child, the official view of the child in ECE and school is most evident in the curricula. In the past, the child was viewed as 'nature' in both countries in ECE. In France, this view faded away when the 1995 curriculum became organised by curricular domains instead of child development domains. With the strengthening school identity, the *école maternelle*'s image of the child came to resemble that of the *école élémentaire*, though the proposed curriculum issued in 2014 suggests a different image of the child, that of the child as having various needs and learning together with others to live together. The first preschool curriculum issued in 1998 in Sweden projects the child as active and competent, learning through relationships and interaction with others, which is also present in the school curriculum. The 2010 revised preschool curriculum and 2011 new school curriculum retain the same, common image of the child. The divergence in terms of the image of the child between France and Sweden that commenced in the 1990s may be reflected in the policy divergence with regard to the relationship. Another kind of divergence was found from the analyses of the policy and empirical data: divergence between the policy and the actual experience of the stakeholders. As touched upon earlier, this may be due to various factors such as time lag in the policy implementation, the resistance by policy actors and the interplay between different policy actors regarding the policy.

8.3.2. Identifying types of relationship found or conceptualised

The literature review also identified five types of relationship between ECE and school. These are (1) 'readying for school' or 'pre-primary approach to early education' (OECD, 2006), (2) ready school, (3) 'stand off' (Moss, 2013), or, 'indifference and isolation' (Haug, 2013), (4) strong and equal partnership (OECD, 2006), and (5) the vision of a pedagogical meeting place (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, 1994).

The first focuses on ECE, defining its role as preparing the child for schooling, equipping him or her with skills and behaviours according to the requirements and expectations of school education. In the second type, there is focus on school, defining its role as adapting to the child's needs and interests and being attentive to his or her experience prior to the school entry. The first type tends to support schoolification of ECE while the second tends to support preschoolification of school. Despite this contrast, these types can and do co-exist within the same society or locality.

While the first and second focused on the child's experience in transiting from ECE and school, the third, fourth and fifth focus on the respective roles of ECE and school in improving the child's transition experience. These include a more systemic and institutional perspective on the relationship, attentive to the different power and status attached to ECE and school. The third type exists when the ECE and school cultures are very different from one another, and they are indifferent or isolated from each other. The fourth and fifth types both stress the equality of relationship between ECE and school as well as valuing of each other. There is active searching and learning from each other about approaches to education, learning, knowledge and the child of each sector. The vision of the pedagogical meeting place is a step further compared to the 'strong and equal partnership' in the sense that it involves transformation of each sector through dialogue, confrontation and cooperation between ECE and school, creating new common conceptions and approaches together that can be shared between the sectors.

The policy analysis in Chapter 5 indicated the French policy of schoolification between 1989 and 2013, and then de-schoolification policy since 2013; the Swedish policy has been the convergence of the relationship - especially the preschool aligning more with school - with conscious attention paid to maintaining and nurturing the specific identity and pedagogy of the preschool. The empirical study in Chapter 6 identified a range of types of relationship, some of which overlap with the above-mentioned types found in the literature. These were 'no relationship' (France and Sweden, referring to several decades ago); 'two-way relationship' (France); schoolification (France and Sweden); close and balanced relationship (Sweden); ready-school relationship (Sweden); 'readiness for school and for life' (Sweden).

The study has shown that the relationship as viewed and experienced by stakeholders is complex, and that the school readiness and ready school relationships can co-exist and can indeed be complementary. There are signs that the 'strong and equal partnership' model (OECD, 2006) corresponds to the situation in Sweden. However, there was no evidence that the 'vision of the pedagogical meeting place' (Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi, 1994) was actually

the case in France and Sweden, although efforts toward this model were reported in Sweden, such as the creation of a Reggio-inspired network connecting preschool and school teachers.

8.3.3. Understanding and comparing the views and experiences of stakeholders about the changes in the relationship

There were two parts to this objective: understanding and comparing the views and experiences of stakeholders concerning (1) the policy changes regarding the relationship, and (2) whether globalisation and changes in the image of the child have influence on the policy regarding the relationship.

There was some level of convergence between the relationship put forward by the policy and interviewees' views about the kind of relationship that they observed. Most French interviewees referred to schoolification of the *école maternelle* as the current relationship, with an opening to a different direction due to the 2013 education law. In Sweden, responses varied more on the kind of relationship they saw, but the general tone was, unlike in France, positive for ECE and portrayed a more balanced relationship. Schoolification was observed to be taking place in both countries at different degrees, with France experiencing a stronger, longer and more widespread phenomenon. 'Preschoolification' was felt as something to promote not only in Sweden, where the government announced such a vision of integrating preschool within the education system, but also in France. The divergence between the countries was most pronounced with regard to how the workforce issues have been treated. France has kept the integrated teacher education for the *maternelle* and *élémentaire* teachers since the 19th century, while Sweden has changed from separate teacher education to an integrated one in 2001 and then reverted back to separate systems in 2010. The interviews revealed that the integrated model was supported in France, while the separate model was showed in Sweden, but with the former being critical about the insufficient attention given to training needs of the *école maternelle*. The inequality between ECE and school teachers in both countries was reported.

The influence of tradition and culture, including those related to ECE and school, in shaping the relationship, was found to be very important. The French individualist culture was not viewed as conducive to enhanced cooperation between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*. In contrast, the Swedish democratic and egalitarian culture was more attuned to cooperation and teamwork between preschool and school, as well as to the pedagogical style that involves listening to children, and learning from each other – which is considered important in the Reggio Emilia approach. The hierarchical nature of the adult-child

relationship in France, which supports adult's directedness and authority, is closer to the traditional teaching approaches with children facing and listening to the teacher. Furthermore, the existence of a strong and vibrant preschool research community in Sweden and the absence of a comparable force in France give rise to the differential power of ECE vis-à-vis school.

As shown in the policy analysis, globalisation is understood by stakeholders to be more influential in Sweden than in France. The Swedish interviewees made more frequent reflections on effects of globalisation on early childhood and primary education, such as OECD's PISA, international literature on the importance of early childhood education and care, James Heckman's work, compared to their French counterparts. The French inward-looking culture and its sense of superiority over others was cited as a potential reason for the relative indifference to the outside trends and opinions, though there were signs of opening up to the outside world. Being a smaller country, with more elevated pressure to globalise and excel in international comparisons, might also be a reason for the cross-national difference regarding external influence. The better English skills possessed by the Swedish people compared to the French people may be an additional factor that encourages heightened exposure to external influences, including international literature on ECE.

In connection with the image of the child, the Swedish stakeholders were more at ease with the question compared to the French ones. There was a range of responses from both countries. But in France, the most frequent responses were around the differences in the image according to the levels of education due to the child being at different developmental stages, and the child as increasingly defined as a 'student' as they get older; in Sweden, the dominant response was the child as active and competent in both preschool and school, but there were difficulties in working according to this image in school which was considered to have a strong teacher-centred tradition which upheld a passive, listening child. The existence of different images of the child for ECE and school between France and Sweden has contributed to the diverging relationship between the two countries.

8.4. Reflections on the methods employed

Regarding the policy analysis, access to the French and Swedish policy documents varied due to my different levels of competence in French and Swedish. The study was able to draw from a greater number of French policy documents than Swedish ones because I read French and do not read Swedish. However, the number itself is not an absolute indication of the richness of the information pool. There have been many more policy reforms in the *école*

maternelle and *élémentaire* in France (which was partly conveyed by interviewees expressing a sense of reform fatigue) than in Sweden, therefore having more documents to analyse in the French study can be justified. To compensate for the lack of Swedish language ability, I conducted a targeted search of possible relevant policy documents, using Google Translate, paying attention to the month and year of policy events of interest as well as to the names of the key persons and the titles of the events and reforms given in English. What has been helpful was the presence of two local researchers with whom I felt comfortable and confident in asking questions, clarifications and advice. Their cooperation was valuable and enabled me to verify the relevance of the policy documents written in the Swedish language to the purposes of my search. Overall, the policy analysis, which proceeded through the identification of key themes and clustering of the information from the policy documents according to the identified themes, generated an understanding of the policy changes with regard to the relationship, as well as the basis on which to explore the possible influence of globalisation and the image of the child.

As for the empirical study, the semi-structured interview was found to be a suitable method for addressing the research questions concerning the views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the relationship, including their views and experiences of whether globalisation and the image of the child have impacted on the relationship. The 'relationship' between the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*, or preschool and school, proved an unfamiliar topic to reflect upon for many of the interviewees both in France and Sweden. Often, it was necessary to explain what it meant, what kinds of issues were relevant or of interest to my thesis. Also, the question about the 'image of the child' was unfamiliar for some interviewees, particularly in France. Similarly, exploring interviewees' views and experiences in connection with globalisation was not a straightforward task, especially for people working away from the policy level. It was critical to pay extra attention during the interviews to see whether they might contain any suggestion of possible influence of globalisation in their responses.

