



The Quality Dialogue

An Activity-Theoretical Study on Systematic Quality
Work in a Municipal Preschool Administration

Marina Karlsson



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

The Quality Dialogue

The Quality Dialogue

An Activity-Theoretical Study on Systematic Quality
Work in a Municipal Preschool Administration

Marina Karlsson



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

© MARINA KARLSSON, 2024
ISBN: 978-91-7963-191-8 (printed)
ISBN: 978-91-7963-192-5 (pdf)
ISSN: 0436-1121

Editor: Olof Franck
The publication is also available in full text at:
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/83514>

Doctoral dissertation in Educational Work at the Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg

Subscriptions to the series and orders for individual copies sent to: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, PO Box 222, SE-405 30 Göteborg, Sweden or to acta@ub.gu.se

Centre for Educational Science and Teacher Research, CUL Graduate school in educational science. Doctoral thesis 108.

This doctoral thesis has been prepared within the framework of the graduate school at the Centre for Educational and Teacher Research, University of Gothenburg.

In 2004 the University of Gothenburg established the Centre for Educational Sciences and Teacher Research (CUL). CUL aims to promote and support research and third-cycle studies linked to the teaching profession and the teacher training programme. The graduate school is an interfaculty initiative carried out jointly by the faculties involved in the teacher training programme at the University of Gothenburg and in cooperation with municipalities, school governing bodies and university colleges.
www.cul.gu.se

Cover image:
Thoughts Towards Enlightenment (mixed media on canvas) © Ovidiu Ivan

Photographer: Stelian Ivan

Print: Stema Specialtryck AB, Borås, 2024



Abstract

Title: The Quality Dialogue
Author: Marina Karlsson
Language: English with a Swedish summary
ISBN: 978-91-7963-191-8 (printed)
ISBN: 978-91-7963-192-5 (pdf)
ISSN: 0436-1121
Keywords: Quality Work, Dialogue, School Improvement, Educational Administration, Preschool, Activity Theory, Procedural Display, Relational Agency

‘Quality dialogues’ have become increasingly common in systematic quality work which is legally mandated by the Swedish Education Act. Quality dialogues can be seen as a response to the decentralization of the welfare state in Nordic countries and as a complementary way of reviewing educational quality in trust-based policy management. At the same time, a policy shift has redirected the light towards LEAs’ and principals’ accountability for educational quality. As a response to intensified political and administrative pressures, local authorities in the Swedish public sector have increased the number of professionals at quality departments whose work concerns auditing and quality assessments. Quality auditing now puts higher demands on organizational coordination and interprofessional communication than ever before. Nordic research on interprofessional quality dialogues has identified issues related to the tension between shared knowledge formation and support on the one hand, and control on the other.

The present thesis aims to contribute to knowledge on quality dialogues in local education administrations’ systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control. The research questions are: What is the intended purpose of the quality dialogue, and how does this purpose align with the actions of the quality dialogue participants? How do culturally and historically shaped contradictions influence the development and function of the quality dialogue? The aim and research questions are addressed through a study conducted within a large Swedish municipal preschool administration. The thesis examines quality dialogues occurring at the unit level, the authoritative level, and at the intersection between these two levels of the organisation.

A qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Data has been sampled from quality dialogues at preschool units, at the authoritative level and in the intersection between preschool units and the authoritative level where professionals and managers in various positions and levels, as well as politicians, meet to discuss preschool quality. The empirical data consists of municipal documents and interviews which were elicited with examples from observed dialogues and participants' written reflections. The empirical data is analysed through the lens of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, CHAT. In CHAT, the processual interaction between quality dialogue participants is directed towards a collective purpose, the object, which in turn shapes the activity and is mediated by tools, rules, and division of labour within a community. The object of activity is in constant movement which is why a cultural-historical analysis is necessary to understand the activity. Present-day actions within an activity are shaped and influenced by inner and outer influencing factors and culturally and historically shaped systemic contradictions that bear potential for development.

The findings show how quality dialogues have developed locally over time, under the influence of culturally-historically shaped contradictions caused by national and local policy, municipal reorganisation, and societal needs. The findings also show that quality dialogues have multiple purposes and that several culturally and historically shaped systemic contradictions influence the development and function of the quality dialogues. Most contradictions were found in the quality dialogue conducted at the intersection between the unit level and the authoritative level. This is also the quality dialogue most focused on control. Quality dialogues at the unit level and the authoritative level, respectively, focus more on support even though control is also at play. Findings further show that the actions taking place in quality dialogues might not entirely be addressing the shared, intended object of activity because quality dialogue participants' actions are directed towards substitute objects. Participants display to each other sets of interactional and content-related procedures that could count as procedural display. Based on the key findings, the importance of common preparations when designing quality dialogues and careful follow-up is emphasised.

*To those whose
genuine curiosity creates magic*

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is a journey with many fellow travellers. It has been a great privilege to have Professor Ulf Blossing and Associate Professor Åsa Hirsh as my supervisors. Their brilliance is truly inspirational. Dearest Ulf, I am in awe of your great knowledge, commitment, and kind, structured, and supportive guidance. I am forever grateful that you were the experienced travel guide who kept the straight course. With great generosity, you taught me many tricks of the trade, not least table making. Dearest Åsa, I truly admire your diligence, expansive knowledge, and passionate devotion to constantly search for ‘a new thirdness’. You encouraged both my CHAT endeavours and my creative side. In addition, your use of metaphors like ‘fluffy marzipan cake versus crisp bread’ appeals to me. Both of you have generously helped me expand my scientific thinking as well as increased my knowledge about researchers’ work life. You stood steadily by me through confusions, frustrations, and creative blocks, and you cheered me on when I expanded my knowledge. Ulf and Åsa, Åsa and Ulf, my steady rocks, my pillars of support and dedication; a million thanks. Without you, neither would this thesis be what it is, nor would I.

My thesis-writing-journey had some very important milestones. At the planning seminar, Associate Professor Mette Liljenberg cleverly highlighted valuable aspects. Your brilliance and immense knowledge as well as your interest and feedback, great and small, has been invaluable over the years. Professor Inger Eriksson, your sincere response at the mid-seminar showed me alternative paths that were important to return to even in the final analytical stages. At my final seminar, I was greatly privileged to get Professor Emeritus Yrjö Engeström’s immensely reassuring, insightful response on the thesis manuscript. You provided the last clues on how to improve the analysis. It was also a privilege to receive further insightful comments from Professor Niklas Pramling at my final seminar. To all of you – Mette, Inger, Yrjö and Niklas – I convey my greatest appreciation and gratitude. This thesis would not be what it is today without you.

At the very first session with my supervisors, I was asked what I most wanted to learn in the coming years. My spontaneous answer was, ‘theory!’ Since then, I have wholeheartedly participated in, and enjoyed, all the amazing online sessions arranged by members of the international CHAT community. I have really appreciated all the helpful feedback from senior CHAT researchers, not least Professor Emeritus Yrjö Engeström, Professor Emeritus Michael Cole and

Professor Annalisa Sannino. All three possess an extraordinary ability to explain complexity in an easy way. Your knowledge is fathomless. I especially thank Professor Annalisa Sannino, who was a Guest Professor at University of Gothenburg in 2022, for her immense support. Annalisa, your knowledge, kindness, and passionate dedication are truly inspirational. A special thanks goes to the Center for Research on Activity, Development and Learning (CRADLE) for all you do and the regular, informative newsletters. In the local context, the insightful conversations in the CHAT@IPS-group have further contributed to my understanding of CHAT research. A big thank you to Åsa Hirsh, Helena Wallström, Cecilia Hermansson, Sofie Lökhölm, Anneli Ahlin, Ingela Andersson, and Dimitrios Papadopoulos for our open and rewarding conversations. Without all of you, the level of analysis obtained in the present thesis would have been impossible.

I am grateful for the Centre for Educational Sciences and Teacher Research (CUL) whose graduate school I attended. A special place in my heart is reserved for the CUL theme ‘Teaching profession, school development, and democracy’, which over the years was led by Ann-Sofie Holm, Ulf Bjereld, Sofia Persson, Cathrin Wasshede, and Helena Wallström. I am especially thankful for all the good friends I found in my fellow doctoral students who participated in the daily CUL theme Zoom room. My love goes out to Linnéa Rosengren, Minna Panas, Annelie Mickelsson, Annette Mitche, Christopher Thorén, Christer Larsson, Louise Backelin, Camilla Bratt, Maria Lindberg, Hampus Liljeröd, and Caroline Önnebro. We have supported each other’s PhD endeavours through thick and thin and been there for each other through all of life’s other endeavours, relationships of all sorts, and pet adventures. I do not know if I could have survived the solitude of the PhD-student life without all of you. As a little gift, I have included the work prayer in the post scriptum.

A big thank you to all the members of the School Development and Leadership research environment (SKUL) for being a safe, challenging haven for all these years! Thank you, Ann-Charlotte Mårdsjö Olsson for your encouragement and interest in me and other PhD students. I especially appreciate the team for research education at the Department of Education and Special Education: Stefan Johansson, Kajsa Yang, Annette Engsevi, and Jenny Landqvist. Something magical happened when you became a team. You have been innovative, service-minded, and supportive. Anche grazie mille, Anna Rehn! I am grateful to all those I met at courses, conferences, networks, and so forth. A special thanks to Jill Bratton, Camilla Finsterbach Kaup, Kristina Hunchäll Berndtsson, Fredrik Dahl, Helena

Josefsson, Sofia Moström, Anders Lindqvist, Jonas Udd, Sara Viklund, and members of the SWERA Doctoral Council's Working Group in which I enjoyed being a secretary for a couple of years. Christian Eidevald and Karin Alnervik, your interest and encouragement have been invaluable. Without the support of all of you, who knows what could have happened?

A special thanks goes out to my employer, who made the third cycle studies possible. I am forever grateful to the former top managers of the central administration and the previous superintendent who supported my application to the graduate school. I also want to extend my appreciation to my managers, former and present, Birgitta Henecke, Moa Morin, and Jan-Ola Olsson, for their trust and encouragement, and to my colleague Karolina Pesonen, whose flexibility was invaluablely supportive. My former and present colleagues and coworkers, I am appreciative of your support of my adventures and for everything we have done and learned together over the years. In this respect, my special thanks go to Anna Edvardsson, Christina Lagrange, Björn Beckman, Ninni Hyleborg, Jörgen Dunér, Charlotte Rosdahl-Larsson, Eva Ifversson, Eva Armini, Anna Törnberg, and Hans-Åke Norrby, whom I have learned so much from and together with. The warmest of thanks to my boss of oh-so-many years; dear Mr PW, the one and only Peter Wahlström. Once upon a time, you introduced me to school leadership. Over the years, you have inspired and challenged me. I listened and learned when you said no, but, most importantly, I grew and flourished thanks to you. You have encouraged and supported my dreams, crazy adventures, and choices, not least the PhD journey. I am truly and eternally grateful! Without the support from all of you, this thesis would never have been written.

Even though I represented the municipality, collaborating with Malmö University enriched me as a doctoral student. My special thanks go to Anders Olsson, Gunilla Löfström, participants of the Program Committee for Preschool Teacher Education at the Department of Childhood, Education and Society at Malmö University, and especially the head of department, Peter Lilja, who has an amazing ability to describe the organisation and what factors influence it.

My warm appreciation goes out to Ovidiu Ivan, who painted the amazing 'Thoughts Towards Enlightenment', which can be seen on the cover and brilliantly captures the idea of quality dialogues. To my sister-of-the-heart Malin Gillberg and my aunt-of-the-heart Ulla Seth Pedersen, I am forever grateful for your loving support. My love and appreciation also go to the extended family Nord (some with other surnames); my godchildren and god-grandchildren Cathrine, Stefan, Freja & Vidar Tengvall, my cousin/big-brother-of-the-heart and sister-in-law-of-the-heart

Peter & Lena Nord and their children and children-in-law Madeleine & Rickard Linnskog, and Alexander Nord & Rebecca Ekman, and all their children. I truly admire your welcoming warmth, sense of humour, and everlasting love and loyalty. To my father and late mother, I extend my loving gratitude.

Finally, the warmest of thanks go to the participants of the study, the ones who give life to the results chapter. Without all of you, this thesis would not have been possible.

Marina Karlsson

Gothenburg, November 2024

Ps. This is the work prayer of the daily CUL theme Zoom room:

Må distraktionerna vika hädan och
koncentrationen uppfylla våra själar.
Må arbetslusten och den intellektuella
kreativiteten gå som en liten elektrisk stöt
genom våra kroppar, från topp till tå och
ända ut i våra tangentbordsfingrar.

Go arbejdslyst!

Gute Arbeit!

Hyvää työniloa!

يوم عمل موفق

May the force be with us.

Happy writing!

Ready steady go, go!

May all distractions disappear, and
concentration fill our souls. May the
desire for work and the intellectual
creativity pass through our bodies like a
small electric chock, from head to toe
and right into our keyboard fingers.

'Happy working', in Danish,

German,

Finnish and

Arabic [Yaum amal moafaq]

May the force be with us.

Happy writing!

Ready steady go, go!

Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	17
Introducing the Research Problem	17
Origins and Development of Quality Dialogues.....	18
The Purpose and Enactment of Quality Dialogues.....	22
Aim and Research Questions.....	24
Outline of the Thesis.....	24
CHAPTER 2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND.....	27
The Swedish Governance of Education.....	27
Terminology	28
Systematic Quality Work	30
Dialogues in Systematic Quality Work	32
Swedish Early Childhood Education and Care	33
Quality Work in Swedish Early Childhood and Care	35
Summary	37
CHAPTER 3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH.....	39
Interprofessional Communication in School Improvement.....	39
Communication as a Tool for Understanding Culture and Needs for Change.....	39
Moves towards Systemic Improvement and Trust	41
Trust-Based Public Management and Dialogue	43
Quality Dialogues in Nordic Countries	44
Systematic Quality Work	47
Evaluation Practices in Public Administration.....	49
Educational Organisations as Complex Systems.....	50
Handling Complexity	51
Conclusions from the Literature Review.....	53
CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	55
Cultural-Historical Activity Theory.....	55
Culturally Mediated Action	56
Activity, Actions, the Object and Historicity.....	57
Contradictions.....	62
Relational Agency.....	63
Critique Against Cultural-Historical Activity Theory	64
The Construct of Procedural Display	65

CHAPTER 5 METHODS	67
Selection of the Sample.....	67
The Authoritative Levels of the Administration	69
The Preschool Units	70
Data Collection	72
Municipal Documents.....	72
Prestudy	74
Observations	74
Individual Written Reflections.....	75
Interviews	76
Processing and Analysing the Data	78
Considerations of the Study	81
Ethical Considerations.....	81
Role of the Researcher.....	82
Credibility	84
CHAPTER 6 RESULTS	87
Part 1. Local Cultural-Historical Development.....	87
Before 2010	90
2010–2013	92
2013–2016	96
2016–2019	98
2019–2020	101
Summary	103
Part 2. Quality dialogues at preschool units (type A).....	105
Arrangements.....	105
Participants’ Perceptions of the Purpose	108
Contradictions.....	111
Summary	113
Part 3. Quality Dialogues at the Intersection of Preschool Units and the Authoritative Level (Type B)	114
Arrangements.....	114
Participants’ Perceptions of the Purpose	115
Primary Contradictions.....	120
Secondary and Tertiary Contradictions	124
Summary	131
Part 4. Quality Dialogues at the Authoritative Level (Types C-D).....	133
Arrangements.....	133
Participants’ Perceptions of the Purpose	134

Contradictions	137
Summary	139
Conclusion	140
CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION	143
Multiple purposes	143
Culturally and historically shaped contradictions	144
Support versus control.....	145
Procedural display or relational agency?	147
Methodological and theoretical reflections	150
Reflections on Methods.....	150
Reflections on the Theoretical Framework.....	151
Knowledge contribution, study limitations and suggestions for further research	153
Implications for Practice.....	155
SWEDISH SUMMARY	157
Bakgrund och tidigare forskning	157
Syfte och frågeställningar.....	158
Teoretiskt ramverk	159
Metod	160
Resultat.....	161
Del 1. Den historiska framväxten av lokala kvalitetsdialoger.....	161
Del 2. Kvalitetsdialoger på förskoleenheterna (typ A)	164
Del 3. Kvalitetsdialoger i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå (typ B)	165
Del 4. Kvalitetsdialoger på huvudmannanivå (typ C/D).....	167
Diskussion	168
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	171
APPENDICES	187
Appendix 1. Letter of Consent	189
Appendix 2. Characteristics of the Preschools	191
Appendix 3. Observation guide.....	192
Appendix 4. Individual Written Reflection	193
Appendix 5. Interview Guide.....	197
Appendix 6. Types A, B, C and D.....	202
Appendix 7. List of data	203

List of tables and figures

Table 1. Description of the empirical data	72
Table 2. Description of the four types of dialogues.....	73
Table 3. Participants	78
Table 4. Timeline with summary of the development of local quality dialogues	89
Table 5. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue type A.....	106
Table 6. Use of preparations in quality dialogues type A.	109
Table 7. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue type B.....	115
Table 8. Use of questions in the guidelines.	125
Table 9. Use of quality reports.	127
Table 10. Use of statistics.	129
Table 11. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue types C and D.	134
Figure 1. The activity system	60
Figure 2. Two interacting activity systems with a potentially shared object	61
Figure 3. The authoritative levels and preschool unit level in the studied administration.....	68
Figure 4. Organisational plan of the studied geographical areas and preschool units	71
Figure 5. Objects and contradictions in and between activity systems before and around 2010, when quality dialogues emerged in the studied municipality.....	93
Figure 6. Object and contradictions in the periods 2013–2016, 2016–2019 and 2019–2020.	104
Figure 7. Quality dialogue type A. Objects and contradictions.	113
Figure 8. Quality dialogue type B: Objects and contradictions.	132
Figure 9. Quality dialogue type C/D: Objects and contradictions.	140
Figure 10. Quality dialogue types A–D in the field of control versus support.	141

Chapter 1 Introduction

The present thesis deals with interprofessional ‘quality dialogues’, also known as result dialogues, in local education administrations’ systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control. In this first chapter, I briefly introduce the research problem to present the issues explored in the present study. The aim and associated research questions are also presented. Finally, an outline of the thesis is given.

Introducing the Research Problem

In decentralised Nordic educational contexts, quality dialogues have become increasingly common in local education authorities’ (LEAs’) and in (pre)school units’ quality work. The fact that such quality dialogues are used in almost 90% of Swedish municipalities (Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE), 2021; Tornberg et al., 2022) could perhaps be explained by the strong recommendations in the National Agency’s general advice for systematic quality work (SNAE, 2015) and in the National Agency’s general advice for curricular goal achievement in preschool (SNAE, 2017) that LEAs should have regular dialogues on quality with school units and preschool units, and that principals should have regular dialogue with the staff.

The National Agency’s general advice for systematic quality work assumes that dialogues contribute to an extended understanding of results and curricular goal achievement so that LEAs can improve overall prerequisites — such as the allocation of financial resources, staff competencies, organisation, or management — that are affecting the results. In the same policy text, principals are recommended to hold dialogues on a regular basis with their staff about what improvements and adjustments are expected to contribute with, and what is realistic to achieve. The idea of dialogue in interprofessional knowledge work regarding educational quality is so well established that quality dialogues are not limited to local education administrations and their (pre)school units. In the spring of 2022, the SNAE, in cooperation with the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM), started conducting quality dialogues with LEAs.

Quality dialogues thus exist at and between local and national levels as a rather undisputed part of public evaluation practice.

Origins and Development of Quality Dialogues

The origins and emergence of quality dialogues can be found in the societal movements and historical transformations of school improvement and public evaluation practices. School improvement and organisational improvement can trace its roots back to the works of Kurt Lewin (1936; 1947; 1951) and organisation development (OD) (Hopkins et al., 2014). Communication between professionals was emphasised in the joint endeavour of understanding organisational cultures and challenging needs for change.

The purpose of evaluation is to carefully examine and assess if what one has done has led to and fulfils set goals and aspirations (Vedung, 2010). Evaluation in public administration dates back in industrial developments but exploded in the 1960s when decision-making started to be grounded in facts from rational, scientific testing. In the mid-1970s, a dialogue-oriented evaluation wave appeared, emphasising democratic forms of evaluation in which to those whom the evaluation mattered should be included. Dialogical evaluation aimed at generating broad agreements, consensus, and democratic legitimacy (Foss Hansen, 2024; Vedung, 2010, 2013). The dialogical evaluation wave coincided with the emergence of dialogical pedagogy (Kallós, 1979) and in school improvement research, focus was placed on tools for the collective improvement of schools, for example action research (Hopkins et al, 2014).

In the late 1970s and 1980s, a neoliberal wave called new public management (NPM) put more focus on the evaluation of results and less on processes. This led to an increased emphasis on accountability and quality assessment, performance measurement and consumer satisfaction appraisal. For education, this meant that demands for accountability, school leadership development and large-scale national reforms increased in the 1980s (Hopkins et al, 2014). The evaluation landscape later developed in the 2000s so that evaluation could be more evidence based and conducted by public sector practitioners in their own practices (Foss Hansen, 2024; Vedung, 2010, 2013). Many local authorities have increased the number of specialised professionals at quality departments who work only with auditing and quality assessments. In fact, the number of specialised administrators, also called organisational professionals, has been increasing rapidly in the Swedish public sector as a response to intensified political and administrative pressures

because of increasing demands for accountability (Alamaa et al., 2024; Löfgren et al., 2022).

As a result of the different waves of evaluation, NPM, and lessons from school improvement research, the practice of systematic quality work in education developed over time and became regulated in Swedish policy around the year 2010 (Lpfö18; SFS 2010:800; SNAE 2015). Systematic quality work is a time-consuming practice for teachers, principals, LEAs and other managers and officials in local education administrations. The quality work is also coordinated locally, regionally, and nationally. In the Swedish decentralised governance system, since the 1990s, LEAs have held the responsibility to provide, follow up, evaluate, and improve education in accordance with national and local policy. This means that professionals and managers in various positions within local education administrations have both separate and shared responsibilities for educational quality and school improvement processes. The school board, the superintendent, the principal, preschool teachers, teachers, and other members of the teaching staff all have shared and separate responsibilities according to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curricula for school forms, such as preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary school (Gy11; Lgr22; Lpfö18).

Local ‘systematic quality work’ according to the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) means that the LEAs and their administrations have the responsibility of reviewing and evaluating educational quality and what needs to be improved to verify data-informed managerial and local political decision-making. Hence, several locally adjusted organisational routines and tools aimed at interprofessional knowledge work have been generated. The growing interest in quality dialogues as one such routine seems to be in alignment with the trust-based public management reform, which the Swedish government initiated in 2016 by their decision to form a commission commonly known as the Trust Commission. This commission involved 12 key research projects on management in health care, social care, and education (SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43). Trust-based management involves, among other things, trustful dialogue between public officials and elected policymakers, professional development and inspection focused on learning, along with a focus on citizen needs.

Swedish quality dialogues bring together two historical and philosophical concepts, that is, quality and dialogue. Both concepts are loaded with positive connotations (Bornemark, 2018; Dafermos, 2018; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Englund, 2012; Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2015; Nyttell, 2006). According to the SNAE (2015), quality in education refers to how well schools and preschools meet and

respond to national goals, requirements, and guidelines as well as to what degree they are characterised by aiming for renewal and continuous improvement based on prevailing conditions. The concept of quality in Swedish educational policy has undergone notable transformations, particularly since the 1990s. This shift reflects a broader trend away from politically ideological perspectives towards a stronger focus on goal achievement, measurable results, and increased auditing. This shift is evident in both the language used in policy documents and in practice. Moreover, the shift has had implications for the balance between teacher autonomy and local authorities' control. This has been described by, for instance, by Bergh (2010; 2011; 2015) and Nytell (2006), who have investigated how the notion of quality has been used in Swedish educational policy texts. Their results show how Swedish educational policy has changed from more politically ideological standpoints to an increasing interest in goal achievement, results, and auditing with a major turning point in the late 1990s. The findings show how there has been a significant change in language and practices. Bergh (2015) also identifies the implications for the relation between teacher autonomy and local authorities' control.

Dahler-Larsen (2019) argues that schools used to be providers of education but are now instead regarded as providers of quality and that quality has become a matter of socio-political importance. According to Dahler-Larsen, quality as a concept can be interpreted in many ways, for example, as the accomplishment of political goals, as the fulfilment of users' needs and expectations, as expert judgement, as compliance with standards, as impact, excellence, practice or as an organisational recipe. Over the years, quality and quality work has become a platform for governance, mostly entailing procedural control (cf. Bornemark, 2018; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Nytell, 2006). Biesta (2009; 2010) reflects on the age of measurement that has emerged, questioning whether what is of real value for education is measured or if what is being measured is valued. Dahler-Larsen (2019) argues that a quality audit has become 'a problematic industry itself' (p. 36), which places demands on organisational coordination and a special kind of knowledge.

The concept of *dialogue* also has positive connotations. When most people think of dialogue, they think of something good and desirable (Dafermos, 2018; Englund, 2012; Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2015). In evaluation practice, dialogue is linked with transparency, inclusion, deliberation, and good governance (Dahler-Larsen & Boodhoo, 2019). In addition, dialogue is valued in democratic systems of governance because it signals a will from decision-makers to listen to the opinions of the citizens (Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2015). Dialogue is also a philosophical concept that originates from the Greek polis and from the

philosopher Plato (Dafermos, 2018; Englund & Sandström, 2015). Since ancient times, dialogue has been elaborated on by many thinkers, not least Bakhtin, Gadamer and Habermas (Englund & Sandström, 2015; Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2015). According to Englund (2012) and Englund and Sandström (2015), Bakhtin, Gadamer and Habermas share an understanding of dialogue as consisting of language and the speech situation, nonobjectivising and openness of unfinalisability. Gadamer combines the notion of uncompletedness with the idea of community in the sense that reaching an understanding in dialogue entails ‘being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were’ (Gadamer, 2004, p. 371). Englund (2012) elaborates on the ethical-moral dimension as being open and nonauthoritarian, that is, communication free of power and constraints. However, in quality dialogues, participants represent different asymmetrical positions and responsibilities in the education system. Therefore, quality dialogues could perhaps also be understood as tools for governance, control, and accountability.

The notion of dialogue and conversation have increasingly been positioned as powerful tools within Swedish educational policy, particularly starting in the late 1960s through 2008. Sandström (2012)¹ investigates how the notions of dialogue and conversation were used in Swedish educational policy texts from the late 1960s to 2008, finding them to be increasingly described as potent instruments for solving problems of an educational and democratic kind. Conversation and dialogue have been regarded as the instruments for improving assessment and grading, enhancing teachers’ professionalism, governing the development of education at several levels, and fostering democracy. The policy texts investigated by Sandström are permeated by a striving for softening the boundaries between school authorities and school personnel by creating an atmosphere of intimacy, trust, togetherness, and the achievement of consensus. In addition, the policy texts are unproblematic and very positive descriptions of dialogue and conversation. According to Sandström, this could explain why dialogue as a governing technique, here loaded with positive connotations, has been widely spread and hardly met with any criticism.

¹ The study is also described in Englund, B., & Sandström, B. (2015). Dialogue – Ideal and practiced: How philosophy is transformed into governance. In K., Jezierska & L., Koczanowicz (Ed.) *Democracy in dialogue, dialogue in democracy: The politics of dialogue in theory and practice*. Routledge.

The Purpose and Enactment of Quality Dialogues

Dahler-Larsen (2019) argues that the notion of quality and evaluation practice should be studied as a social phenomenon that needs both organisational coordination and a special kind of knowledge. Through a cultural-historical activity theoretical analysis, the present thesis addresses issues such as *how* and *why* professionals in educational organisations communicate and engage in joint knowledge work (Edwards, 2011). The current thesis also explores the possible systemic contradictions that might affect the purposefulness of the quality dialogues. For example, professionals and managers might risk being more influenced by issues in the current debate or by personal motives than on what the students need.

The purpose of an activity can be identified through statements and actions. Previous research shows that quality dialogues often take a starting point in documentation, such as schools' annual reports and commitment plans (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021) or observation protocols (Prøitz et al., 2021) and quantitative data such as school surveys, final grades and national test scores (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Bröms, 2020; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Prøitz et al., 2021). Adolfsson and Alvunger (2020) show how quality reports can be considered regulative, and Adolfsson and Håkansson (2021) explain how data discussed during the quality dialogues can deliberately be used by principals to demonstrate that they are in control of their schools. However, these studies have not specifically explored how such artefacts mediate the dialogues or how the participants perceive the dialogues' purposes. The present thesis addresses this knowledge gap by analysing the role of tool-mediation in quality dialogues.

The current study seeks to understand the purpose of the quality dialogues as they are enacted and understood by the quality dialogue participants. The positive connotations associated with the terms 'quality' and 'dialogue' might discourage critical examination of whether these dialogues function as tools for meaningful conversation on quality. The present thesis is a contribution to the literature on dialogue in administrations' systematic quality work. In contrast to previous research on quality dialogues which has focused on the dialogues between superintendents and school units (e.g., Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Adolfsson & Håkansson, 2021; Bröms, 2020; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Prøitz et al., 2021), the present thesis examines 'quality dialogues' within the context of preschool administration. The studied

quality dialogues also include more professionals and managers from several parts of the organization than what has been studied before.