The methodological choice of trying to establish a sample of interviewees with experience in the field of education since 1989 can be considered appropriate for the study: it was found through an initial scan of policy documents that, for both France and Sweden, 1989 was the year around which significant policy changes occurred with respect to the relationship. However, it was not possible to have a sample exclusively composed of people with such a profile, because the school directors and principals who kindly agreed to my conducting interviews with their staff did not or were not always able to select people with the requested profile. Nevertheless, the interviewees with 'less' experience had at least 6 years of working experience, and provided responses that were insightful and valuable.

The qualification and training of the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire* are unified, i.e. teachers are qualified to teach children ages 2/3-11. All the French teachers in the sample had experience of working in both the *école maternelle* and *élémentaire*. This was not part of the sample design, but was the result of school directors choosing for me teacher respondents who had experience in both sectors. They reasoned their choice by saying that they thought that it would be more useful for my study to have teachers with experience in both levels due to the nature of the topic and that the teachers would have more relevant opinions and insights to contribute to my study. It is difficult to say whether this teacher sample resulted in skewed findings. Also, due to the lack of statistics about active teacher workforce with and without work experience in both levels, it is not possible to say numerically whether and by how much such teachers are under- or over-represented within the total workforce population. When asked about whether teachers generally have experience only in one level or both, the responses were not clear, but there was some agreement that teachers tend to prefer to stay in one level, or even with the same or very similar age group of children. So, based on these responses, the teacher sample included in the overall French sample of my study may have represented a minority of teachers.

Most of the interviews were conducted individually, either face to face, by phone or Skype. There were only a handful of interviews conducted with more than one interviewee – the number was between two and four people. Group interviews generated, in a sense, deeper insights as they influenced each other's responses. However, one needs to be cautious about generalizing responses from the group, because there were dominant interviewees speaking up more than others, hence, the less dominant persons' views could have been lost. Therefore, there are advantages and disadvantages in having individual and group interviews.

8.5. Implications for further study and for a wider context

Observation as potentially an additional methodological option is worth reflecting upon. The pilot empirical study in France and Sweden included observation in addition to the semi-structured interviews. Observation consisted of observing and recording key information consistently across a set of dimensions, such as the flow of the day, interactions between adults and children and among children, the number of children and adults present, the settings, learning environments and materials available. Chapter 7 includes a section on the summary of the information and analysis generated from the observation (in 7.2.2).

Observing and recording the structuring of the day, the physical environments and interactions – including visual recording through photographs – were found to be very useful in understanding the relationship between ECE and school. If I had relied only on interview data, my appreciation and understanding of the relationship as experienced by children and constructed by teachers would have been less clear. For example, the different images of the child found in classrooms of 6-year-olds in France and Sweden generated by the observation were striking: the French teacher was dispensing teaching to 25 children in her class, with classroom arrangement that emphasises the hierarchical relationship between teacher and children; by contrast, the Swedish classroom had large carpets for children to sit on and learn together or individually, and often the Swedish teachers kneeling down and coming to the same height and eye level as children's to provide support and reassurance. While the observation was not useful in understanding the possible effects of globalisation on ECE and school and the relationship between them, it was very helpful in better understanding the images of the child held in ECE and school settings. It served as a powerful visualisation of similarities and differences in pedagogy and learning environments that shape children's daily experiences in the settings. Thus, for a future study, the addition of observational work that consists of observing and recording (1) flow of the day, (2) physical environments and (3) interactions in the study of the relationship is highly recommended.

While most of the semi-structured interviews were carried out individually, there were occasions to interview more than one person at a time, which generated interesting comments and insights due to the fact that people influence and build on each other's comments. On one occasion in Sweden, there were 15 people in the room where I was able to ask questions. They were teacher educators and doctoral students who worked at the university with the researcher/teacher educator interviewee with whom I had the contact. This focus group was not arranged at my request but on the interviewee's initiative, turned out to be very informative. Other such occasions presented themselves in Sweden where I interviewed four people (two principals, one preschool teacher, one psychologist) at the same time, and where I had three people (one assistant principal, two teachers). In France, there was only one occasion where I interviewed two people (two teachers) at once, but all the other interviews were conducted individually. In any future study, it would be useful to arrange an equivalent number of focus group discussions between the two countries, in addition to individual interviews.

A possible methodological option for achieving a wider breadth of views and experiences regarding the relationship is using a survey. It would have the potential to reach a greater number of stakeholders and improve on the 'statistical generalisation'. However, due to the fact that many interviewees were unfamiliar with the questions included (e.g. what do you mean by 'relationship', what do you mean by the image of the child), the potential response

rate would not be high, and the quality of responses may be compromised as people would have the tendency to respond according to their personal understanding of the questions. Also, the survey method would have been more costly, and even if the cheaper technique was chosen, i.e. online survey, it would have required carefully crafted explanatory notes, which may be discouraging for the respondents.

The present study has highlighted that one of the key dimensions is the issue around the workforce. A review of the scope, contents and methods of initial and continuous teacher education and professional development – which could not be part of the present study – would be useful in understanding the relationship by investigating the expectation of competencies required to be ECE or school teachers, the extent to which joint sessions with ECE and school teachers are organised, and the degree to which exchange, learning from each other and confrontation are possible. The interviewees pointed out that university institutions providing initial teacher education for ECE and school teachers were required to follow the overall government guidelines on the development of teacher education programmes. Therefore, a future study can usefully include a review of such guidelines to gain a better insight on government definitions of what is required to be qualified as ECE and school teachers.

I noted that the issue of language was a critical dimension of the present study. The fact that I do not speak and read the Swedish language has been a concern. Even if Swedish people are in general very competent in English, using English as the main medium of communication may well have missed the nuances that could have been important for understanding the issues surrounding the relationship. There were two incidents of note among the Swedish interviews. One was an interview with a teacher interviewee, who did not feel confident enough to speak in English and asked a colleague to translate. But the colleague was an intern, who did not have good understanding of the work of the preschool. Thus, the interview did not go smoothly, interrupted with interactions between the interviewee and the translator in order to reach most appropriate responses, and there were times where the interviewee was frustrated and preferred to tell me directly in English without the help of the translator. Another interview of note was a face-to-face interview with an assistant principal, who had brought with her a tablet to check her English words and expressions through Google Translate whenever she had doubts. Specifically, it was a challenge for her to explain complex concepts (e.g. entrepreneurship, idea of the child as ‘becoming’ as opposed to ‘being’) in English to me, though she made genuine efforts to get her meanings and opinions across. While the semi-structured interview is a suitable method of inquiry in view of the nature of the topic of the thesis as well as the aim of exploring the views and experiences of stakeholders regarding the relationship, the way in which the questions were described broadly and open-endedly might not have been helpful for interviews with people who are not

familiar and confident with responding in another language. More elaboration as to what aspects might be relevant in each of the questions in the interview guides may have been useful.

Finally, the study methodology can be used for investigating the relationship between early childhood and primary education in other countries, including those which have an overlapping or parallel system of early childhood education and care governance. It also provides an analytical framework for studying the relationship between other levels and sectors of education, such as the relationship between primary and secondary education and the relationship between formal and non-formal primary education. Thus, it is intended that the study will be disseminated in education journals and research conferences, such as those provided by the European Early Childhood Education Research Association and the European Education Research Association, to disseminate to an audience with interest not only in early childhood education but also in primary education, education transitions, and lifelong learning.

8.6. Final remarks

The study has pointed out that, for the better future of ECE, it is important to pay attention to its relationship with primary education and other levels of education, and to consider the coherence of the entire education system. As some of the interviewees suggested, dialogue, interaction and confrontation between stakeholders working in early childhood and primary education are crucial for working toward enriched practice in both sectors and forging a constructive relationship between them.

The study is being finalised at the time when a new global agenda for education is being shaped and will be adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. It is to be a universal education agenda that brings stakeholders together to work toward ensuring 'inclusive and equitable quality education' and promoting 'lifelong learning opportunities for all'.⁵³ Seen as embracing an ambitious and aspirational set of targets, the proposed global education agenda puts forward, as its second target, 'by 2030 all girls and boys to have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'. This wording of the early childhood education and care target conveys a sense that early childhood education and care is essentially for readying children for primary school. While the sense could be widened by ensuring the use of a broad definition of what readiness for primary education means, it has a risk of contributing to an

⁵³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>

acceptance of a narrow definition of early childhood education and care that may have an effect of closing alternative discourses on the purpose and meaning of early childhood education and care. There seems little possibility of having the wording changed, although it would depend on whether there is a critical mass of voices that call for the change through the process of adoption. It is my hope that the study can contribute to supporting more constructive models of the relationship between early childhood and primary education which would be of benefit to both sectors.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: A sample of an interview guide for the French pilot

Yoshie Kaga

mariée ; un enfant
nationalité : japonaise

Thème de la recherche

Quelle influence porte la pédagogie de l'éducation des jeunes enfants sur la pratique à l'école élémentaire ? Une étude comparative en France, en Angleterre et en Suède

Buts de la recherche

- (1) Comprendre des concepts, des théories et des contextes historiques et actuels qui forment les structures et la pratique de l'école maternelle et ceux de l'école élémentaire;
- (2) Identifier des ressemblances et des différences entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire au niveau des structures et de la pratique;
- (3) Explorer les obstacles et/ou les possibilités offertes pour que les pratiques pédagogiques de la école maternelle soient introduits dans l'école élémentaire ;
- (4) Identifier les pratiques pédagogiques de l'école maternelle qui pourraient être utilement introduits à l'école élémentaire, s'ils existent ; et quelles conditions peuvent faciliter l'introduction de ces pratiques.

Supervision de la recherche

Dr Claire Cameron et Professeur Peter Moss, Institut de l'Education, Université de Londres, Royaume-Uni

Justification

- (1) Cette recherche s'inspire de la recommandation de l'OCDE sur la politique de l'éducation et la protection de petite enfance (2001 et 2006) qui propose 'un partenariat fort et égal' entre le domaine de la petite enfance et le système éducatif. Elle sera une contribution vers la réflexion approfondie sur (et vers la réalisation potentielle de) cette vision ;

(2) La France, l'Angleterre et la Suède ont été choisies pour la recherche comparative, car les trois pays ont une longue et solide tradition en matière de l'éducation des jeunes enfants ;

(3) Ces pays organisent de manières différents les services de la petite enfance et les écoles élémentaires, qui rendent la comparaison plus riche.

Méthodes de la recherche

La recherche applique les méthodes suivantes pour examiner le thème : (1) analyse de littérature académique et documents publiques, (2) entretiens semi-structurés avec des personnages clefs (ex. directeurs et enseignants d'écoles, chercheurs, institutions qui s'occupe de formation des enseignants), (3) observation participante dans la classe pour enfants de 4-5 ans et dans la classe pour enfants de 6-7 ans dans chaque pays.

Demande des possibilités d'entretiens et d'observation

Dans le cadre de cette recherche, je voudrais faire des entretiens et observer la pratique dans une *école maternelle* et dans une *école élémentaire*. Spécifiquement, je voudrais :

- faire un entretien avec la directrice/directeur d'une *école maternelle* (environ 30 minutes) ;
- faire un entretien avec la directrice/directeur d'une école primaire (environ 30 minutes) ;
- faire un entretien avec une ou deux maîtresses/maîtres de moyenne section de l'*école maternelle* (entre une demi-heure à une heure pour chaque entretien) ; et faire une observation dans une classe de moyenne section pendant une journée entière (c'est-à-dire jusqu'à 16h30), si possible ;
- faire un entretien avec une ou deux maîtresses/maîtres de Classe préparatoire (entre une demi-heure à une heure pour chaque entretien) ; et faire une observation dans une classe de CP pendant une journée entière (c'est-à-dire jusqu'à 16h30), si possible.

Concernant les entretiens, le but principal est de comprendre l'organisation des services éducatifs et les perceptions des directeurs/directrices et des maîtres/maîtresses sur la thème de ma recherche. Veuillez trouver ci-jointe la liste des questions que j'aimerais adresser aux directeurs/directrices et aux maîtres/maîtresses. .

Le but principal de l'observation dans les classes moyenne et CP est de faire connaissance de l'environnement scolaire de chaque classe et du déroulement d'une journée écolière, et de voir des interactions au sein des classes. Par conséquent, je ne m'impliquerai pas aux

interactions et aux activités de la classe. Je souhaiterais prendre quelques notes et photos pour enregistrer les environnements physiques d'apprentissage (y compris la cour) et des interactions importantes, mais je respecterai votre avis et conseil, ainsi que ceux des écoles, sur ce sujet.

Note

Je m'engage entièrement à garder la confidentialité des informations, et à utiliser ces informations pour cette recherche seulement. Je demanderai si les personnes qui participent aux entretiens voudraient garder l'anonymat. Dans les jours qui suivent la rencontre, je m'engage à leur contacter – pour assurer la précision des informations fournies et pour demander s'ils voudraient changer leurs réponses par rapport aux certaines questions.

Le résultat de cette partie de recherche sera écrit en anglais, que je présenterai au cours de cette année académique à Londres (soit vers fin juin ou octobre 2010). Je serai ravie de partager ce résultat avec vous et les écoles qui ont généreusement participé.

Questions aux directeurs/directrices de l'école *maternelle* école *maternelle* et l'école *élémentaire*

1. Formation et expérience professionnelle de directeur/directrice
2. Nombre et âge d'élèves, leurs caractéristiques sociales
3. Organisation de service (ex. group par âge, nombre d'élèves par classe, personnelles dans classe, heures d'ouverture)
4. Quel est votre avis sur la suppression d'IUFM, passant la formation des enseignants aux universités ? Quelle est l'intention du gouvernement sur ce changement ?
5. Y-a-t-il des autres initiatives gouvernementaux récents qui ont affecté votre fonction ?
6. À votre avis, quelles sont les ressemblances entre l'éducation des jeunes enfants et l'éducation élémentaire (ex. buts, image de l'enfant et l'enfance, apprentissage et développement ; organisation des écoles ; approches pédagogiques ; implications de parents) ?
7. À votre avis, quels sont les différences entre l'éducation des jeunes enfants et l'éducation élémentaire (ex. buts, image de l'enfant et l'enfance, apprentissage et développement ; organisation des écoles ; approches pédagogiques ; implications de parents) ?
8. Pensez-vous que les enfants de la *école maternelle* et de l'élémentaire apprennent différemment ? Si oui, comment ? Quelles sont des stratégies pédagogiques qui sont appropriées pour la *école maternelle* et pour l'élémentaire ?
9. Pensez-vous que les enseignants de la *école maternelle* et de l'élémentaire nécessitent des différentes formations ? pourquoi ?

10. Es-ce la promotion de transition 'fluide' de la *école maternelle* vers l'élémentaire est considérée comme un thème pour votre école ? Quel est votre idée d'une transition 'fluide' ? Y-a-t-il des stratégies pour promouvoir une transition 'fluide' pour les élèves dans votre école ? Quelles sont les difficultés de mettre ces stratégies en œuvre ?
11. Considérez-vous qu'il serait utile d'introduire quelques pratiques pédagogiques de la *école maternelle* dans l'*école élémentaire* ? si oui, pourquoi, et quelles pratiques pédagogiques seraient utiles ? si non, pourquoi pas ?
12. À votre avis, quels sont les obstacles et/ou les possibilités offerts pour que les pratiques pédagogiques de la *école maternelle* soient introduits dans l'*école élémentaire* ?

Questions aux maitresses/maitres de moyenne section de l'école maternelle / de la classe préparatoire de l'école élémentaire

1. Formation et expérience professionnelle de maître/maîtresse
2. Nombre et âge d'élèves dans sa classe, leurs caractéristiques sociales
3. Organisation de service (ex. nombre d'élèves par classe, personnelles dans classe, nombre d'heures de travail par journée)
4. Pour vous, quels sont les buts principaux d'*école maternelle* (particulièrement la moyenne section) / d'*école élémentaire* (particulièrement la classe préparatoire) ?
5. Quelles sont les approches pédagogiques que vous utilisez dans votre classe (y compris l'utilisation d'espace extérieure) ?
6. Qu'évaluez vous ? quelle est la fréquence de l'évaluation ?
7. Pour quels buts et à quel degré sont les parents impliqués dans la vie d'écoles de leurs enfants ?
8. À votre avis, quelles sont les ressemblances entre l'éducation des jeunes enfants et l'éducation élémentaire (ex. buts, image de l'enfant et l'enfance, apprentissage et développement ; organisation des écoles ; approches pédagogiques ; implications de parents) ?
9. À votre avis, quelles sont les différences entre l'éducation des jeunes enfants et l'éducation élémentaire (ex. buts, image de l'enfant et l'enfance, apprentissage et développement ; organisation des écoles ; approches pédagogiques ; implications de parents) ?
10. Pensez-vous que les enfants de la *école maternelle* et de l'élémentaire apprennent différemment ? Si oui, comment ? Quelles sont des stratégies pédagogiques qui sont appropriées pour la *école maternelle* et pour l'élémentaire ?
11. Pensez-vous que les enseignants de la *école maternelle* et de l'élémentaire nécessitent des différentes formations ? pourquoi ?
12. Quel est votre avis sur la suppression d'IUFM, passant la formation des enseignants aux universités ? Quelle est l'intention du gouvernement sur ce changement ?