An ambiguous purpose might affect what can be achieved through quality dialogue meetings in educational administrations. Quality dialogues within the Nordic educational context have increasingly been recognised as sites of both opportunity and tension. On the one hand, these dialogues foster shared knowledge formation and provide support while, on the other hand, they serve as mechanisms for governance and control. This dual trend reflects a broader trend towards recentralised governance at both the local and national levels, as shown by, for instance, Adolfsson and Alvunger (2020), Bröms (2020), Henriksen (2018), Henriksen and Paulsen (2021), Håkansson and Adolfsson (2021) and Prøitz et al. (2021). The dialogues can be understood as part of a recentralised governance at both the local and national levels (cf. Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020). The dialogues can also be understood as tools that support school improvement and lead to an in-depth understanding of the responsibilities of various actors in the quality system (cf. Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021). To achieve dialogues that are perceived as supporting and knowledge-generating democratic processes, as argued by Henriksen and Paulsen (2021) and Henriksen (2018), conscious and systematic efforts are required that build trust, openness and ‘critical friendship’ for school improvement between the participants. These efforts could, for instance, be action research projects (Rönnerman et al., 2008), change laboratories (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013) or developmental dialogues (Heikkilä & Seppänen, 2014).

The current thesis deals with the tension of support versus control as a foundational inner contradiction of quality dialogues. Cole and Matsumiya (2007; 2008) have also addressed this contradiction, but they call it a foundational tension between quality versus innovation. The tension raises questions on what the intended purpose of quality dialogues is, how the enactment of the quality dialogues lives up to the purpose, and what systemic contradictions may influence the development and function of the quality dialogues as supportive measures or controlling mechanisms.

Aim and Research Questions

The present thesis aims to contribute to knowledge on ‘quality dialogues’ in local education administrations’ systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control. The current thesis attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the intended purpose of the quality dialogue, and how does this purpose align with the actions of the quality dialogue participants?
2. How do culturally and historically shaped contradictions influence the development and function of the quality dialogue?

The aim and research questions are addressed through a study conducted within a large Swedish municipal preschool administration. The study focuses on quality dialogues occurring at the preschool unit level, the authoritative level and at the intersection between these two levels. Rather than examining individual achievements, the study takes a broader perspective, analysing systemic contradictions and societal dynamics. To this end, the empirical data is interpreted using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), with the findings being discussed in terms of relational agency and procedural display.

Outline of the Thesis

The present thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the contextual background. The background first describes the Swedish governance of education including a presentation of terminology used in this thesis. Next is a section on national demands for systematic quality work in local education administrations, which is followed by a section on Swedish Early Childhood Education and Care because the context of a preschool administration can have implications for the results. Chapter 3 reviews previous research. Knowledge about dialogue in local education administrations’ systematic quality work can be found in the research area of school improvement, specifically in the role of interprofessional communication for school improvement. This is followed by a section of systematic quality work. Dialogues in local education administrations’ systematic quality work engage several professionals and managers in various positions, which is why a section follows that describes previous research on educational organisations as complex systems. Chapter 4 situates the thesis within

the theoretical framework of CHAT which is complemented with the framework of relational agency and the construct of procedural display. Chapter 5 describes the methods. Chapter 6 presents the results in four sections. The first section provides the key findings on the emergence and local cultural-historical development of quality dialogues in the studied administration. The other sections present the key findings on quality dialogues at and between the different levels of the administration, such as the quality dialogues unfolded and were described by the participants in 2019–2020; quality dialogues at the preschool units (type A), quality dialogues at the intersection of preschool units and the authoritative levels of the studied organisation (type B) and, finally, quality dialogues at the authoritative level of the administration (types C–D). Finally, chapter 7 first discusses the key findings and then provides methodological and theoretical reflections. Then follows a discussion of knowledge contribution, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. The chapter ends with a discussion on implications for practice.

Chapter 2 Contextual Background

This chapter provides the contextual background. The chapter first provides an overview of the Swedish governance system of education and some terminology that is used in the present thesis. In addition, the chapter describes systematic quality work as it is presented in governance policy documents and the role of dialogues in systematic quality work. The chapter concludes with a presentation on Swedish Early Childhood Education and Care and the development of Swedish preschool's quality work, leading to a summary of the chapter.

The Swedish Governance of Education

In Sweden, the state holds the overall responsibility for educational policymaking and defining the intended student outcomes. The Swedish parliament has established the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), while the government remains responsible for the national curricula. The National Agency for Education provides additional guidance, such as the general advice for systematic quality work (SNAE, 2015) and the general advice for curricular goal achievement in preschool (SNAE, 2017). The Schools Inspectorate audits both school units and the local authorities. However, it is the responsibility of local authorities — both municipal and independent — to implement these policies in practice. It is a task for the LEA to ensure that education aligns with the goals and objectives outlined in the Educational Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curricula (cf. Gy11, Lgr22, Lgra22, Lpfö18). Additionally, the LEA is responsible for organising management structures. Policy documents must be adhered to by local authorities, educational administrations, principals, teachers, and other staff members. Schools and preschools can be organised either municipally or independently. Given that the present thesis is focused on Early Childhood Education and Care, it is important to note that, as of autumn 2023, 70% of all Swedish preschools were municipally operated (SNAE, 2024). Given that the findings of the current thesis may also be relevant for independent organisations, the contextual background is specifically focused on municipal organisation, governance, and terminology.

Municipalities have one or several school boards that are responsible for fulfilling educational obligations. These school boards and their top management collectively form what is referred to as the LEA. According to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), the LEA is required to systematically provide, plan, follow up, evaluate, and improve education at an overarching level, while the principal — along with the teaching staff — is responsible for systematic quality work at the unit level. Although the local authorities are self-governing, the state plays a supportive role through, for example, the Swedish National Agency, SNAE, and exercises control through the National Schools Inspectorate.

The management structure within Swedish municipalities varies significantly because each municipality is organised according to its own specific frames, making comparisons difficult (Styf, 2012). However, under the Education Act (SFS2010:800) and curricula (Gy11, Lgr22, Lgra22, Lpfö18), teachers, principals, superintendents, and local authorities collectively bear the responsibility for maintaining educational quality in schools and preschools. The municipal organisation can be complemented by, for example, lead teachers, assistant principals, and area managers at the managerial levels as well as various professionals at the supporting administrative levels.

Löfgren et al. (2022) and Alamaa et al. (2024) demonstrate that local authorities have increasingly staffed their quality departments with professionals solely dedicated to auditing and quality assessments as a response to heightened political and administrative pressures stemming from increasing demands for accountability. Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) argue that the top levels of an organisational hierarchy tend to become advisory rather than steering. Educational leaders across all levels must navigate both national and local governance, relying on many coworkers and contacts within and outside the school administrative context. Thus, the professionals at leading and supporting levels of the chain of governance act in complex networks. Reports have highlighted the critical importance of communication and trust between professionals within local education administrations as well as a focus on a smaller number of long-term priorities (SKL, 2016; SOU 2018:38).

Terminology

The following terminology has been used in the present thesis:

The school board and the local authority. Formally, the municipal council holds responsibility for all municipal education. The council delegates

responsibility to the school board, which is made up of democratically elected politicians. The presiding members of the school board usually represent the political parties with the most mandates. The presiding members are closest to the superintendent and have the most insights into the doings of the administration. In everyday reality, the professionals in the local education administration execute decisions, follow up on and evaluate outcomes and provide the board with decision support data. The term ‘local authority’ is used here when the local authoritative level is being discussed, that is, the responsibilities of the municipal and school board.

The local education administration. The Swedish terminology for local education administration would be ‘*förvaltning*’. In the present thesis, I have chosen this term to describe all professionals who work at the preschool units as well as for professionals and managers at the authoritative level. In some Swedish municipalities, the local education administration is responsible for issues other than educational as well, depending on the local context. The studied preschool administration is only responsible for Early Childhood Education and Care, that is, for the educational settings for children aged 1 to 5 years old.

The central administration and the superintendent. The central administration comprises administrators who work closely with the school board, with the superintendent being the highest-ranking official. The superintendent is considered part of the authoritative level (Ringarp & Nihlfors, 2017) but is also part of the administration. The role of the superintendent of schools was first established in 1958, with responsibilities spanning both educational and organisational issues and ensuring that state decisions were carried out well. However, with the introduction of the new Education Act (SFS 2010:800), the explicit responsibilities shifted to the school board, principals, and teachers, excluding the role of superintendent. Hence, the director of administration assumed the top position in the municipal chain of governance, taking on many of the same responsibilities as a superintendent (Ringarp & Nihlfors, 2017). Because of changes in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), as of 1 January 2019, all local authorities must appoint a superintendent. Now, the superintendent has the overall responsibility for quality and school improvement, hence guaranteeing that schools and preschools follow national policy.

In the present thesis, the superintendent is the highest-ranking official responsible for the entire administration, from the central administration (which entails a Quality Department, Department of Finances, Department of Human Resources, and a Department of Communication) to the geographical admini-

strations in which all preschool units are organised. The superintendent is the manager who is in the closest contact with the presiding members of the school board on a weekly — or sometimes daily — contact.

Geographical administration and area manager. The studied municipality is large enough to be divided into five geographical administrative areas, each of which is overseen by an area manager. The area manager is subordinate to the superintendent yet superior to the principals. Many Swedish municipalities have introduced a role that falls between the superintendent and principal, often with either a geographical responsibility or responsibility of specific school forms, for instance, preschools, compulsory schools, or secondary schools. The Swedish equivalent would be *utbildningschef* or *verksamhetschef*. In the present thesis, I have chosen the translation ‘area manager’ to emphasise that it is a top managerial position for a specific geographical area. I could just as well have chosen to use the terminology assistant or vice superintendent instead. The role of area manager is increasing in Swedish municipalities. According to Paulsen et al. (2016), by 2009, a third of Swedish municipalities had introduced this role. Although such a role is not yet prevalent across the Nordic countries, it is gaining traction in Denmark, and a similar development is anticipated in Finland. In the municipality studied for the current thesis, the area manager is supported by a geographical administration that includes an administrative team, a special education team and a pedagogical development team. Each of the three teams is led by a team leader, whose responsibility it is to support both the area manager in their role and the principals and their preschool unit areas in their work.

Systematic Quality Work

The concept of systematic quality work is closely tied to the requirements outlined in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curriculum. Systematic quality work, as regulated by the Swedish Education Act, focuses on achieving the educational goals set forth in the act and other national regulations, that is, national goals (SFS 2010:800). According to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), local ‘systematic quality work’ mandates that LEAs and their administrations review and evaluate educational quality and identify areas for improvement to support data-informed managerial and local political decision-making. This process has led to the development of locally adjusted organisational routines and tools aimed at interprofessional knowledge work. Systematic quality work is comparable with school improvement, which Hopkins, et al. defines as ‘a distinct approach to

educational change that enhances student outcome as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change' (1994, p. 3). In addition, systematic quality work bears resemblance with public evaluation practices.

When the National Schools Inspectorate (Schools Inspectorate, 2017) conducted a three-year long inspection on the quality of Swedish preschools, one focus was on how local authorities lead the systematic quality work of preschools. Unlike schools, there are no individual achievement goals for the Swedish preschool children, but instead, there are aspirational goals. Children's development and learning are to be monitored so that the education can be assessed and evaluated in relation to the curricular goals and objectives (Lpfö18).

The National Schools Inspectorate (2017) has criticised how the prevalent practice of basing preschool quality assessments largely on quantitative data such as staff educational levels and staffing as well as enquiries answered by staff and parents without focusing on the children's signs of learning and development. Therefore, professionals at leading and supporting levels of the administration and the school board may be more influenced by issues in the current debate and on school outcomes than on the actual needs of preschools. This underscores the importance of studying interprofessional collaboration within school administrations, particularly in facilitating school improvement processes. In this context, it is valuable to examine how professionals at various levels interact and what they aim to achieve when discussing preschool quality in formal meetings as well as the potential impact of these meetings on educational improvement processes. In this respect, it is interesting to study the interactions between professionals at the leading and supporting levels and what they aim to achieve when they discuss preschool quality at formal meetings; it is also relevant to look at the potential of these meetings for the educational improvement processes.

The enactment of systematic quality work by Swedish LEAs' was investigated by the National Agency (SNAE, 2021), which shows that a majority follow up their schools and preschools more than once a year through the use of both dialogues and written documentation. Schools are typically monitored with more statistical measures than preschools, primarily because they have access to more quantitative data in the form of, for example, grades and national test results. According to the National Agency (SNAE, 2021), many local authorities find it challenging to assess preschool quality because of the lack of quantified data available for evaluation. As a result, there is a need to develop alternative methods that can assess and evaluative more interpretative, qualitative, and narrative aspects of education. It is

possible to assume that the quality dialogue has been introduced to serve this purpose.

Dialogues in Systematic Quality Work

The National Agency's general advice on systematic quality work (SNAE, 2015) and the general advice for curricular goal achievement in preschool (SNAE, 2017) recommend that local authorities engage in regular dialogues with preschool and school units and that principals maintain dialogue with their staff. A regular dialogue with principals is needed so that the authority can analyse the results and goal achievement at an overall level. The local authority must know in what ways the prerequisites of the units affect the results and what measurements are needed so that national goals and objectives can be achieved. It is furthermore argued that, if the assessments and decisions made by the authority is communicated by the principal to the staff, the staff's understanding for the underlying causes and reasons might increase. As for the dialogue between principal and staff, it is argued that planned measurements should be well anchored with the staff for improvement work to be successful. Therefore, principals should have an ongoing dialogue with staff about what the measurements are intended to produce and what is realistic to be achieved. However, there is an inherent contradiction in the National Agency's general advice. Although the National Agency emphasises the concept of dialogue, the communication they describe resembles a one-way transmission of information rather than a dialogue.

An inquiry by Tornberg et al. (2022) answered by 88% of all Swedish municipalities reveals that 9 out of 10 municipalities use quality dialogues in their systematic quality work to investigate preschool units' quality and goal achievement, here according to the national curriculum (Lpfö98). Quality dialogues seem to be the most prevalent form for evaluation, with 85% of municipalities collecting written documentation, 62% using digital evaluation systems and only 60% conducting regular visits at the units (Tornberg et al., 2022). The Swedish National Agency (SNAE, 2021) has conducted a similar survey with local authorities on their systematic quality work, confirming that quality dialogues are the most prevalent form for evaluation. The survey was sent to 1,372 local authorities, both at the municipal and private levels. The results of the survey show that most local authorities have dialogues with preschool units (84%) and school units (91%), while other forms for evaluation are less prevalent. Written documentations are only sampled by the local authorities from 77% of the schools

and 66% of the preschools. In addition, 99% of the principals participate in the quality dialogues, regardless of preschools or schools. Furthermore, 83% of the local authorities with responsibility for preschools answered that preschool teachers participate, while only 69% of the local authorities with responsibility for schools stated that teachers participate in quality dialogues. However, despite the extensive use of quality dialogues, there remains much to be investigated. The response rate for the survey was 66–68%, and the National Agency notes that it remains unclear how the dialogues are enacted, hence leaving the true purpose of the dialogues as uncertain.