13. Y-a-t-il des autres initiatives gouvernementaux récents qui ont affecté votre fonction ?
14. Es-ce la promotion de transition 'fluide' de la *école maternelle* vers l'élémentaire est considérée comme un thème pour votre école ? Quelle est votre idée d'une transition 'fluide' ? Y-a-t-il des stratégies pour promouvoir une transition 'fluide' pour les élèves dans votre école ? Quelles sont les difficultés de mettre ces stratégies en œuvre ?
15. Considérez-vous qu'il serait utile d'introduire quelques pratiques pédagogiques de la *école maternelle* dans l'*école élémentaire* ? si oui, pourquoi, et quelles pratiques pédagogiques seraient utiles ? si non, pourquoi pas ?
16. À votre avis, quels sont les obstacles et/ou les possibilités offerts pour que les pratiques pédagogiques de la *école maternelle* soient introduits dans l'*école élémentaire* ?

Appendix 2: A sample letter requesting from the inspector the authorization to conduct interviews and observation in a French preschool

Yoshie Kaga

le)

Mme Diallo
Inspectrice de l'Education Nationale
2^{ème} circonscription, Val-de-Marne

Paris, le 4 mai 2010

Madame,

J'ai l'honneur de solliciter votre accord pour conduire la phase "pilote" d'une recherche dans 2 écoles de votre circonscription.

Actuellement, je travaille dans la Division de l'Education de Base à l'UNESCO où je m'occupe du programme sur l'éducation et l'accueil des jeunes enfants.

Sous la direction du Professeur Peter Moss et du Docteur Claire Cameron de l'Université de Londres, je suis en train de faire ma thèse comparant trois pays européens – la France, l'Angleterre et la Suède. La recherche portera sur l'influence éventuelle de l'école *maternelle* sur l'école *élémentaire*.

Dans le cadre de cette recherche, je souhaiterais conduire des entretiens avec les directrices des écoles *maternelle* et élémentaire Pasteur, et faire des observations dans une classe de moyenne section et dans une classe de cours préparatoire.

Veuillez trouver ci-joint une description de ma thèse et les détails sur les entretiens et les observations envisagés.

Je reste à votre disposition pour toute information complémentaire et vous prie de recevoir, Madame, l'assurance de ma sincère considération.

Yoshie Kaga

Appendix 3: A sample of an interview guide for the Swedish pilot

Yoshie Kaga

MPhil/PhD student

Institute of Education, University of London

Correspondence: 1

A Summary of Research and Questions

26 January 2012

This summary has been prepared for those who kindly agreed to meet and facilitate me during my visit to Sweden (6-10 February 2012). The purpose of the visit is to gain a better understanding of the Swedish context and practice for informing my research, and to pilot the preliminary methodology for later refinement.

Theme of research: Relationships between early childhood and primary education: a comparative study of France and Sweden

Objective and aims of the research: The research seeks to explore and understand system differences and convergences in the relationships between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. It is, however, not concerned with child outcomes per se, i.e. it does not intend to explore which type of relationship is better for reasons of child outcomes. Specifically, the research aims to:

1. To identify what types of relationship⁵⁴ between early childhood and primary education have been conceptualised.
2. To assess how relevant and useful these typologies are for understanding and predicting the relationships in France and Sweden.

⁵⁴ Some of these typologies are, for example: (1) The school readiness or pre-primary education approach (ECE is to serve the objectives of public education and equip children with 'readiness for school' skills); (2) The ready school approach (primary schools are to serve children and be ready to welcome them); (3) The social pedagogy tradition (considered to exist in Nordic and Central European countries; combines care, upbringing and learning without hierarchy; early childhood is to be a broad preparation for life; a view that it is rather ECE that should influence the first years of primary school); (4) The strong and equal partnership (bringing together the perspectives and methods of early childhood and primary education as equal partners, focusing on the strengths of both) (OECD, 2006).

3. To understand and explain the similarities and differences in the relationships between France and Sweden, and identify factors affecting the relationships in the two countries.
4. To describe if and how the relationships are changing in France and Sweden, and understand whether the two countries are converging.

Supervision of the research: Prof. Claire Cameron, Anglia Ruskin University, and Prof. Emeritus Peter Moss, Institute of Education, University of London, UK

Methods of the research: This comparative research uses (1) documentary analysis, (2) semi-structured interviews, and (3) participant observation, therefore relying on documentation, interviews, and classroom observation as main data sources.

Documents to be analysed include policy documents, public and technical reports, national curricula, teacher training curricula, teachers' schemes and lesson plans.

Interviewees include key stakeholders concerned with the development and implementation of and research on early childhood and primary education policy and practice (e.g. policymakers, experts on early childhood and primary education, teacher educators, evaluators, union representatives, school directors, teachers). *Interview questions for consideration are attached below.*

Participant observation of classes of 4-year-olds and those of 6-year-olds is to be conducted in each country. The main aim of classroom observation is to understand the early childhood and school settings, daily routines of classes of 4-year-olds and 6-year-olds, actors who work in the settings, and interactions that take place with and around young children. For recording these different aspects, I wish to take notes and to photograph the physical environments (both indoor and outdoor) and some of the interactions that involve young children.

Note: I will ensure that interviewees are informed of my research and what will be involved in their participation in the interviews. I am committed to keeping the confidentiality of information gained through the interviews and classroom observation, and to utilising the information for research purposes only. I will seek interviewees their permission to audio-record the interview, and ask if they would like to keep anonymity. I will also ask them to feel free to withdraw from the research project at any point. After the interviews, I intend to contact them to check if they would be satisfied with their answers that I have recorded. Also, I will comply with required procedures for realising visits to early childhood and primary school settings and for taking photographs of young children, other actors and the settings as per advice given to me. The result of this pilot study will be compiled into a document to be

submitted to the Institute of Education in the course of 2012; and I would be happy to share this document with interviewees upon request.

Reference

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National Education Goals Panel (1998) *Ready School*. Washington D.C: Author.

OECD (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: Author.

Woodhead, M. and Moss, P. (2007) *Early Childhood and Primary Education: Transitions in the Lives of Young Children*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Interview questions

The interview is intended to be a 'conversation' around the following themes. It may take about one hour to cover these themes and any others which may spontaneously arise as it proceeds. Please let me know if you would accept to have the interview audio-recorded.

Thank you very much in advance for your kind cooperation and generosity with your time and knowledge.

1. What are your current positions, professional backgrounds and experiences?
2. What services does your Resource Centre (*Resurscentrum*) / Family House (*Familjens hus*) provide? Whom does it serve? What is the staffing of your Centre/House? Opening hours?
3. Is it possible to have some basic contextual information about Vallentuna, e.g. population size, ethnicities, economy, employment, welfare?
4. Is it possible to have some basic figures in preschool and compulsory school education in Vallentuna?
 - a. Numbers of children participating in preschool and compulsory school; and if the numbers are growing
 - b. Numbers of preschool and schools; and if the number is growing
 - c. Types of early childhood services and opening hours
 - d. Fee of early childhood services (by type)
 - e. Participation rate by type of early childhood services and by age
 - f. Participation rate in preschool classes
 - g. Ages of children participating in *fritidshem* and participation rate

- h. % of municipal education budget for (1) preschool education and (2) compulsory education; are the percentages changing, and in which way; are the allocated amounts increasing or decreasing?
5. Which unit/division is responsible for preschool and school education within the Vallentuna *Kommun*? How many colleagues work on preschool education, and how many on school education?
 6. How do you describe the relationship between preschool and compulsory school?
 7. How has the relationship changed since you first entered the field? Why do you think it has happened?
 8. Is there any regular contact, communication and collaboration between your Centre/House, preschools, schools and leisure time centres – and between *Kommun* staff working on preschool education and those working on school education (if you know)? On what topic is there communication/collaboration, in what ways, and how often?
 9. What are key government reforms (legal, policy, curricular, etc.) - in and outside the field of education - that have impacted on the relationship?
 10. Can you think of any key publications, research and/or projects that have impacted on the relationship?
 11. Can you think of any practice at school- and classroom-levels that impact on the relationship?
 12. What are the strengths/successes of the relationship in Sweden? What are its problems/weaknesses?
 13. Does the government have an official position regarding the relationship?⁵⁵ What about the university? Your unit/division? Does it – or do you – provide any guidance on the relationship?
 14. How would you like to see the relationship develop? How do you think it will develop?

⁵⁵ For example, the vision expressed by then Prime Minister Göran Persson in 1996: 'preschool should influence at least the first years of compulsory school' (Korpi, B.M. 2005. The foundation for lifelong learning. In: *Children in Europe*. Issue 9).

15. In your view, is there anything that preschool education can usefully learn from school education, and vice-versa? How could such learning be realised?

Appendix 4: Consent form used for the Swedish pilot

Relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden

CONSENT FORM

Please circle as appropriate

I have been given information about the research project Yes/No

I agree that the interview will be audio-recorded Yes/No

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, for any reason and without prejudice Yes/No

I know that I can ask questions at any time before and during the project Yes/No

I have been given an assurance that while what I say may be quoted my name will not be revealed in any publication arising from the research Yes/No

I know who to contact about the research project and how to contact them Yes/No

I agree that the research team can hold data about me which I have supplied Yes/No

Data Protection: I agree to the processing of personal data which I have supplied for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me. I understand that all personal data collected will be protected and destroyed at the end of the project.

Name (print)

Email (optional)

Signed.....

Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the project, please complete the form below and return to Yoshie Kaga,

Title of Research Project: **Relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden**

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5: Relevant French policy documents for Chapter 5

Policy changes / milestones since 1989	Relevant policy documents
1989 loi d'orientation sur l'éducation	1989 Loi n°89-486 du 10 juillet 1989 - Loi d'orientation sur l'éducation http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/1989_1.pdf http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=887AA0234BF6B07C6D16EC7CA45E4D94.tpdjo09v_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000509314&dateTexte=19890714 Establishment of Cycles d'apprentissage; creation of IUFM (institut universitaire de formation des maîtres)
1990 discours du ministre sur la politique de l'EP	Une nouvelle politique pour l'école primaire (l'EP) NOR : MENW9050100X, RLR : 514-7 Discours du ministre d'État, ministre de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports du 15 février 1990 http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/1990_3.pdf
1990 Protocol d'accord sur classe passerelle (between EM and childcare structures)	Note de service no. 91-015 du 23 janvier 1991, NOR: MENE9150041N, RLR: 501-0 Mise en œuvre du Protocol d'accord relative a la petite enfance (which includes the 1990 protocol) http://www.circ-ien-illfurth.ac-strasbourg.fr/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Protocole-daccord-petite-enfance-1991.pdf
1990 Décret : organisation et fonctionnement des EMs et EEs (including the obligation of livret in EM)	Décret n° 90-788 du 6 septembre 1990 relatif à l'organisation et au fonctionnement des écoles maternelles et élémentaires http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000352635&fastPos=6&fastReqId=442475165&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte obliging EM to create a 'livret scolaire' from the first year of EM, today stated in article D. 321-10 du code de l'éducation (IGEN and IGAENR, 2011: 57)
1991 Programmes, aligned with Cycles	Cycles a l'École Primaire, including a list of competences to acquire for each Cycle d'apprentissage
1992 Décret - ASEM renamed ATSEM	Décret n°92-850 du 28 août 1992 portant statut particulier du cadre d'emplois des agents territoriaux spécialisés des écoles maternelles [ATSEM]. NOR: INTB9200364D. Version consolidée au 07 juillet 2013. http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=8734A5B3BD387F672396C6AD6E4BB2CC.tpdjo12v_3?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006079793&dateTexte=20130314 http://www.cndp.fr/crdp-montpellier/images/articles/cd30/conferences/maternelle/vasse_nimes_2011.pdf
1995 Arrêté - Programmes pour chaque cycle de l'EP	Arrêté du 22-2-1995 NOR : MENE9402286A Programmes pour chaque cycle de l'école primaire
1998 Charte pour bâtir l'école du XXI ^e siècle	Une charte pour bâtir l'école du XXI ^e siècle, C. n° 98-235 du 20-11-1998, NOR : MENE9802836C, RLR : 510-0, MEN - DESCO http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/1998/hs13/default.htm
1998 rapport Ferrier sur l'efficacité de	Rapport Jean Ferrier (inspecteur général) - Améliorer l'efficacité de l'école primaire : rapport remis à Mme la ministre déléguée chargée de l'enseignement scolaire http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-

l'EP	publics/994000202/index.shtml
1999 instructions: les langages, priorités de l'EM	Les langages, priorités de l'école maternelle. BOEN Hors série n° 8 du 21 octobre 1999. Instruction du 8 octobre 1999 http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/1999/hs8/texte.htm
2000 rapport sur la classe passerelle	Rapport sur les dispositifs passerelles de la famille et du lieu de garde à l'école maternelle. Inspection générale des affaires sociales, inspection générale de l'éducation nationale. Rapport n°2000-153 N° 00-054. Novembre 2000 http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/94/5/5945.pdf http://www.senat.fr/rap/r08-047/r08-0477.html
2001 circulaire sur l'évaluation en GS et CP	Evaluation et aide aux apprentissages en GS de maternelle et en CP: identification des compétences et repérage des difficultés des élèves, NOR: MENK0101686C, RLR 513-2; 514-2, circulaire no. 2001-148 du 27-7-2001, MEN, DPD, DESCO (outil de prévention de difficultés) http://www.education.gouv.fr/botexte/bo010830/MENK0101686C.htm
2002 new timetable and programmes for l'EP	Horaires et programmes d'enseignement de l'école primaire, B.O. du ministère de l'éducation nationale et du ministère de la recherche, no. 1, 14 février, 2002 numéro hors-série
2003-4 OECD ECEC Review in France	http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport.pdf http://www.social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/rapport.pdf http://www.oecd.org/education/school/34400146.pdf
2005 loi de programmation et d'orientation pour l'avenir de l'école	Loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école, L. n° 2005-380 du 23-4-2005. JO du 24-4-2005, (NOR : MENX0400282L) http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2005/18/MENX0400282L.htm - loi http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2005/18/MENX0400282L.htm
2006 socle commun	Socle commun de connaissances et de compétences, décret n° 2006-830 du 11-7-2006, JO du 12-7-2006, NOR: MENE0601554D, RLR : 191-1, MEN - DGESCO A1-4 http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2006/29/MENE0601554D.htm
2007 rapport sur l'EP	L'école primaire: bilan des résultats de l'école – 2007, Haute Conseil de l'Education [reinforcing 'l'option scolaire de la maternelle', Gauzente, 2007: 14] http://www.education.gouv.fr/archives/2012/refondonslcole/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/rapport_du_hce_bilan_des_resultats_de_l_école_l_éc_ole_primaire_2007.pdf
2007 rapport Bentolila sur l'EM et des inégalités	La maternelle : au front des inégalités linguistiques et sociales. Rapport commandé par Xavier Darcos, Ministre de l'Education nationale. Prof. Alain Bentolila direction scientifique. EM regarded unsuitable for 2-year-olds, it would 'denature' EM and turn it into day nursery (Garnier, 2011: 557) http://www.cafepedagogique.net/lexpresso/Documents/docsjoints/Bentolila.pdf
2007 Lettre de Président Sarkozy	Lettre au ministre http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/2007_10.pdf?616d13afc6835dd26137b409becc9f87=e6393350bc038f7d3f1847952a8455e1 Lettre aux éducateurs http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/2007_11.pdf?616d13afc6835dd26137b409becc9f87=e6393350bc038f7d3f1847952a8455e1
2008 new EP programmes	B.O. hors-série no. 3 du 19 juin 2008, Horaires et programmes d'enseignement de l'école primaire (y compris une lettre du Ministre) http://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2008/hs3/default.htm
2008 circulaire: mise en œuvre du livret scolaire, obligeant bilan	Circulaire n° 2008-155 du 24-11-2008 - BO n° 45 du 27 novembre 2008 : Mise en œuvre du <i>livret scolaire</i> http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid23049/mene0800916c.html