As will be shown in the next chapter, interprofessional communication has long been part of school improvement processes. What I see as new, however, is the extensive systematisation of organised, recurring dialogues between superiors and subordinates within and across educational organisations. These dialogues serve not only as the instruments for promoting improvement processes but also as the tools for evaluation and governance.

The first national attempt at such structured dialogues was introduced shortly after the turn of millennium. A series of development dialogues were conducted between the National Agency for School Development and 116 LEAs between 2001 and 2003. These dialogues focused on schools' annual quality reports, where principals outlined strengths and development areas. The purpose was to emphasise the overall goals and results, learning results and how cooperation would positively influence the improvement processes. These evaluations indicated that municipalities and schools viewed the dialogues positively because they fostered mutual understanding and provided municipalities with supportive guidance from the state (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut, 2002; 2003). Because of a lack of funding, the national development dialogues ended in 2003. A similar practice reemerged in the early 2020s in the form of quality dialogues between the three national agencies — the National Agency for Education, the National Agency for Special Education, and the Schools Inspectorate — and representatives of LEAs.

Swedish Early Childhood Education and Care

The current thesis examines quality dialogues in a municipal administration that is responsible for Early Childhood Education and Care, specifically preschools. To understand the context of these dialogues, it is important to provide a historical background to this specific school form. Historically, there has always been a

reciprocal influence between a nation's educational system and the social and political development of society. Education cultivates the kind of citizens that society envisions for its future. Richardson (2010) describes how education can be seen as an agent in societal development because it is influenced by social and political movements, and at the same time, education is an instrument for changing society because it affects the population in a desired direction. The establishment and development of preschools in Sweden follow the Nordic example of being an integral part of the welfare society, democracy, and women's liberation. Following the Swedish industrial revolution in the late nineteenth century and the great moves from the countryside to cities, preschools needed to be established so that women could work outside their homes while their children would still be safely looked after (Broström et al., 2018). Hence, the initial purpose for establishing Swedish preschools was of a socio-political character. Richardson (2010) explains that, when children were taken care of by the establishments, they were protected from wandering in the streets; at the same time, women could enter the labour market. In the mid-twentieth century, developing more and better preschools for all became an even stronger political focus to enable gender equality. Preschools were primarily the results of reforms aimed at addressing labour market needs and promoting equality. In addition, they were of interest to advocates seeking to reduce class differences, increase inclusion and create educational opportunities for all children.

It was, however, not until the late 1990s that Early Childhood Education and Care was transferred from being a socio-political responsibility to becoming an educational responsibility. Over the years, there has been a growing emphasis on improving the quality of preschool education (Klingvall & Pramling Samuelsson, 2022; Lindgren & Söderlind, 2019) and recognising children's right to education as a fundamental right in and of itself. The first national curriculum for preschools (Lpfö98) was introduced in 1998. Beginning in 2002, preschools were required to produce quality reports and submit to the National Agency (Nytell, 2006). Since 2010, preschools have also been included under the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) subjecting them to the same regulations for systematic quality work as schools do.

Nowadays, children aged 1 to 5 years old can attend Swedish preschool, which is a voluntary form of Early Childhood Education and Care. Preschool represents the first step in the Swedish national education system and are regulated by both the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and national curriculum (Lpfö18). Almost 70% of all Swedish preschools are municipally operated, and almost 86% of all Swedish children aged 1–5 years old attend preschool. Almost all children (96%) aged 4 and

5 years old are enrolled in preschool while the same only applies for less than half of the 1-year-olds (SNAE, 2024).

The preschool teaching staff at Swedish preschools consists of professionals with varying educational backgrounds. Preschool teachers, who make up about 40% of the national teaching staff, have completed a university education of 210 credits and hold a teaching licence from the National Agency for Education. There is, however, a national lack of licensed preschool teachers because they only make up a mere 40% of the teaching staff at a national level, which means less in some municipalities and more in others. The rest of the teaching staff includes child minders (17%) with secondary school degrees, and 40% of the teaching staff lacks any of the mentioned educations. This latter group is rapidly increasing (SNAE, 2024). The shortage of qualified staff is a national problem for quality and equity in Swedish Early Childhood Education and Care. The quality dialogues studied in the present thesis involve a wide range of professionals at preschool units, including nonacademics, and can provide valuable insights into how these diverse backgrounds affect the evaluation.

Quality Work in Swedish Early Childhood and Care

Quality work and evaluation has long been integral to Swedish preschools, but their importance has grown significantly since preschools were formally included in the educational system in the late 1990s. The foundation for ongoing and systematic evaluation was established in the ‘Pedagogical Programme for Preschools’ as a basis for planning and development (National Board of Health and Welfare, 1987), which emphasised that education should be evaluated in relation to national goals stated in the pedagogical programme which in turn were based on statements in the Social Services Act (SFS 1980:620). There was also a recommendation for local preschool units and municipalities to formulate their own local goals in accordance with the national goals. A shift occurred in the late 1990s when responsibility for preschool was transferred from the Department of Health and Welfare to the Department of Education, leading to the first national curriculum for preschools (Lpfö98). The ambition was to strengthen lifelong learning and enhance the quality of all educational stages. The curricula of preschools and schools were intended to create a continuous, cohesive educational experience, connecting the various stages of education.

The first national curriculum for preschools (Lpfö98) replaced the pedagogical programme for preschools but also built upon its foundations. The first chapter

has shown that the education should be planned, enacted, evaluated, and developed (p. 4) and with the expectations that these processes align with the national goals stated in the curriculum. In 2001, an international programme, *Starting Strong, Early Childhood Education and Care* held its first conference in Sweden. The conference produced eight quality strategies, two of which focused on systematic data collection and utilisation as well as a long-term plan for evaluation and research on early childhood education and care (Lindgren & Söderlind, 2019). As a result, a focus on aspects of preschool quality was intensified during this period, leading to the introduction of a revised curriculum in 2011 (Lpfö 98/10), which clarified demands for follow-up, evaluation, and improvement. The introduction of a revised curriculum for preschools coincided with preschool gaining a strengthened position in the Education Act, in which systematic quality work was proposed at both the (pre)school units and authoritative level. Systematic quality work was now mandated by law and compulsory in all school forms. Hence, the revised curriculum (Lpfö 98/10) assigned specific responsibilities within systematic quality work to the principal and preschool teachers while also including all teaching staff members. In the latest revised edition of the curriculum (Lpfö 18), the responsibilities for planning, following up, evaluating, and improving educational quality remain assigned to the principal, preschool teachers, and other teaching staff members.

Preschools have clearly been influenced by societal movements towards more quality measuring and assessment, which has been partly driven by NPM. This has meant a larger focus on accountability for results, often at the expense of contributing to school improvement (Blossing & Söderström, 2014; Biesta, 2010). Throughout the 2010s, there has been great focus on individualistic professionalisation, with international efforts to enhance professionalising teachers, among them new ways of making a career (Hardy & Rönnerman, 2019). In Sweden, preschool teachers' responsibilities for teaching, documentation, follow-up, and evaluation were clarified which many found both new and difficult. A national problem for preschools is, however, the lack of competence because the teaching staff is made up of professionals of varied educational backgrounds, with a low percentage of licensed preschool teachers. In 2013, lead teachers were introduced by — and partially financed by — the state in schools but not in preschools. However, some local authorities chose to implement lead teachers or similar roles in preschools as well.

The role of principals has also changed during the past few decades. From having previously been regarded as head teachers (Swedish term: *föreståndare*) with

some managerial responsibilities, preschool principals became equated with the principals of schools in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) that started being applied on July 1, 2011 (SFS 2010:800). Principals' role has been clarified in both the Education Act and national curricula (Lander et al., 2013). Since 2010, there has been a mandatory education for principals, which, since 2019, also included newly appointed principals of preschools. These changes have significantly altered the perception of preschool principals and emphasised the importance of systematic quality work, which is now a central component of their training.

Summary

This chapter has given a contextual background to the current thesis. Although the state has the overall responsibility for policymaking and descriptions of intended student outcomes, it is the local authorities, both municipal and private, who are responsible for implementing policy into practice, that education corresponds with the goals and objectives of policy and for management structures. At the top of the municipal organisation that is responsible for preschools, we find the school board and highest-ranking top manager: the superintendent. The structure of the municipal organisation can vary, but in the studied administration, preschools are organised in geographical areas, each led by an area manager.

The terminology 'systematic quality work' relates to the demands stipulated in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curriculum. Systematic quality work is regulated in the Swedish Education Act and is focused on the educational goals in the Education Act and other national regulations, that is, national goals (SFS 2010:800). LEAs and their administrations have the responsibility of reviewing and evaluating educational quality and needs for improvement to verify data-informed managerial and local political decision-making. An increasingly prevalent way of doing this is for the LEA to conduct quality dialogues with principals and their units.

Swedish preschools have a long history. Their purpose and the political responsibility for preschools have shifted over the years. Preschools have only been an educational responsibility for the last quarter of a century, and it was not until 1998 that they received a national curriculum. Today, there is an increasing focus on the quality of preschool education and heavy demands for systematic quality work. In accordance with higher demands for accountability, great changes

have been placed on the teaching staff, preschool principals, and LEAs to engage in systematic quality work, which is a central part of the education.

Chapter 3 Previous Research

In line with the purpose and research questions of the present thesis, I have chosen to primarily focus on the search for previous research within the fields of interprofessional communication within school improvement which is presented first in this chapter. Here, the chapter describes communication as a tool for understanding cultures and needs for change, moves towards systemic improvements and trust-based public management, and research on quality dialogues in the Nordic context. The chapter then provides previous research on systematic quality work and evaluation practices in public administration. A section on the complexity of collaboration in social organisations follows because systematic quality work in a local education administration involves numerous professionals and managers. The chapter ends with conclusions from the literature review.

Interprofessional Communication in School Improvement

Knowledge about dialogue in local education administrations' systematic quality work can be found in school improvement research. The development of this field of research began with the hypothesis that communication or dialogue between organisational members may be crucial for control. From an international point of view, over the years, research on school improvement has shifted away from investigating the importance of local school improvement initiatives to analysing educational collaboration more systemwide, with communication between professionals as a key tool for improvement.

Communication as a Tool for Understanding Culture and Needs for Change

The works of Kurt Lewin (1936; 1947; 1951) and organisation development (OD) constitute the major approach to — and the origin of — school improvement and organisational improvement (Hopkins et al., 2014). Communication between

professionals was emphasised in the joint endeavour of understanding organisational cultures and challenging needs for change. The collective tools for improving schools were team training and target setting. In addition, networking, self-review, increased communication within and between practices and a focus was placed on changing culture. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a shift in international research, where the focus was placed on tools for the collective improvement of schools. At the school unit level, teacher initiatives such as action research were popular and focused on instruction and what could be changed in the classrooms. Demands for accountability, school leadership development and large-scale national reforms increased in the 1980s. In this era, international research analysed self-evaluation, feedback, and follow-up as tools for collective school improvement. However, these tools were not implemented in schools, and overall, school evaluations do not have strong links to students' achievements and learning outcomes (Hopkins et al., 2014).

In the late 1990s, educational systems were decentralised in the Nordic countries. International research has focused on how decentralised leadership and improvements at the school level, parallel with national approaches for educational change, could become the tools for school improvement. A key idea was to give schools more responsibility for their own management and improvement of student outcomes, which demanded communication within local organisations. School units were given an expanded mandate as local educational authorities' and national agencies' mandates diminished (Hopkins et al., 2014). Rather, power over education changed because national policymakers clarified what should be achieved locally, which needed to be accounted for. Hence, from a Swedish perspective, the 'idea of quality' gradually became dominant in the governance of schools at the end of the 1990s. Nyttell (2006) investigated educational policy texts from 1987 to 2003 and reported an increasing use of 'quality' as a concept as well as concepts related to quality.

Since being used rather seldomly and colloquially, quality as a concept gradually became more common at the beginning of the 2000s. Nyttell (2006) argued that, even though the concept of quality is ambiguous and hard to define, quality seems to have become a platform for the governance of schools, mostly entailing procedural control. Imsen et al. (2016) discuss the vulnerability of the Nordic model of education with its democratic values and education for all after the turn of the millennium, when the welfare state turned into a state of market and competition; they argue that the neoliberal ideology of soft governance that implies

reforms, inspection and control is in strong contrast to equalising social differences, inclusion, and equality.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) and networks within and between schools have emerged as the tools for interprofessional communication on what needs to be changed and how (Hord, 1997; Stoll & Seashore, 2007). PLCs are groups of educators who meet on a regular basis to share their expertise in teaching. They learn to improve their own teaching skills by collectively evaluating pupils' academic achievements in relation to teaching (Stoll & Seashore, 2007). There is also increased emphasis on the evaluation of student outcomes and how educational leadership can influence changes in teachers' instruction, thus improving the achievements of all students (Fullan, 2016; Le Fevre, et al., 2019; Timperley, 2011). This makes communication between professionals central, as does mutual understanding of each other's work, the need for change and what influences increased goal achievement and school improvement processes. Feedback loops have been found to be important for sustainable school improvement within complex school organisations (Koh & Askill-Williams, 2021; van der Steen et al., 2013).

Moves towards Systemic Improvement and Trust

There has been a move towards systemic improvement, where different parts make up a whole system (Blossing, 2022). School improvement gains from interprofessional cooperation between levels (Henriksen, 2018; Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013; Skott, 2014). Cooperation and communication can be regarded as the prerequisites for joint leadership and school improvement. However, communication might present challenges because various actors in a vertical hierarchy belong to different practices within the same administration, with their own sets of experiences, knowledge, and perspectives.

Aspects that make a difference in students' learning should be central to quality work (Blossing et al., 2015). A key factor should also be the teachers' learning for a constantly changing practice (Edwards Groves & Rönnerman, 2013). A key factor, according to Hopkins (2017), is that teachers use adequate data to evaluate the needs of students to expand their own teaching methods. There are many kinds of data at schools, even though there seems to be a lack of knowledge on how to use data to make informed decisions (Schildkamp et al., 2019). Hence, evaluating student outcomes and school improvement processes is not a matter only for teachers but rather builds on communication between professions in various

positions. However, contradictions between external and internal expectations can cause problems.

Lager (2010, 2015) conducted a policy analysis of how professionals in various positions within a local education administration enacted systematic quality work. Lager focused on the key positions for improvement efforts and how they organised for improvement. The results showed that there are obvious differences in expectations. Administrators emphasise templates for documentation and inventing models to be implemented at school units so that the results can be measured. Concrete and measurable individual results are often lacking in the documentation made at preschools, which seem to be characterised more as descriptions of the units' curricular goal achievement. Coordinating municipal quality work is challenging and has a contradictory understanding of quality. Administrators create models that are influenced by the positive measurement of schools, even though preschools do not have national, achievable goals for individual children. Lager argued that there is a need to analyse systematic quality work in its various phases.

A systemic view of school improvement builds on communication, transparency and mutual trust in each other's work and capacity, according to Nihlfors and Johansson (2013), who reported a lack of transparency and communication between professionals in various positions in municipal administrations. Their results show that only a few principals can influence school boards' decision-making. Members of the school boards also stated that they have little confidence in principals' capacity to work with school improvement. Principals, on the other hand, showed great faith in the national expectations of principals and stated that they are more loyal to the responsibilities given to them by the state than to the municipal responsibility of local administrations. A contributing factor could be that school boards seem to emphasise financial follow-up more than follow-up on educational aspects. This is not necessarily negative, considering the results of an American study by Hooge and Honingh (2014) in which they investigated whether and how school boards understand the quality of education at primary schools. The results show that school boards are usually aware of the quality of education. In fact, the greater the degree of awareness is, the more the school board believes in the importance of high awareness. Moreover, when the school board and school managers maintain their respective governing and managerial roles, there is a positive effect on the extent to which the school board recognises educational quality. Sticking with one's own role does not necessarily exclude, constrain, or impede communication.

A Swedish public inquiry (SOU, 2019:43) revealed several benefits from trust-based governance and leadership, such as increased motivation, improved service, and quality as well as knowledge exchange between professionals. It is argued that, when professionals are encouraged to use their professional judgement, qualitatively good results, such as the satisfaction of pupils, patients and clients, are expected. It is also argued that important tools in improvement work include vertical and horizontal dialogues, collaborative learning and professional cooperation (Andersson et al., 2018). These arguments are supported by Jederlund (2021), who shows that teachers' collegial trust, collective trust in teacher teams and trust in school development processes are highly important for school improvement.

Trust-Based Public Management and Dialogue

Research (Cobb, et al., 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Henriksen, 2018; Jederlund, 2021; Fullan, 2016; Le Fevre, et al., 2019; Nihlfors & Johansson, 2013; Timperley, 2011) has shown that communication can play an important role in school improvement and in building interprofessional knowledge and trust that can promote school improvement processes. Interprofessional quality dialogues seem to be a rather new phenomenon and are investigated mainly in Nordic research. This is related to the trust-based public management movement, which has spread increasingly in Western countries, especially in Nordic countries (Bringselius, 2023; SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43). Trust-based public management has emerged as a response to heavy red tape (bureaucracy) and extensive administrative spending. Instead, public resources should be redirected to core processes (Bringselius, 2023). Nyhan (2000) argues that the central parts of a trust-based paradigm call for extensive employee empowerment. To strengthen organisational commitment, employees should be involved in decision-making. Nyhan also argues that trust should be understood as an interpersonal attitude. In 2016, the Swedish government initiated a 'Trust Commission' that worked with defining and promoting trust-based public management (Bringselius, 2023; SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43).

The Trust Commission (Bringselius, 2023; SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43) conducted 12 studies of trust-based public management within the welfare sector, such as education, health care and social care, to investigate how trust-based public management could be implemented in practice. In summary, Bringselius (2023) argues that the creation of trustful dialogue between public officials and elected

policymakers is at the core of trust-based public management and that management reduces the number of goals, indicators and rules that could otherwise be needed. The Trust Commission shows that effort is put into relationship building and a shared understanding of each other's roles. The focus is on supporting the mission and service quality rather than on control and financial reporting. In the long term, strategic goals are cocreated with those employees whom the goals concern. The goals also have a strong qualitative focus, and employees can explain to policymakers what support they need. As trust-based public management has a strong focus on professional quality development; colleagues from various parts of the organisation can visit one another to provide advice on how to develop their professional practice.

Bringselius (2023) explains that there is not always a need for external audits to analyse and develop an organisation. Instead, organisations develop communities of practice and situation learning as they build systems for in-house quality auditing, quality visits and quality dialogues. Professional peer review processes seem to make top-down control superfluous because the focus is instead on professional learning and shared responsibility for the success of the core mission. The organisational culture focuses on the shared mission of the citizen, that is, in education, the relationship with children, pupils and parents. The organisational culture focuses on the shared ethics where core values and priorities are discussed. The studies of the Trust Commission also show that, when many share leadership from a systems perspective, managers take servant leadership and focus on building relationships based on trust. Here, time and patience seem to be important, along with dialogue.

Quality Dialogues in Nordic Countries

As mentioned before, Bringselius (2023) noted that trust-based public management has gained relevance in the Western world, particularly in Nordic countries. This could be the reason why research on quality dialogues seems to have been conducted mainly in the Nordic context. Recent research on 'quality dialogues' is rare and often does not focus on the aim or research questions. In a study by Adolfsson and Wikström (2007), dialogues were introduced as a new model for collecting qualitative data for an annual municipal quality report; their findings show that school staff narratives on everyday experiences provided administrators with a better complementary overall picture than quantified data. Dialogue contributed to increased attention to fundamental human values and

presented relational — rather than hierarchical — accountability processes. The findings also show that dialogues can be useful for identifying areas in need of improvement, for goal setting and for reflection on ways of working. Initially, the dialogues were perceived as another way for the central administration to exercise performance control, but when the participants helped design meetings and there was mutual agreement on what to discuss, the participants became more positive about the purpose and usefulness of the dialogue meetings.

A twofold purpose of interprofessional dialogues was identified in a study by Håkansson and Adolfsson (2021). The first was to strengthen schools' analysis and improvement work and the second was to contribute supporting material, beyond quantified data, to the LEA's quality management work. The schools' annual reports and commitment plans formed important tools for this dialogue. It was explicitly expressed by the LEA that dialogues should not be perceived as external control but instead as a means of generating insights so that LEAs can 'keep tabs'. Adolfsson and Wikström (2007) also demonstrated that dialogues can draw administrators' attention to educational issues and increase their contact with local units.

The fact that dialogues are settings for creating knowledge beyond documentation is shown in Bröms' (2020; 2023) studies on dialogue meetings between the LEA and principals. The purpose was described as contributing to greater knowledge for both the principals and LEA about schools' prerequisites, challenges, and work processes. The results further show an underrepresentation of qualitative data compared with quantitative data, such as statistics on national test results, final grades and school surveys with students and parents. Dunn et al. (2013) show how data were shared by teachers at dialogues formalised three times per year; the purpose was to assess the impacts on students' achievements and set collaborative targets, which were monitored through a continuous process at several levels of the organisation. The dialogues were part of a large-scale initiative for data-informed decision-making and improvements at all levels of Ontario's school districts.

Broad participation has been shown to motivate further improvements. Student achievements are positively affected when LEAs involve all professionals at the leading and supporting levels in establishing and prioritising shared goals. Research shows stable patterns of interaction between individuals and groups when it comes to being productive when these groups have mutual expectations and reciprocal dependencies (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000). Norquist and Ärlestig (2020) conducted a study where they sought to understand how leaders

within a school district system perceive the different leadership positions from the perspectives of systems thinking and how the leadership positions are related and understood. Findings show among other things that principals and lead teachers do not relate much of their work to the past but rather focused on improvements in line with their visionary work. One example that is presented is a principal who meets teacher teams and an assistant principal in annual meetings to discuss ongoing work in relation to visions and objectives. The principal believes this to be the most important day of the year and that participation contributes to shared understanding and a shared direction in school improvement. Henriksen's (2018) results show how dialogues can strengthen the relationship between a superintendent and school leadership teams when the purpose is to establish and maintain a shared interpretation while working on educational issues.

Broad representation and participation are the key factors in Henriksen and Paulsen's study (2021), in which they followed dialogue meetings between a Norwegian superintendent and school units for one and a half years. The purpose was to discuss the results of tests, exams, and surveys at the school level so that the schools' challenges and strengths could be identified and remedied. Rather than control, the intention was to gain insights into processes so that schools could receive appropriate support. By meeting numerous professionals, the superintendent gained more insights than would have been possible from just meeting the principals. Broad participation also led to empowerment and commitment at the schools. Implementing changes became easier when several professionals engaged in discussions. In this case, the superintendent had to balance trust and control.

Additionally, studies on interprofessional dialogues show that purposes can be impeded. Håkansson and Adolfsson (2021) reveal that, despite shared routines and standardised structures and processes, LEAs have not found ways to prevent crises or declining outcomes, nor have they determined sufficient ways to explain the problems faced by schools. The findings also pointed to uncertainties concerning the LEAs' expectations of the participants. Norqvist and Ärlestig (2021) show that, even though superintendents encouraged listening and engagement, meetings were perceived by principals as more informational than dialogic because of the large number of participants. This affected the role of the area manager, who had to give the principals more support and coaching afterwards. The principals and lead teachers experienced great distance from the central administration, and they felt that communication about goals and improvements to outcomes was directed only upwards in the governance chain.

Pröitz et al. (2021) investigated data-use meetings between district administrators and school leaders from 2015 to 2016. The meetings were referred to as result meetings, result dialogue meetings or development meetings. The meetings were part of the school district's governing cycle. Although the meetings occurred regularly, the frequency varied from once a month to once or twice per semester. The meetings had different themes but most generally concerned results from national tests and national assessments and surveys. Meetings in the two districts were investigated, and they had somewhat different purposes. In district A, attempts were made to determine what leaders and teachers do to act on results and improve outcomes. The discussions were concrete and confrontational about teaching and learning. In district B, the results were presented, and dialogue was about learning outcomes to facilitate shared interpretation, analysis, and discussion of the data. The findings show that the data were approached differently, hence reflecting district-specific characteristics, policies, and strategies. The administrators' personal governing styles influenced the meetings greatly, where one governing style was closed and controlling while the other was open and facilitated development. The analysis reveals that the different governing styles were made possible by decentralisation.

Systematic Quality Work

Since 2010, the concept of 'systematic quality work' has been mandated by law in Sweden (SFS 2010:800) and is regulated in national curricula and policy (Lpfö18; SNAE 2015). Although there have historically been initiatives and demands for school improvement processes within education, it was not until the 1990s that the concept of quality became increasingly prevalent in policy (Bergh, 2010, 2011; Nyttell, 2006) after changes such as marketisation, new public management (NPM), management by objectives and results and decentralisation of education. The idea was that schools would work more efficiently with fewer resources if work was planned, and improvements would be made in accordance with set goals and priorities (Lundgren, 1999). Curricular goals constitute the starting point for planning and evaluating local, decentralised education. Thus, the purpose of quality work can be described as the implementation of curricular intentions or how and for what it is used (Åkesson, 2024).

In recent years, the state's responsibilities have shifted towards auditing and inspection. The introduction of the National Schools Inspectorate in 2008 and the new Education Act (SFS 2010:800) in 2010 marked paradigm shifts in the state's

responsibilities (Rönnberg, 2012, 2014). There has also been a global shift towards the recentralisation of education, placing an increasingly strong focus on the accountability of LEAs for student outcomes and educational quality (Bergh, 2010; Farrell & Coburn, 2017; Nytell 2006; Prøitz et al., 2022). As a response to intensified political and administrative pressures because of increasing demands for accountability, many local authorities have increased the number of specialised professionals at quality departments who work only with auditing and quality assessments within the Swedish public sector (Alamaa et al., 2024; Löfgren et al., 2022).

The quality work is also coordinated locally, regionally, and nationally. Local coordination is conducted by municipalities and independent school organisations. Regional coordination is conducted by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), which is an employers' organisation that represents and advocates for local government in Sweden. All of Sweden's municipalities and regions are members of SALAR. The national coordination is conducted through policy and interorganisational collaboration between, for example, municipalities, the Swedish National Agency for Education, the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate. The latter also has the task of auditing if local schools and authorities, such as municipalities, conduct their systematic quality work according to regulations in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800). In conclusion, over the years, quality work has become, in many respects, a platform for governance. Dahler-Larsen (2019) describes quality work as having developed into an industry of its own right, and researchers such as Bornemark (2018), Dahler-Larsen (2019) and Nytell (2006) have concluded that it entails much procedural control. Dahler-Larsen (2019) argues that schools used to be the providers of education but are regarded as providers of quality and that quality has become a matter of sociopolitical importance.

Research on quality work in Swedish early childhood education and care has mainly focused on the use of documentation as a tool for reflection and the search for what interests the children (Alnervik, 2013, 2018; Dahlberg & Elfström, 2014; Elfström, 2013; Insulander & Svärdemo Åberg, 2014; Sheridan et al., 2012; Vallberg Roth, 2014; Öqvist & Cervantes, 2018). It is shown by the authors that, when documentation is used as a tool for collective reflection in dialogue, it can become a tool for formative assessment as well as a tool for knowledge creation on learning processes and support for improvement of education (Dahlberg & Elfström, 2014). Pedagogical documentation has also been suggested inter-

nationally as a tool for improvement (Baker, 2015; Ebbeck & Chan, 2010), and nationally by the Swedish National Agency which has published a support material for preschools (SNAE, 2012).

Evaluation Practices in Public Administration

Quality work has many qualities in common with not only school improvement, as described above, but also with evaluation practices in public administration. The developments of school improvement research have largely coincided with the development, or different waves, of public evaluation practices. Since the 1990s, the evaluation industry within public administration has rapidly expanded, taking various forms (Vedung, 2010). The purpose of evaluation is to carefully examine and determine whether the actions that have been taken have led to achieving the intended goals/objectives. Such knowledge is assumed to lead to a better understanding of how future actions can be oriented. Visions alone are not enough; it is the results that count (Vedung, 2010). The purpose of evaluation is to improve a programme or the implementation of policy (Furubo, 2024), and the evaluation work is supposed to be useful for those conducting the evaluation and for those whom the evaluation presumably impacts (Bastøe, 2024). However, this is not easily achieved, as shown by, for example, the OECD's (2019) study of public evaluations; in most of the included 42 nations, major challenges in using evaluations as the basis for political decisions were identified. These challenges were mainly because of the absence of strategies for conducting evaluations and inadequate human resources in terms of competence and capacity (Bastøe, 2024; OECD, 2019).