de acquisitions de l'EM en fin de GS et joint au <i>livret scolaire</i>	
2008 masterisation de formation initiale	From bac+3 to bac+5 (from 'license' to master) http://www.qsf.fr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Jolion.Arnoux.pdf
2008 communication à la commission de finance du sénat	L'école maternelle. Article 58.2 de la loi organique du 1er août 2001 relative aux lois de finances. Articles L. 132-4 et L. 135-5 du code des juridictions financières. Juillet 2008. Cour des comptes http://www.senat.fr/rap/r08-096/r08-096-annexe.pdf
2009 sénat - rapport d'information	L'école maternelle, une institution mal connue aux multiples facettes, rapport d'information 24 juillet 2009, http://www.senat.fr/rap/r08-096/r08-0965.html#fn4
2009 circulaire	Préparation de la rentrée 2009, NOR : MENE0911464C, RLR : 520-0, circulaire n° 2009-068 du 20-5-2009, MEN – DGESC http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid27581/mene0911464c.html http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid27581/mene0911464c.html announcing the creation of <i>pole pédagogique spécifique</i> for <i>maternelle</i> within inspection at department level (see below the 2009 référentiel also), stressing the preparatory role of EM
2009 référentiel de compétences de enseignants de maternelle	Instructions pédagogiques, enseignants du premier degré exerçant en classes et <i>écoles maternelles</i> NOR : MENE0900711C, RLR : 513-2, circulaire n° 2009-098 du 17-8-2009, MEN - DGESCO A1-1 (Les inspecteurs de l'Éducation nationale responsables des pôles départementaux pour l'EM veilleront... à la conception d'un programme de formation spécifique) http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid48696/mene0900711c.html
2009 Luc Chatel discours	Luc Chatel veut donner un 'nouvel élan' à la maternelle (31 August 2009) http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2009/08/31/luc-chatel-veut-donner-un-nouvel-elan-a-la-maternelle_1233586_3224.html ; http://www.cahiers-pedagogiques.com/Revue-de-presse-du-lundi-31-aout-2009
2010 arrêté - LPC CE1 CM2 college	Livret personnel de compétences, NOR : MENE1015788A, arrêté du 14-6-2010 - J.O. du 1-7-2010, MEN - DGESCO A1 http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid52377/mene1015788a.html
2011 rapport IGEN sur l'EM	L'école maternelle - Rapport à monsieur le ministre de l'éducation nationale, de la jeunesse et de la vie associative. Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche. N° 2011-108. octobre 2011 http://media.education.gouv.fr/file/2011/54/5/2011-108-IGEN-IGAENR_215545.pdf
2011 compte rendu de la commission, sénat, évaluation à l'EM	Comptes rendus de la commission de la culture, de l'éducation et de la communication. Mardi 25 octobre 2011. Évaluation à l'école maternelle - Audition de M. Jean-Michel Blanquer, directeur général de l'enseignement scolaire (DGESCO) au ministère de l'Éducation nationale http://www.senat.fr/compte-rendu-commissions/20111024/cult.html#toc2
2011 compte rendu de la commission, sénat, scolarisation -3ans	Comptes rendus de la commission de la culture, de l'éducation et de la communication. Mercredi 26 octobre 2011. Scolarité obligatoire à trois ans - Examen du rapport et du texte de la commission. La commission examine le rapport de Mme Brigitte Gonthier-Maurin et élabore le texte sur la proposition de loi n° 447 (2010-2011) de Mme François Cartron, visant à instaurer la scolarité obligatoire à trois ans. http://www.senat.fr/compte-rendu-

	commissions/20111024/cult.html#toc2
2012 lettre aux personnels de l'éducation nationale	Lettre à tous les personnels de l'éducation nationale (Le ministre de l'éducation nationale, Vincent Peillon; La ministre déléguée, chargée de la réussite éducative, George Pau-Langevin). NOR : MENE1200269Y, lettre du 22-6-2012, MEN – DGESCO http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=60701
2012 note de service - LPC simplifiée	Simplification pour l'année 2012-2013, NOR : MENE1235160N, note de service n° 2012-154 du 24-9-2012, MEN - DGESCO A1 http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=61611 ; http://eduscol.education.fr/cid65896/simplification-du-lpc.html#lien0
2012 circulaire scolarisation des enfants de -3 ans	Accueil en école maternelle: Scolarisation des enfants de moins de trois ans. NOR : MENE1242368C, circulaire n° 2012-202 du 18-12-2012, MEN - DGESCO A1-1 http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=66627
2012 figures	Page MEN sur l'EM http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid166/l-ecole-maternelle.html 11% of 2-year-olds and almost all 3-5 year-olds in EM
2013 loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République	Adoption de la loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'École de la République, mars 2013 http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid70899/adoption-en-premiere-lecture-de-la-loi-pour-la-refondation-de-l-ecole.html ; http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/2013_1.pdf?616d13afc6835dd26137b409becc9f87=3c5bb2f8ff0205c2102b0fe8640841d6 http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/01_Janvier/29/3/2013_Dossier_de_presse_projet_de_loi_Refondation_ecole_239293.pdf (projet de loi pour la refondation de l'école)
2013 M@gistere (formation continue numérique)	http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid72318/m@gistere-accompagner-la-formation-continue-des-professeurs-des-ecoles.html#Une_vingtaine%20de%20modules%20de%20formation%20disponibles%20d%E2%80%99ici%20la%20fin%20de%20l%E2%80%99ann%C3%A9e
2013 décret Cycles d'enseignement	Cycles d'enseignement, NOR : MENE1318869D, décret n° 2013-682 du 24-7-2013 - J.O. du 28-7-2013, MEN - DGESCO A1-2 http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=73449 ; http://www.formapex.com/telechargementpublic/textesofficiels/2013_3.pdf?616d13afc6835dd26137b409becc9f87=3c5bb2f8ff0205c2102b0fe8640841d6 the new Cycles enter into force in September 2014 in EM; CP, CE1, 5ème in September 2015; CE1, CE2, 4ème September 2016 etc)
2013 arrêté - Référentiel des compétences professionnelles	Référentiel des compétences professionnelles des métiers du professorat et de l'éducation, NOR : MENE1315928A, arrêté du 1-7-2013 - J.O. du 18-7-2013, MEN - DGESCO A3-3
2013 rapport IGEN notation et évaluation à l'EP	Rapport - n° 2013-072. Juillet 2013. Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale. La notation et l'évaluation des élèves éclairées par des comparaisons internationales. Rapport à Monsieur le ministre de l'Éducation nationale http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/134000726/0000.pdf
2013 cour des comptes rapport sur accueil de -3 ans	Cour des Comptes. 2013. L'accueil des enfants de moins de 3 ans: une politique ambitieuse, des priorités à mieux cibler. Rapport publique thématique. http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/134000811/0000.pdf
2014 discours Ministre	Discours de Benoît Hamon à l'occasion du coup d'envoi de la refondation de l'éducation prioritaire, le 9 avril 2014 http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid78789/discours-de-benoit-hamon-a-l-occasion-

(Hamon)	du-coup-d-envoi-de-la-refondation-de-l-education-prioritaire-le-9-avril-2014.html
2014 circulaire recommandations pour la mise en oeuvre des programmes (EE)	École élémentaire : Recommandations pour la mise en œuvre des programmes, NOR : MENE1414153C, circulaire n° 2014-081 du 18-6-2014. MENESR - DGESCO MAF1 http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=80467
2014 rapport IGEN sur la scolarité -3 ans	Scolarité des enfants de moins de trois ans : une dynamique d'accroissement des effectifs et d'amélioration de la qualité à poursuivre. Rapport- n° 2014-043, juin 2014. Rapport à monsieur le ministre de l'Éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche. Inspection générale de l'éducation nationale, Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/2014/11/3/2014-043_Scolarite_moins_de_3_ans_345113.pdf
2014 discours Ministre (Vallaud-Belkacem)	Déclaration de Mme Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, ministre de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche, sur la refondation pédagogique de l'école et la réforme et la mise en oeuvre des programmes scolaires, Paris le 25 septembre 2014. http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/143002170.html
2014 consultation sur le nouveau programme de l'EM	La consultation pendant une période de 4 semaines ouvrables, du 22 septembre au 18 octobre 2014 http://eduscol.education.fr/consultations-2014-2015/events/programmes-de-lecole-maternelle/
2014 rapport IGEN creation de ESPE	La mise en place des écoles supérieures du professorat et de l'éducation. rapport no. 2014-071, septembre 2014 http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/2014/91/6/Rapport-IGEN-IGAENR-2014-071_355916.pdf

Appendix 6: Relevant Swedish policy documents for Chapter 5

Policy changes / milestones since 1989	Relevant policy documents
(1987)	(Pedagogical programme for preschool 1987 – not available electronically)
Changes until 2006, read:	Martin Korpi, B. (2006) <i>The Politics of Pre-school - intentions and decisions underlying the emergence and growth of the Swedish Pre-school</i> [Förskolan i politiken: om intentioner och beslut bakom den svenska förskolans framväxt]. Stockholm: The Ministry of Education and Research.
1991 – flexible school starting age	Bill 1990/91:115 http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Forslag/Propositioner-och-skrivelser/om-vissa-skollagsfragor-mm_GE03115/?text=true
(investigation 1994)	SOU, 1994:45. 'Grunden för ett livslångt lärande. En barnmogen skola. Betänkande av utredningen om förlängd skolgång.' The foundation for lifelong learning. A 'child-mature' school. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet - unavailable online Dahlberg, G. and Lenz Taguchi, H. (1994) Förskola och skola. Om två skilda traditioner och om visionen om en mötesplats. [Pre-school and school. About two different traditions and about the vision of a meeting-place]. Stockholm: HLS Förlag. Paper prepared for the above committee report 'Grunden för ett livslångt lärande. En barnmogen skola.'
1994 Lpo 94	Compulsory school curriculum Lpo 94
1996 Transfer of ECEC from social welfare to education	Bill 1995/96:206 Vissa skolfrågor m.m. (Specific school issues etc). http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Forslag/Propositioner-och-skrivelser/prop-199596206-Vissa-skolfr_GJ03206/ Goran Persson's statement in Riksdagen (Swedish Parliament) mentioned in Martin Korpi (2006), 22 March 2006 https://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/Central/dokument/pdf/tal/regeringsforklaring_mars_1996.pdf
1998 Preschool Class	Bill 1997/98:6 http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/02/51/72/0376c7a7.pdf
1998 Amendments to Education Act	SFS 1998:352 Lag om ändring i skollagen (1985:1100) law amending the Education Act http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sfs/sfs/19980352.PDF
1998 Lpfo 98	SOU, 1997:157 'Att erövra omvärlden.' [To conquer the surrounding world]. Förslag till läroplan för förskolan. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet. http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/25224 Preschool curriculum Lpfo 98
1998 revised Lpo 94	SOU, 1997:21. "Växa i lärande, Förslag till läroplan för barn och unga 6-16 år". [To grow in learning], Delbetänkande av Barnomsorg och skolkommittén. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet. http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/25215 Curriculum for compulsory school, preschool class and leisure time centre Lpo 94 (revised in 1998)
1999 OECD ECEC Review in Sweden	http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/2534972.pdf http://www.oecd.org/education/school/2479039.pdf
2001 new teacher education	Bill 1999/2000:135 En förnyad lärarutbildning (A Renewed Teacher Education) http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c4/26/45/df80f045.pdf MOES fact sheet: a new system of teacher education (August, 2010)

2001-2002 the right of children of unemployed parents (2001) and of parental leave with younger sibling (2002)	Right to at least 15 hrs/week (These provisions are regulated in the Education Act) Skolverket, 2007, five years with the maximum fee
2002 maximum fee	Skolverket, 2007, five years with the maximum fee
2003 free preschool for age 4 and 5 (525 hrs/year ie. 3 hrs/day)	(This provision is contained in the Education Act) Skolverket, 2007, five years with the maximum fee
(2004 evaluation by Skolverket)	Skolverket, 2004, preschool in transition
(2008 evaluation by Skolverket)	Skolverket, 2008, ten years after preschool reform
2008 proposed guidelines for new school curriculum	Bill 2008/09:87 http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/11/72/69/514f5f8a.pdf MOER fact sheet U08.021 December 2008 Curricula with syllabuses and knowledge requirements and a new grading scale
(2009 report by the Globalisation Council)	The Final report of the Globalisation Council Ds 2009:21
2009 Ordinance regarding research school	Ordinance 2009:1036 stipulating government support for preschool and school teachers to participate in research schools http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Forordning-20091036-om-stat_sfs-2009-1036/
2010 Reform of teacher education	The 2008 investigation report on new teacher education SOU 2008:109 En hållbar lärarutbildning: Betänkande av Utredningen om en ny lärarutbildning (HUT 07), Stockholm 2008 http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/11/67/37/b4b3b355.pdf http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/11/67/37/b4b3b355.pdf Bill 2009/10:89 http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/13/93/30/100696be.pdf MOER fact sheet: Top of the class – new teacher education programmes (March 2010)
2010 Revised Lpfo 98	2008 -09-25, U2008/6144/S. Uppdrag till Statens skolverk om förslag till förtydliganden i läroplanen för förskolan [Assignment to the National Agency for Education on propose clarifications in the curriculum of preschool] http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/11/27/62/cd36fcf3.pdf Skolverket, 2009 . Förslag till förtydliganden i läroplanen för forskolen. Redovisning av regeringsuppdrag U2000876144/S [Proposal for clarification of preschool curriculum]. 2009-09-30. Dnr:2008:03000. Stockholm: Fritzes. https://www1.lararforbundet.se/web/lokhem/jarfalla.nsf/files/CF75C0F1F3F8DA30C125783B0042C854/\$FILE/Skolverkslutrappor2009%5B1%5D.pdf (the first proposal for curriculum revision, which was criticised and not adopted) Preschool curriculum Lpfo 98 revised, published in 2010, entered into force 1 July 2011

	<p>2010 Förskola i utveckling – bakgrund till ändringar i förskolans läroplan [Preschool in development - background to the changes in the preschool curriculum], MOER</p> <p>Skolverket, 2010. The preschool is for your child</p>
2010 The Swedish Education Act (2010:800)	<p>Bill 2009/10:165 Den nya skollagen – för kunskap, valfrihet och trygghet [The new Education Act – for knowledge, choice and security] http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/108/a/142368</p> <p>The adopted Swedish Education Act (2010:800) – entered into force on 1 July 2011 http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Dokument-Lagar/Lagar/Svenskforfattningssamling/Skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800/?bet=2010:800</p> <p>MOER fact sheet: status and pedagogical task of preschool to be strengthened (June 2011)</p>
2011 New curriculum Lgr 11	<p>New curriculum for compulsory school, preschool class and recreation centre Lgr 11</p> <p>Ministry of Education and Research fact sheet on new curricula with syllabuses and a new grading scale, 2008 http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/11/77/01/1011cd7a.pdf</p>
2012 Certification of teachers and preschool teachers	<p>Regeringens proposition 2010/11:20 Legitimation för lärare och förskollärare ([registration for Teachers and Preschool teachers] http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/15/39/33/31b9e312.pdf</p>
2012 School Inspectorate quality audit of preschool	<p>Förskola, fore skola - lärande och bärande: Kvalitetsgranskningsrapport om förskolans arbete med det förstärkta pedagogiska uppdraget [Pre-school, pre- school - learning and supporting: Quality Review Report on preschool work with the enhanced educational mission] http://www.skolinspektionen.se/Documents/Kvalitetsgranskning/forskola-2011/kvalgr-forskolan2-slutrapport.pdf</p>
2013 MOER report	<p>From preschool pedagogy to nanotechnology: education and research in Sweden, MOER</p>

Appendix 7: Example of letter for the main study in France

Bonjour M. Girerd,

M. Didier Crico (l'Ecole supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation de l'académie de Lyon – É S P É Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1) m'a suggéré de vous contacter par rapport à ma recherche de doctorat.

De la nationalité Japonaise, j'habite à Paris et suis affiliée à l'Institut de l'Éducation à Londres pour ma recherche.

Le but de ma recherche doctorale est de comprendre et de comparer le rapport entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire en France et en Suède. Je cherche également à explorer des points de vue et des expériences des différents acteurs de l'éducation à l'égard du rapport maternelle-élémentaire.

Comme vous jouez un rôle importante auprès des enseignants des écoles maternelles et des écoles élémentaires, je voudrais prendre un rendez-vous avec vous afin de parler des questions concernant le thème de ma recherche. Je serai très reconnaissante de votre temps (environ une heure) et d'un partage de vos connaissance et de vos expérience.

Auriez-vous la possibilité d'un rendez-vous (téléphonique, skype, ou en personne) au cours du mois de juin ?

Je serai très reconnaissante si vous pourriez considérer ma demande positivement.

En attente d'une réponse favorable, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, mes salutations distinguées.

Bien cordialement,

Yoshie KAGA

Doctorante

Institute de l'Education, Université de Londres

Appendix 8 : Interview guide for the main study in France

Les questions pour l'entretien

Dans le cadre d'une recherche doctorale :
« Le rapport entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire en France et en Suède »

Yoshie KAGA
Doctorante, Institute de l'Education, Université de Londres

Le but général de cette recherche est de comprendre et de comparer le rapport entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire en France et en Suède, particulièrement pendant les derniers 25 années. A travers l'analyse documentaire et des entretiens semi-structurés, la recherche a pour objectif de :

- identifier les types de rapport entre la maternelle et l'élémentaire qui ont été constatés ou conceptualisés;⁵⁶
- comprendre des changements dans la « politique » concernant le rapport entre la maternelle et l'élémentaire ;
- explorer l'influence de la mondialisation ainsi que « l'image de l'enfant » sur le rapport entre la maternelle et l'élémentaire ;
- explorer des points de vue et des expériences des acteurs aux niveaux politiques, de la recherche, de la formation et de la pratique.

Voici la charte éthique que je m'engage à respecter dans ma recherche :

- je m'engage à informer les participants aux entretiens sur l'objet de ma recherche
- je m'engage à garder la confidentialité des informations recueillies lors des entretiens, et l'utilisation des informations à des fins de recherche uniquement
- je m'engage à demander autorisation pour enregistrer les entretiens, qui resteront anonymes
- je m'engage à rappeler que l'on peut se retirer de la recherche à tout moment
- je m'engage, après les entretiens, à les contacter pour vérifier s'ils sont satisfaits de leurs réponses documentées
- je m'engage à me conformer aux procédures requises pour les visites à l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire
- je m'engage à partager, sur demande, la thèse lorsqu'elle sera disponible (finalisation au cours de l'année 2015)

D'avance, je vous remercie de bien vouloir, au préalable, remplir le formulaire de consentement (voir la fin du document).

Questions pour l'entretien

L'entretien sera une « conversation » autour des questions suivantes et de tous les autres thèmes qui peuvent spontanément émerger pendant l'entretien. Je vous remercie sincèrement à l'avance de votre coopération.