By the mid-1970s, there was an increased focus on including all those whom it mattered to in the evaluation. A dialogue-oriented evaluation wave followed as a sort of democratic form of evaluation based on the ontological assumption that there exists no objective truth. Realities were seen as social constructions of the mind, and there were as many realities as there were minds. This epistemological stance was that the findings in a study only exist because of the interactions between the observer and the observed. In contrast to the scientific wave, the dialogue-oriented wave rested on communicative rationality. Dialogical evaluation was assumed to generate broad agreements, consensus, and democratic legitimacy. The point was also to make users and stakeholders become more engaged and better citizens (Foss Hansen, 2024; Vedung, 2010, 2013). The dialogue-oriented wave of evaluation coincided with dialogical pedagogy, which was popular in

Swedish preschools in the 1970s (Kallós, 1979). Callewaert and Kallós (1976) criticised dialogical pedagogy as the rose-coloured wave in Swedish pedagogy, stating it is a nonscientific trend in pedagogical research. Callewaert and Kallós critique educational research for being overly ideological, comparing researchers with magicians who, rather than providing real information, should tell politicians and the public of the purpose of education and how a better world can be created instead of producing any real information of contradictions and conflicts.

A neoliberal view of evaluation practices appeared in the late 1970s and was consolidated in the 1980s; this was the neoliberal wave, that is, NPM. The focus was on results rather than processes. NPM harboured a strong leadership, indirect and decentralised control, and customer/citizen orientation. The results-based management has become a trend, and citizens' rights to know how money is spent has become imperative. According to Skedsmo et al. (2021), decreased test results on the international PISA-test also seems to have played a role in the increased focus on accountability and national test results in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark at the beginning of the 2000's. In short, the emphasis on accountability, quality assessment, performance measurement and consumer satisfaction appraisal increased. This movement of accountability has led to a more market-oriented logic, and re-centralisation of power (Skedsmo, et al, 2021). Åkesson (2024) argues that performance-based accountability and systematic quality work hold a foundational tension between control of results and professional trust. Control of results entails external demands and juridification, while professional trust means leaving assessment and decision making to the local professionals and managers.

Nevo (1998) argues that, for fair participation in an evaluation, all actors must understand its purposes. This is confirmed by Forsberg and Nordzell (2013), who analysed mandatory dialogues between the Swedish National Agency and municipalities arranged from 2000 to 2002. These dialogues were regarded by the participants as a means for the state to gain insights into municipal schools and to support local change. Dialogues can be a soft policy instrument enabling the coexistence of governance and professional autonomy (Forsberg & Nordzell, 2013).

Educational Organisations as Complex Systems

According to Ouchi (1980), organisations are created because more than one individual is needed to manage certain tasks that need organisational coordination.

In ideal social organisations, individuals depend on and have mutual expectations of one another, and the purpose of the organisation is greater than that of the individuals (Ouchi, 1980). When many professionals in various practices are involved, social organisations can be regarded as socially complex.

Complex systems can survive the removal of some of their parts because they adapt to changes (Koh & Askill-Williams, 2021). Complex systems are composed of supra- and subsystems and behave in a nonlinear fashion (Shiell et al., 2008). The complexity is evident because school units are part of a larger organisation and must be able to adapt according to external and internal demands and expectations (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2017; Edwards Groves & Rönnerman, 2013; Hopkins, 2017). Handling top-down initiatives in relation to internal demands puts principals in a challenging situation (Hopkins, 2017). When external demands correspond with internal values, there are sense-making aspects, and new demands can be accepted as useful tools rather than as demands. It is possible to assume that external demands on the enactment of dialogues in systematic quality work can either contradict or correspond with internal, sense-making aspects. Possible contradictions between internal and external needs and demands might affect individuals — or groups of individuals — to enact the dialogues in ways that are successful in mediating collective purposes. How and why underperforming schools are affected differently by the same interventions by policy makers has been investigated by van der Steen et al. (2013); their results reveal the complex nature of the school system, showing how causes and consequences interact in circular patterns, creating unexpected outcomes and self-reinforcing mechanisms. Thus, it is argued that understanding feedback loops within school systems is more important than understanding the causes.

Handling Complexity

The complexity of an educational administration depends on several factors, of which systemic contradictions and conflicts between external and internal expectations can be important. The idea of distributed leadership was developed in the late 1990s, as was a systemic view of leadership. The idea is that expertise is distributed within the organisation and that mutual trust in each other's capacity is foundational. It is of interest to investigate the expectations that various professionals have of each other and what roles distributed leadership and leadership from the middle (Hargreaves, 2024; Harris, 2008; Liljenberg, 2014; Mifsud, 2023; Sisson, et al., 2021; Spillane, 2005) can play in school improvement

processes. Ståhlkrantz and Rapp (2020) investigated school boards' expectations of their ability to influence student outcomes. Superintendents were found to be boundary spanners, that is, those who help local educational systems become more tightly coupled. They also have opportunities to exert indirect instructional leadership through which they can largely influence school improvement. Waters and Marzano (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of 27 quantitative studies in which the influence and effect of the superintendent on student achievement in schools were investigated. The results revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between student achievement and district-level leadership. The findings indicate that student achievements are positively affected when the superintendent, district office staff and school board members fulfil key leadership responsibilities to involve all professionals at leading and supporting levels in establishing shared goals for their districts and prioritising those goals. Moreover, the results also show the value of leadership stability. If superintendents keep their tenures long enough, they can see the impact of their leadership. These results highlight the importance of knowledge about the culture and historicity of an organisation as well as the importance of interprofessional communication and cooperation.

Social complexity increases when an organisation has many interprofessional formal and informal networks, both horizontal and vertical. Local education administrations in smaller municipalities might appear to be less complex than those in larger municipalities where local infrastructures tend to be more intricate and difficult for outsiders to understand. A role between the superintendent and the area manager is often constructed in larger municipalities, such as the area manager, which many Swedish municipalities have constructed. The role of area managers is increasing in Swedish municipalities. Slightly more than one-third of Swedish municipalities reported their role in 2009. A corresponding role is not prevalent in the Nordic countries, even though it is increasing in Denmark, and a similar development was anticipated in Finland (Paulsen et al., 2016). The construction of the area manager can be a way for the local authority to support improvement processes or a way of limiting the autonomy of principals. The introduction of the role of the area manager has led to a multilevel system with several actors interacting in a complex system, which can cause communicative problems (Johansson et al., 2016). This gives a reason for formalised dialogues. How work and interprofessional communication are enabled and constrained when there are several area managers in a municipality is something that needs to be further investigated.

To handle the complexity of the Swedish school system, more roles have been introduced over time, which has led to a differentiated system. Some examples include assistant principals, special needs educators, teacher assistants and lead teachers. In 2013, a national reform introduced the role of the lead teacher — or first teacher as the role is called in Swedish — in Swedish schools. Although lead teachers have not been introduced in Swedish preschools through national reform, the studied municipality in the present thesis has introduced lead teachers as part of the local preschool management group. Adolfsson and Alvunger (2017) show how lead teachers help mediate the balance between external demands and internal needs. Lead teachers help visualise shared goals and generate improved knowledge on the curricular and teaching strategies as well as mediate communication between various subsystems within the organisation. Grimm (2020) investigated the leadership of lead teachers by interviewing 34 teachers, lead teachers, assistant principals, and principals of lead teachers at four different schools. The results showed that lead teachers' leadership can be understood as horizontal and facilitative, but that view does not challenge egalitarian and autonomous teaching and learning norms. The traditional view of leadership as vertical and associated with decision-making, management and the individual leader collides with the distributed and democratic view of lead teachers' leadership. A conclusion is that lead teachers are not accustomed to their full potential. The complexity of the organisation grows as various external and internal expectations of leadership exist.

Conclusions from the Literature Review

Interprofessional communication has long been regarded as a key tool for school improvement. Communication between professionals is emphasised when the joint endeavour involves understanding organisational cultures and challenging needs for change. Moves towards systemic improvement and professional trust have focused on interprofessional communication within and between educational organisations. Trust-based public management emerged as a movement for governance and focuses on professional quality development, collaboration, relationship building, professional peer review processes and dialogue. Dialogue concerns fundamental human values and relational processes rather than accountability. Dialogues in trust-based public management are used for identifying areas in need of improvement, for goal setting and for reflecting on ways of working. When expertise is distributed within socially complex organisations and mutual trust in each other's capacity is foundational, dialogue is

regarded as a key factor for handling complexity. Broad representation from professionals and managers in all parts of the organisation is also regarded as a key factor in trust-based public management.

A focus on quality and quality work has followed the changing waves of the evaluation landscape, not least the dialogue-oriented evaluation wave from the 1970s and the neoliberal wave that followed the global paradigm of NPM, management by performance and decentralisation of the Nordic educational systems in the 1990s, through which individual schools received increased power while local educational authorities and national agencies gained decreased power. In recent years, however, there has been a move towards the recentralisation and accountability of local educational authorities for student outcomes and the overall quality of education.

Research on quality dialogues can mainly be found in the Nordic context and show how interprofessional dialogue provides narrative and qualitative aspects to the assessment of quality. Research on quality dialogues has identified issues of accountability and control versus trust and support which need to be further researched.

Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework

To pursue the aim of the present thesis and answer the overall research questions, the empirical data are analysed from a cultural historical activity theoretical (CHAT) perspective because this method is useful for analysing interaction between humans as they work and learn together. Edwards' (2007, 2011, 2017) conceptual framework of relational agency complements CHAT before the chapter addresses some critiques against CHAT. Finally, to further understand the concept of culture, I also turn to Bloome (1989) and Bloome et al.'s (1989) construct of procedural display.

Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

There are many strands of activity theory (Levant, 2018), all stemming from the works of the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky (1896–1934). Vygotsky was influenced by Marx's theories on the ontological assumption of dialectical materialism, which concerns the constant change and movement of all matter (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). The work we conduct together with others is formed by our cultures and our history. Through interactions, humans affect and are affected by each other, the social context, and the development of mediating tools. An epistemological assumption is that knowledge is formed through action in collective activities. Vygotsky also introduced the idea of language as the most powerful mediating tool between individuals and their surrounding environment (Vygotsky, 1978). CHAT stems from the works of Vygotsky and shares the notion of mediation with sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theory focuses on mediated action and language, while CHAT emphasises the object-oriented and contradiction-driven character of the collective activity, the theory of expansive learning and a methodology of formative interventions (Sannino & Engeström, 2018).

CHAT has evolved through four generations of research on work and learning (Engeström & Sannino, 2021), of which the third generation is of interest for this thesis. Even though each generation has its own prime unit of analysis and main concepts, all generations share foundational ideas and concepts where learning and work is analysed as an object-oriented and tool-mediated practice. The generations

should not be seen as hierarchical or progressive in the sense that it is better to conduct a third-generation analysis than a first-generation analysis. Which concepts and units of analysis that are used depends on what kind of analysis best serves the aim and research questions of the study. Activity theory opens several possible ways of analysing local education administrations' quality dialogues. Foundational concepts within CHAT, which are central to the analysis conducted in this thesis, are presented below.

Culturally Mediated Action

The first generation of CHAT was formulated by Vygotsky, who argued that the human individual meets and interacts with the surrounding context: an interaction mediated through some sort of physical or intellectual tools which are integral parts of social practices. In quality dialogues, participants need tools in the form of verbal language, body language and perhaps some sort of documentation as starting points for the discussion. The process in which the tools function and serve the achievement of the object of activity is called mediation. Society is a network of individuals who produce and use the artefacts necessary for their actions. At the time, this was revolutionary because Vygotsky suggested that individuals cannot be understood without their socially and culturally developed instruments with which they communicate, work and learn together with other individuals.

Common to the founders of activity theory is the insight that human mind is not located within the brain, not even bounded by the skin of the individual. The mind is in actions and activities in which humans engage with the world, by means of cultural artefacts such as signs and tools. (Sannino & Engeström, 2018, p. 44)

Vygotsky's theoretical contribution can be understood as a triadic model consisting of subject, object and mediating artefact, which means that the prime unit of analysis is that of culturally mediated action.

Wartofsky (1979) developed the idea of mediated action by describing the mediational functions of the artefacts as primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary artefacts are concrete tools that are used directly in production, for example, pencils and word processors. Secondary artefacts are functional representations of primary artefacts or descriptions of modes of action, such as guidelines, handbooks, templates and so forth. A nonphysical secondary artefact would be expected and inscribed patterned use of a primary artefact. Secondary artefacts

concern tool usage and preserving the modes of action. Tertiary artefacts are another level of abstraction because they concern human needs and intentions and present a possibility of an imagined world, for example, visions or theories. Tertiary artefacts provide a tool for changing current practice, that is, creating new modes of thinking and acting. Cole (2019) emphasises the importance of imagination for tertiary artefacts. It should be noted that there is no hierarchy among primary, secondary, and tertiary artefacts. The concepts rather describe how the same artefact can have different functions, even in the same activity. Here, mediation is central. To exemplify, a pen is a primary artefact when used for writing, that is, to produce text. However, when used as symbol, a pen could be either a secondary artefact or a tertiary one. For example, a primary school teacher could put a series of symbols on a notice board, among which an illustration of a pen could function as an instruction to start writing after having finished another task. When used as a symbol for an ideal, such as freedom of the press and freedom of thought, the pen becomes a tertiary artefact. It could be assumed that, for instance, documentation could function as a primary artefact in systematic quality work when used as a setting for mere knowledge exchange, a secondary artefact when used for discussing work procedures and a tertiary artefact if it promotes visionary or theoretical knowledge creation. It is quite possible that a conversation that departs from documentation could alternate between all these functions but also that it could remain a tool for knowledge exchange without knowledge creation.

Activity, Actions, the Object and Historicity

Vygotsky's thoughts were expanded by his colleague Leontiev (1903–1979), who worked out the second-generation prime unit of analysis, that is, the concept of activity. Leont'ev (1977, 1978, 1981) explicates how object-oriented collective activity relates to individual goal-oriented actions. Actions are finite, with a beginning and an end, while activities are open ended. Everyone's individual actions contribute to a wider social activity. When visiting a preschool, one might think the staff's individual actions seem uncoordinated and without a shared purpose, but their actions are oriented towards a shared object: to provide education and care. Thus, Leont'ev included the notion of division of labour within the community, a community that the individual belongs to and interacts with. In second-generation studies, the focus is on a single, relatively well-bounded activity system and its transformations (Engeström & Sannino, 2021). Second-

generation studies focus on the interrelations between the subject and community as well as social actions oriented at objects. Thus the concept of activity reflects the dynamic relationship between the individual and the surrounding world (Chaiklin, 2019).

Objects distinguish one activity from another (Leont'ev, 1978). The collective activity is oriented towards the object, which then shapes the activity. CHAT explains the object as the true motive or ultimate purpose. The classic metaphor is a horizon; one can try to reach it but will never actually do so because it is always in the distance. Defining the object means understanding what is worked on and how as well as the long-term why (Kaptelinin, 2005); in layman's terms, this can be explained as a vision or the goal towards which collectives strive. Objects can be identified by the statements and actions of the participants of an activity (Spinuzzi, 2011). The difficulty experienced in identifying the object depends on its different manifestations for participants who represent different positions and perspectives (Vetoshkina et al., 2017) and have individual histories (Engeström & Sannino, 2021). Each activity system has its own object (Leont'ev, 1977; 1978). Multiple objects indicate multiple activity systems (Karanasios, 2018).

Engeström and Sannino (2021) argue for the necessity of distinguishing between the generalised and specific object. The generalised object is connected to societal meaning and is the object of a historically evolving activity system. The specific object is connected to personal sense-making and can appear differently to different subjects. For example, medical practitioners deal with health and illness but may describe the object of a work activity differently depending on individual history and the position in the division of labour in the activity system. Nurses have other work tasks than doctors and, thus, can describe the work activity differently. The fact that the participants in an activity have their own histories and personal motives makes them describe the purpose of their work differently, and no descriptions are invalid. This multivoicedness contributes to the difficulties in defining the object (Spinuzzi, 2011). Therefore, how the specific object is perceived by individual quality dialogue participants is an empirical question while the generalised object is related to societal needs and cultural-historical changes.

The object of activity is often obscure, and sometimes, what is intended to be a rule, or a tool becomes an unintended substitute object. In their study on the Postal Buddy, Engeström and Escalante (1996) describe a free-standing electronic kiosk at a postal office, how the computer that was intended to be a tool became an object of affection because of its cuteness. To the humans who used or

interacted with Postal Buddy, an affection grew that made them want to keep Postal Buddy, even though it did not any longer function as the tool it was intended for. Postal Buddy had become a substitute object instead of functioning as the tool it was intended to be.

An important principle within CHAT is historicity. Layers of history are ever present in human activity and activity systems. Activity systems and their objects emerge, are shaped and are transformed over long periods of time. They are in constant movement. The remnants of historically earlier forms of an activity can be both constraining and resourceful. To understand change and human development in any given context, the analysis needs to apply a historical perspective that enables an examination of different layers of history. The local history needs to be studied as well as the global and theoretical ideas that have shaped the activity. When we try to encompass the process of development, we study something in movement, from the time it appears and through all its changes and transformations (cf. Sannino & Engeström, 2018; Scribner, 1985; Vygotsky, 1997).

The object is never static but in constant movement. When the object is qualitatively transformed or expanded, the activity changes as well. The present-day actions within an activity are shaped and influenced by inner and outer influencing factors and systemic contradictions, which is why Sannino and Engeström (2018) and Scribner (1985) argue that one should never try to understand an activity without carrying out a cultural-historical analysis so that various historical perspectives can be identified. As shown in chapter two, the generalised object of the activity preschool serves several societal needs, for example, children's right to be educated, making it possible for parents to work and combating social inequalities. Although all aspects of the generalised object have been relevant ever since preschools first were established at the beginning of the twentieth century, the focus has shifted over time. The current potentials and problems of preschool can only be understood by considering its history.

In the present thesis, systematic quality work is considered an activity that has been imposed on the local education organisations by the state, which is a rule-producing activity system. In the current thesis, quality dialogues can be called a work activity, just like doctor–patient consultations are a work activity in healthcare (Engeström, 2018). Systematic quality work has developed over time, is regulated in policy (SFS 2010:800; Lpfö18; SNAE, 2015), has become a time-consuming practice for professionals and managers in local education administrations and is coordinated locally, regionally, and nationally. The

interpretation that systematic quality work can be considered as an activity is supported by Dahler-Larsen (2019), who argues that schools used to be providers of education but are now regarded as the providers of quality and that quality in and of itself has become a matter of socio-political importance. According to Dahler-Larsen, the control of quality has become ‘a problematic industry itself’ (p. 36). Quality can be seen as an organisational recipe (p. 73), and organisations dealing with quality have organised themselves as self-referential systems (p. 39). Quality should be studied as a social phenomenon in need of organisational coordination and a special kind of knowledge.

Engeström (1987), who represents activity theory’s third generation, developed a visual conceptualisation of Leont’ev’s concept of activity. In Engeström’s model, activities are understood as collective and being carried out by the community. Figure 1 shows the triangular model that illustrates how the subject interacts socially in the activity system, where several elements, or nodes, relate to each other.

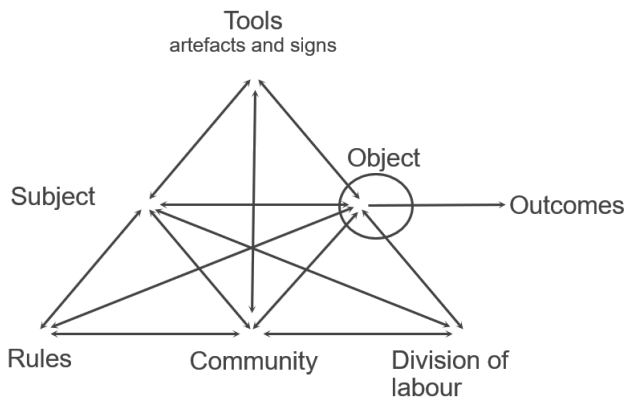


Figure 1. The activity system

(cf. Engeström, 2001)

The upper part of the model builds on the first generation, which focuses on the interaction between the subject, the object, and the tools, that is, the mediating artefacts. The various forms of documentation used in systematic quality work in general and specifically in the quality dialogue are understood as artefacts intended to mediate the subject’s strive towards the object, which subsequently results in outcome. The basis of the triangle consists of three elements: rules, community, and division of labour. The rules can be implicit or explicit norms and values or conventions and agreements that people constitute and that are constituted by

while engaging in the activity. In the present study, the quality dialogue is understood and analysed as a work activity that is framed by a set of rules and guidelines regarding the conduct of the dialogue, who participates, how the documentation is to be handled and so forth.

The community is made up of individuals or groups whom the subject interprets himself to be sharing the object with. Actors in the same community share knowledge, interests, stakes, and goals with the subject and partake in the shaping of the activity. This does not necessarily mean they have the same tasks. Those selected for participation in the dialogues represent a community of others working in the preschool administration — both at preschool units and the authoritative level — who share the same object.

The division of labour node has a horizontal and vertical dimension, where the horizontal may refer to the distribution of tasks in the dialogue (e.g., who contributes what), while the vertical refers to power relations between the participants (e.g., who sets and drives the agenda). The division of labour can be a mediating factor between object and community because the actors have different tasks and roles in the activity. All elements of the activity system relate to and affect each other (Engeström, 1987).

The third generation of activity theory is not limited to one activity system as a unit of analysis but rather as a minimum of two interacting activity systems with a shared or partly shared object (Engeström, 2001; Engeström & Sannino, 2021; Kaptelinin 2005). This opens for analysis of work activities where one group of participants is subject in one activity system while another group of participants is put in the position of the subject in another activity system, as shown in Figure 2.

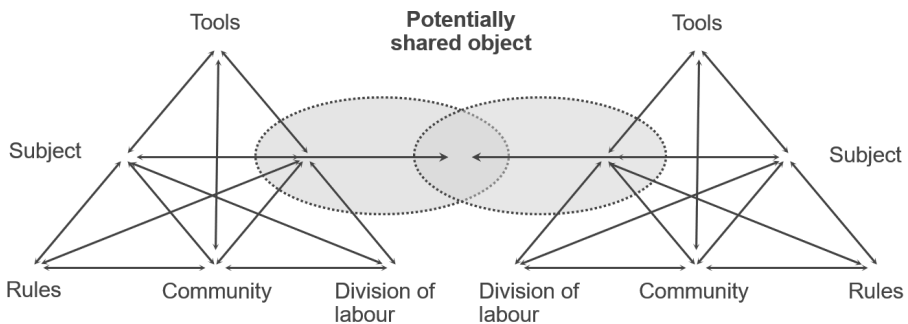


Figure 2. Two interacting activity systems with a potentially shared object

(Engeström, 2001)

The subjects in the two interacting activity systems can have different motives that are directed at the shared, or partially shared, object (Engeström, 2001, 2018). At schools and preschools, both teachers' and managers' shared object is to provide an education of a high quality. However, the raw material that the subjects work on differ. Therefore, teachers' specific object could be described as their own teaching, while managers' specific object could be coordination and the provision of prerequisites such as schedule, organisation, and salary. Spinuzzi (2011) describes how a network of activity systems can share not only the object but other components of the activity system, too. One example could be policy provided by policymakers, which could function as a tool for some activity systems but as a rule for others.

Contradictions

A foundational concept within CHAT is that of contradictions. Contradictions constitute the driving force for organisational change and development in activity systems. Contradictions are systemic and, therefore, not the same as conflicts or problems that can be resolved at action level (Engeström, 2001). In CHAT, contradiction is a theoretical and philosophical concept that reminds us of the dialectical nature of activities (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, 2011). As the arrows in the triangular illustration of an activity system (Figure 1 and 2) indicate, there are interdependent relationships between the nodes in the activity system. Broken arrows in or between the triangles are used to signal the identified contradictions.

When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside, such as a demand for a new way of working, it often leads to resistance, which could be a sign of systemic contradictions between nodes in the system when the new element collides with, for instance, the mediating artefacts or rules in the existing system (Hirsh & Segolsson, 2019). Contradictions within an activity system hold the potential for development. When artefacts, rules or the division of labour do not serve the object purposefully, new solutions need to be developed. The identified contradictions can thus form stimulus for transformative change and expanded learning within the collective practice (Colasante, 2024). Contradictions are rarely resolved by simply combining old and new solutions. Engeström and Sannino (2011) claim that systemic contradictions only can be resolved by working out a 'qualitative new thirdness', that is, a way of organising and working that is qualitatively different from a mere combination or compromise between old and new.

Engeström and Sannino (2011) explain that contradictions cannot be observed or accessed directly but manifest themselves in discourse (through articulations) and actions as historically emergent tensions within and between activity systems. They suggest that contradictions can be analysed as primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary. The primary contradiction resides within a node of the activity system and reflects the tension between use value and exchange value. Secondary contradictions may emerge between two or more nodes within the activity system, for instance, when a new artefact is introduced that affects the division of labour. A secondary contradiction may also emerge when, for example, something that is intended as a tool is instead regarded as a rule. In a quality dialogue, the procedural rules for conversation can mediate, maintain, and redirect the course of the discussion, but if they constrain the conversation, they might instead be understood as rules (Engeström, 1999).

The very presence of an artefact in an activity system does not automatically determine how it is used and perceived by subjects (Engeström, 1990), and furthermore, what is perceived as a mediating artefact by some or in some respects may be perceived as a rule by others or in other respects. For instance, medical records in health care can be conceived of as a bureaucratic rule rather than an artefact because they represent administrative demands from above. When this happens, the tool character is obscured (Engeström, 1990). Tertiary contradictions appear when an activity system is reshaped and there are newly established modes of activity that collide with the remnants of the old ones. Quaternary contradictions emerge in the relationship between interacting activity systems (Engeström & Sannino, 2011, 2018). Such a contradiction could arise when the state or central administration of a municipality pose new demands on schools and preschools. From a CHAT perspective, this could be characterised as a contradiction between the school as one activity system and the state or municipality as a rule-producing or tool-producing activity system.

Relational Agency

Through the entire research process, I have carried the idea that collective agency can be promoted through quality dialogues. The concept of agency could be addressed in various ways within CHAT. The findings will be discussed in relation to Edwards' (2011, 2017) conceptual framework relational agency, which was introduced to widen the understanding of object-oriented collaboration, where expertise is distributed across practices and joint interpretation and responding to

complex problems is central. Edwards has defined relational agency as ‘the capacity of aligning one’s own thoughts and actions to those of others to interpret problems and respond to those interpretations’ (2011). Edwards’ framework consists of a trio of analytical concepts: relational agency, relational expertise, and common knowledge. First, relational agency entails a capacity for working with others to strengthen purposive responses to complex problems. It is a question of recognising what matters to others and why it matters. This idea agrees with the purpose of evaluation, which is to be useful for those the evaluation work is done by and matters to (Bastøe, 2024). It could be assumed that quality dialogues constitute the setting for discussing what matters and why it matters.

Second, relational expertise means knowing how to know who can help, designing settings for knowledge work and having the capacity of working together with others on complex problems. It is important to recognise who has the expertise that is needed and that one’s own expertise is made explicit. In educational administrations, expertise is distributed among several actors, and quality dialogues could constitute the very setting where participants can share their knowledge to create a collective asset.

Third, common knowledge can be built in settings where practices intersect. Common knowledge is not a matter of transferring knowledge but rather a matter of gaining enough insights into motives, purposes, and practices so that collaboration and joint decision-making are enabled. Edwards (2017) concludes that common knowledge is created over time in settings of intersecting practices, where similar long-term goals are recognised, professional values and motives are revealed in discussions and the values and motives of others are listened to, recognised, and engaged with. When created, common knowledge can function as a means to mediate responsive professional action. An assumption would be that subjects from different interacting activity systems, for instance, from the LEA and from school units, use quality dialogues as settings for the creation of common knowledge that can function as double stimulation to mediate responsive action on a shared problem.

Critique Against Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

CHAT has proven useful for analysing the developmental processes of collective work and learning in, for example, networks. However, CHAT has also been criticised for not critically dealing with power relations (Blackler, 2011). Augustsson (2020) argues against this critique by pointing out that many levels of

power are embedded in educational organisations, from political policymaking and decision-making to internal struggles in teachers' work teams. Additionally, Augustsson continues, it is possible for contradictions in activity systems to bring power relations and social tensions to the surface. Several studies on this matter have been published, showing how people's collective endeavours towards a shared purpose are influenced by systemic contradictions in and between activity systems (cf. Botha, 2017; Engeström, 2001, 2018; Engeström & Sannino, 2018; Hirsh & Segolsson, 2019; Nuttall, et al., 2024).

Postholm (2015) and Blunden (2010) have criticised the activity system for being too complex to grasp. Furthermore, Spinuzzi (2011) argues that the network of interacting activity systems with a shared object, as proposed by Engeström (2001), is so complex that it becomes a too risky endeavour to handle empirically. Augustsson (2020) agrees but also points out that the work of teachers is entangled in several layers and levels of society. All those who are involved in the activity — teachers, principals, parents, policymakers, pupils and so forth — can be part of the interconnected activity systems that influence the transformation of the activities.