1. Pouvez-vous me parler de votre poste actuel ?

⁵⁶ Voici quelques types du 'rapport' qui ont été constatés ou conceptualisés: (1) les enfants prêts pour l'école élémentaire ; (2) l'école élémentaire prête pour les enfants, (3) un partenariat forte et égale entre l'éducation des jeunes enfants et l'école élémentaire (ex. OCDE (2006) *Starting Strong* : Early Childhood Education and Care)

2. Pouvez-vous me parler de votre parcours professionnel ? Quelle à été votre expérience en éducation avant la prise du poste actuel ?
3. Au vu de vos expériences personnelles, comment décririez-vous le rapport actuel entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire ? Qu'en pensez-vous ?
4. Est-ce que le rapport entre la maternelle et l'élémentaire a changé au cours de votre parcours professionnel dans le domaine de l'éducation ? Quels sont vos points de vue sur ces changements ?
5. Comment pensez-vous que le rapport entre la maternelle et l'élémentaire se développera au cours des 5 prochaines années ?
6. Une étude suédoise sur le rapport entre l'éducation préscolaire et l'éducation obligatoire suggérait que chacun avait une image ou un conception très différent de l'enfant. Qu'en pensez-vous ?

(Fin de questions)

FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT

Titre de la recherche : Rapport entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire en France et en Suède

Veillez encercler le cas échéant

- J'ai reçu des informations sur la recherche Oui / Non
- Je suis d'accord pour que l'entretien sera enregistré en audio Oui / Non
- J'ai été informé(e) que j'étais libre de me retirer de la recherche à tout moment, pour n'importe quelle raison Oui / Non
- Je sais que je peux poser des questions à tout moment avant comme après l'entretien Oui / Non
- Je sais que mes propos peuvent être cités mais qu'ils resteront anonymes Oui / Non
- Je sais qui contacter au sujet de la recherche et comment contacter cette personne Oui / Non
- Je suis d'accord pour que la recherche contienne des données personnelles me concernant Oui / Non
- Je sais que les renseignements personnels recueillis seront protégés et détruits à la fin de la recherche. Oui / Non

Nom

Email (facultatif)

Signature

Date

Vous recevrez une copie de ce formulaire à conserver

Si vous souhaitez vous retirer de la recherche, veuillez compléter le formulaire ci-dessous et le retourner à Yoshie Kaga,

Titre de la recherche : **Rapport entre l'école maternelle et l'école élémentaire en France et en Suède**

Je voudrais me retirer de la recherche

Signé : _____ Daté : _____

Appendix 9: Example of letter for the main study in Sweden

Dear Ms Maria Dahlstedt,

Eva kindly passed on your message and contact details.

First of all, thank you sincerely for welcoming me to your school/preschool for the purpose of my doctoral research, despite the short notice.

It is an honour and pleasure to have the opportunity to visit your school/preschool and to talk with you, the head of preschool and your teachers! I appreciate the possibilities of meetings indicated in the emails.

In light of the information in the emails, could the two days be organised in the following way?

Monday 26/05

- spend 'a day' with a preschool group (8:00? - 14:00?)
- interview the preschool teacher in charge of the preschool group just observed, for about an hour (14:00? - 15:30?)
- interview the head of preschool, for about an hour (15:30 - 17:00)

Tuesday 27/05

- spend 'a day' with a preschool class (8:00? - 14:00?)
- interview the preschool class teacher in charge of the preschool group just observed, for about an hour (14:00? - 15:30?)
- is there a possibility to interview you, Ms Dahlstedt, for about an hour, e.g. 15:30-17:00?

I do not need to take photos/videos of children for my research.

I would like to take photos of the learning environment (indoor and outdoor); and if possible, of staff (like you and teachers).

May I ask how I could get from Stockholm to Sollentuna by public transport?

I will soon send you brief information about my research and interview questions for your and your colleagues' kind consideration.

I am sorry to say that I do not understand/speak Swedish... I really appreciate your willingness to receive me and communicate in English.

Thank you very much again, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards, Yoshie

Appendix 10: Interview guide for the main study in Sweden

A summary of research and interview guide

Yoshie Kaga

Thank you for agreeing to an interview within the framework of my PhD research. This note briefly outlines the research and interview questions to be considered. I would be grateful if you could kindly fill in the Consent Form concerning your participation in the interview (provided at the end of the document).

Title of the research: Relationships between early childhood and primary education: a comparative study of France and Sweden

Research aim: The overall aim of the research is to understand the relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden. It focuses on government policy, its implementation and the effects of the policy with regard to the relationship. It does not intend to explore which type of relationship is better for reasons of child outcomes.

Research objectives:

1. conduct literature review to identify types of relationship that have been found or conceptualised
2. analyse policy documents since 1989 on the relationship in France and Sweden to understand
 - a. changes in the policy concerning the relationship
 - b. influence of globalisation and changes in the image of the child on the relationship
3. undertake empirical study to:
 - a. identify new types of relationship
 - b. understand:
 - i. views and experiences of stakeholders with regard to the relationship
 - ii. how practice interrelates the policy
 - iii. the influence of globalisation and changes in the image of the child on the relationship

Supervision of the research: Dr. Claire Cameron and Emeritus Professor Peter Moss, Institute of Education, University of London, UK

Methods of the research: The research uses documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Documents to be analysed include policy documents, public, technical and statistical reports, national curricula and guidelines, teacher training curricula, research literature. Interviewees include stakeholders concerned with policy, research and practice of early childhood and primary education.

Note: I am committed to the ethical considerations of the research:

- ensuring that interviewees are informed of my research and what will be involved in their participation in the interviews
- keeping the confidentiality of information gained through the interviews, and utilising the information for research purposes only
- seeking their permission to audio-record the interview, and keeping their anonymity
- asking them to feel free to withdraw from the research at any point
- contacting them to check their satisfaction regarding the recorded answers, after the interview
- complying with required procedures for realising visits to early childhood and primary school settings as per advice given to me

- upon request, sharing the thesis when available (in the course of 2015)

Reference: Moss, P. (ed) (2013) *Early Childhood and Compulsory Education: Reconceptualising the Relationship*. London: Routledge; National Education Goals Panel, (1998) *Ready School*. Washington D.C: Author; OECD (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: Author; Woodhead, M. and Moss, P. (2007) *Early Childhood and Primary Education: Transitions in the Lives of Young Children*. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

Interview guide

The interview intends to be a 'conversation' around the following themes. It may take about one hour to cover these themes and any others which may spontaneously arise as it proceeds. Thank you very much in advance for your kind cooperation and generosity with your time and knowledge.

1. Can you tell me about your current position?
2. Can you tell me about your background in education, starting with when you first entered the field?
3. How would you describe the current relationship between preschool and compulsory school?
4. Has the relationship changed during your time in the education field?
5. What are your views about these changes? and the current relationship?
6. How do you think the relationship will develop over the next 5 years?
7. One (Swedish) study of the relationship between preschool and school thought that each had a very different image or concept of the child. What do you think?

(end)

CONSENT FORM

Relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden

Please circle as appropriate

I have been given information about the research project Yes/No

I agree that the interview will be audio-recorded Yes/No

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, for any reason and without prejudice Yes/No

I know that I can ask questions at any time before and during the project Yes/No

I have been given an assurance that while what I say may be quoted my name will not be revealed in any publication arising from the research Yes/No

I know who to contact about the research project and how to contact her Yes/No

I agree that the researcher can hold data about me which I have supplied Yes/No

Data Protection: I agree to the processing of personal data which I have supplied for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me. I understand that all personal data collected will be protected and destroyed at the end of the project.

Name (print)

Email (optional)

Signed.....

Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the project, please complete the form below and return to Yoshie Kaga,

Title of Research Project: **Relationship between early childhood and primary education in France and Sweden**

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 11: Photos from the pilot study



Photo 1: Classroom for 4-year-olds, école maternelle, France



Photo 2: Classroom for 4-year-olds, école maternelle, France



Photo 3: Classroom for 4-year-olds, école maternelle, France



Photo 4: Classroom for 4-year-olds, école maternelle, France



Photo 5: Classroom for 4-year-olds, école maternelle, France



Photo 6: Classroom for 6-year-olds, école élémentaire, France



Photo 7: Classroom for 6-year-olds, école élémentaire, France



Photo 8: Classroom for 6-year-olds, école élémentaire, France



Photo 9: Preschool group, Sweden (children aged 1-4)



Photo 10: Preschool group, Sweden (children aged 1-4)



Photo 11: Preschool group, Sweden (children aged 1-4)



Photo 12: Preschool group, Sweden (children aged 1-4)



Photo 13: Preschool playground, preschool group, Sweden (children aged 1-4)



Photo 14: Preschool class, Sweden (6-year-olds)



Photo 15: Preschool class, Sweden (6-year-olds)



Photo 16: Preschool class, Sweden (6-year-olds)



Photo 17: Preschool class, Sweden (6-year-olds)



Photo 18: Schoolyard, preschool class, Sweden (6-year-olds)