The Construct of Procedural Display

To further understand the concept of culture, I turn to Bloome et al. (1989) and Bloome (1990), who describe culture as an interactionally constructed and publicly held system of meanings. The cultural meaning of a specific behaviour is derived from the local system of meanings publicly constructed by people interacting with each other in the context in which the behaviour is embedded. The system of meanings constructed in a quality dialogue likely reflects, at least partially, one or more of a society's basic functional needs, for instance, the provision of high-quality teaching and care for preschool children. What happens in a quality dialogue may not necessarily address this basic functional need, even though it is interpreted as such by those involved and by the community. What is occurring in an activity might be masked. Bloome et al. (1989) and Bloome (1990) have introduced 'procedural display' as a construct that can be used to explain such cultural behaviours that often remain unexamined and are taken for granted. The notion of procedural display has predominately been used in educational studies, in particular classroom studies (cf. Atkinson & Delamont, 1990; Bloome et al., 1989; Iannacci, 2006; Hirsh, 2014) but is relevant for discussing the findings of the present study because quality and quality work have become, in many respects, a

platform for governance mostly entailing procedural control (cf. Bornemark, 2018; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Nytell, 2006).

When procedural display takes place, it could be described as participants displaying to each other sets of interactional and content-related procedures that they themselves count as ‘doing’ something. In this case, the enactment is not necessarily related to the intended object of the activity but is instead related to the set of cultural meanings and values held by the local education community. It should be noted that procedural display is not the same as mock participation, which has more of a conscious pretending element to it. Procedural display does not necessarily involve conscious pretence on the part of the participants. Procedural display does not mean that what is going on is meaningless; instead, what is worked on can result in something of value other than what the dialogue intentionally aims for (Bloome, 1990). The construct of procedural display could enrich an analysis that shows the existence of substitute objects that have replaced the intended object (Engeström & Escalante, 1996).

Chapter 5 Methods

To achieve the aim of the present thesis, the empirical data were sampled in the context of a local education administration responsible for municipal preschools or, as it is often referred to in the studied context, a municipal preschool administration. The analysed data were sampled from different hierarchical levels of the administration, that is, from quality dialogues at the preschool units, quality dialogues at the intersection between preschool units and the authoritative level and quality dialogues at the authoritative level. All the empirical data were collected in the school year of 2019–2020. This chapter describes the empirical selection, data collection, analysis procedures and considerations of the study.

Selection of the Sample

The studied administration is responsible for municipal preschool education in one of Sweden's larger cities. This kind of strategic selection (cf. Esaiasson et al., 2017) means the studied administration cannot be said as being representative of all education administrations in Sweden. It is an example of real people in real contexts, hence unfolding the complex and dynamic interactions of events, human relationships, and other factors (Cohen et al., 2018).

Because I had worked in the selected administration for many years, easy access could easily have been the only reason for this empirical selection. However, it was important for me to consider studying quality dialogues in other municipalities because I realised my own preconceptions could affect my objectivity. In the end, several reasons made me choose this municipal administration as the case study. First, I knew that the officials often described dialogue as a valuable tool permeating the administration's work. Those descriptions were not only made at different meetings within the administration but also at, for instance, conferences with other municipalities. Second, the managers often referred to quality dialogues being an important tool for analysis because it is important to trust professional judgements. The top managers described themselves as being influenced by the Trust Commission (Bringselius, 2023; SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43). Third, quality dialogues have evolved at and between different levels of the organisation and

undergone major transformations over a period of several years. The idea of dialogue as a necessary tool within local systematic quality work has remained a constant, even though there have been major organisational changes over the years. This meant it would be possible to gain knowledge of what improvements had been made and what had caused them. Fourth, the administration was also selected because of its size and complex organisation. Each level of the vertical hierarchy has several professions of various educational and occupational backgrounds with separate and shared responsibilities, which is why quality dialogues can be described as settings for multiprofessional dialogue. The organisation is illustrated in Figure 3, as it was described in municipal documents and interviews.

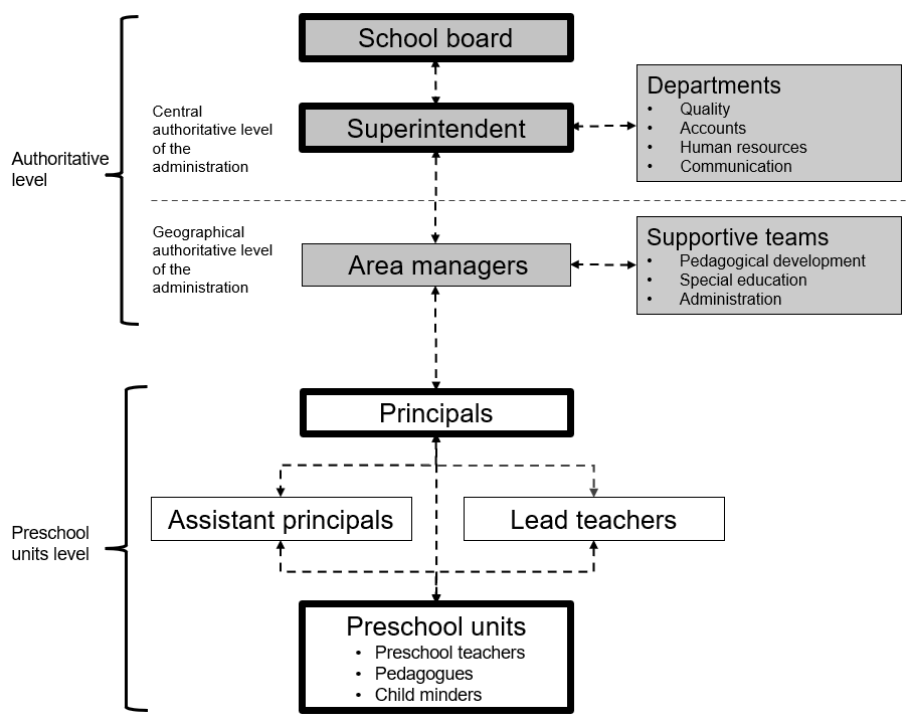


Figure 3. The authoritative levels and preschool unit level in the studied administration.

The coloured squares in figure 3 shows the authoritative level — made up of both a central part and a geographical area part — and the white squares show the preschool unit level of the administration. Squares with a highlighted border show roles (school board, superintendent, principals, and teaching staff at the preschool

units) that have responsibilities according to the curriculum (Lpfö18) and the Education Act (SFS 2010:800), while the other squares show roles (area managers, departments and supportive teams, assistant principals, and lead teachers) that have been created within the municipality. All parts, or levels, of the organisation have several professionals in various positions who engage in interprofessional dialogues. In the following, I first present the administration's authoritative level and then describe the participating preschool units as they are shown in figure 3.

The Authoritative Levels of the Administration

Formally, the municipal council holds the responsibility for all municipal education. Responsibilities have been delegated to three school boards. The School Board of preschools is responsible for all municipal preschools for children aged 1–5 years old. The school board is made up of politicians who hold political assignments alongside their ordinary occupations. The political decisions made by the school board are executed by a local education administration, which also organises the municipal preschools. The highest-ranking official of the administration is the director, who additionally bears the title of superintendent which is proposed in the Education Act (SFS 2010:800). As the highest-ranking official and manager of the administration, the superintendent is accountable to the school board.

It was shown in Figure 3 that the central administration is divided into four departments that support several levels of the administration, such as the school board, the superintendent, the geographical areas, and the principals. The four departments are quality, accounts, human resources, and communication. The task of executing the school board's responsibilities regarding the systematic quality work belongs to the department of quality. The heads of each department make up the central administration together with the area managers of the five geographical areas in which all preschools are organised.

Because the studied administration is large, its preschool units are divided into five geographical areas. The areas' main purpose is to organise and support principals and their preschools. Each geographical area is led by an area manager, who is the immediate manager of a group of 10 to 12 principals. Area managers are described as the 'superintendent's representatives'. In each geographical area, there are also three teams that support the area manager as well as the principals and their management groups: one administrative team, one pedagogical

development team and one team of special education teachers and psychologists. Each team is led by a team leader, whose immediate manager is the area manager.

The Preschool Units

There are 10 to 12 principals in each geographical area, and each principal has a preschool area consisting of two to six preschools, depending on the preschool unit's size. The principal is supported by two or three assistant principals, who are the managers of the teaching staff (preschool teachers, pedagogues, and child minders), and two or three lead teachers, who support the preschool's pedagogical development.

According to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and the national curriculum (Lpfö18), preschool teachers are responsible for teaching, yet the education is designed by multiprofessional work teams consisting of what I have chosen to call the 'teaching staff' for simplicity reasons. Several professions can be represented in the teaching staff, for example, preschool teachers, child minders and pedagogues. The latter is a term used in the studied municipality and is applied to those who have studied pedagogy at the university level for at least two years but are not licensed preschool teachers. It is not an official and nationally agreed upon title. When I mention the professions separately, there is a point of making distinctions between them. Preschool teachers have an academic education and are licensed to teach at preschools. Child minders do not have an academic education.

When selecting preschools for the study, consideration was made regarding several aspects. First, because the entire administration was studied, I wanted all geographical administrative areas to participate with at least one preschool, except for geographical area 5 because of ethical and validity considerations related to my own background as a principal. Second, principals whom I had close collegial relations within areas 1–4 could not be considered because of ethical reasons. Third, potential preschools were selected with the help of the area managers' group so that the preschools would represent a variety of characteristics (appendix 2), meaning the participating preschools would represent a strong variety in the municipality. After having selected possible candidates for the study, the principals were asked to participate together with their staff, and they all agreed.

Five preschool units participated in the present study. Figure 4 is an organisational plan which shows how the five studied preschools are organised in preschool areas of 3–6 preschool units led by a principal and several assistant

principals and lead teachers. The five preschool areas belong to four geographical areas led by area managers who in turn are led by the superintendent.

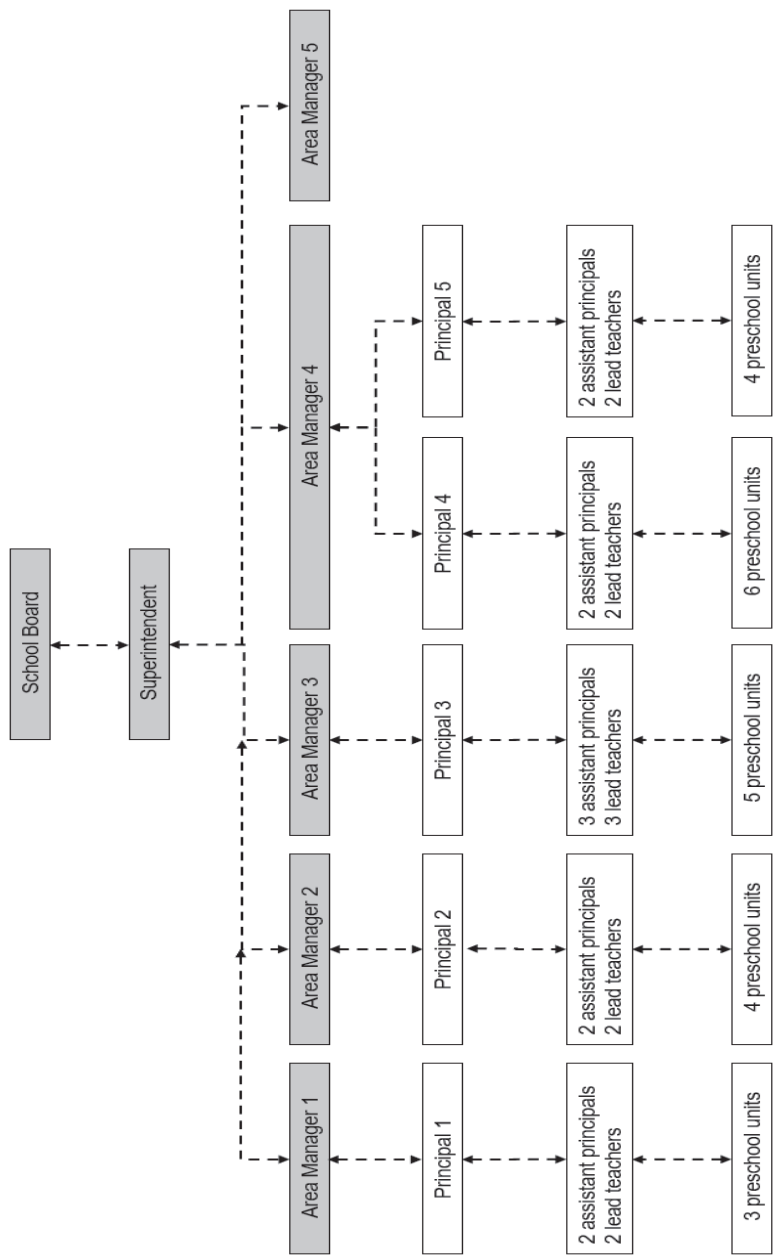


Figure 4. Organisational plan of the studied geographical areas and preschool units

Data Collection

Initiating contact with the superintendent, the presiding members of the school board, area managers, principals and local management groups took place in the spring of 2019. The intention of these first contacts was to inform about the study and obtain consent as well as to gain a deeper understanding of which quality dialogues could come in question for observations. The empirical data were then collected in the school year of 2019–2020. The study required a variety of qualitative approaches. Data came from five sources (Table 1).

Table 1. Description of the empirical data

Types of data	Primary or secondary data	Research questions	Commentary
Municipal documents describing the quality dialogues	Primary data	1	
Interviews	Primary data	1 + 2	
Observation guides	Secondary data	1	Data used to elicit interviews
Participant individual reflections	Secondary data	1 + 2	Data used to elicit interviews
Documents used as artefacts during quality dialogues	Secondary data	1 + 2	
Field notes	Secondary data	2	Data used to elicit interviews

Interviews and municipal documents that describe systematic quality work in general and quality dialogues specifically have served as the primary data. Municipal documents used during dialogues, such as quality reports and statistical reports, were also collected and have served as secondary data. Observation guides, participants individual written reflections and researcher’s field notes were used to elicit interviews and have served as secondary data.

Municipal Documents

In CHAT, an assumption is that activities develop through an extensive period, which is why an activity theoretical study should include an analysis of the origins and cultural-historical developments of activities. Therefore, I started by asking officials at the Quality Department and participants who had been working in the municipality for a long time for municipal documents, both historical and current, that describe organisational routines for the administration’s systematic quality

work in general and quality dialogues specifically. Those documents assumed to be most important for the study had been produced in the years 2012–2013 and 2019–2020 (Appendix 7). The documentation from 2012–2013 was a project report of when the model for systematic quality work was developed in the studied municipality. An especially important document from June 2019 was a document that, in the results chapter, is called ‘the novel guidelines’, describing the different quality dialogue types in the studied year.

The intention of starting with municipal documents was not only to analyse the origin and historical development of quality dialogues but also to understand how the systematic quality work was organised locally and what quality dialogues could be questioned for the empirical data collection. The documents that describe the quality dialogues in the studied year allowed me to identify formal dialogue meetings about educational quality at and between four levels of the vertical hierarchy throughout the school year. The letters A/B/C/D are frequently used in the presentation of the findings to identify which type of meeting is described. The four types of quality dialogues are illustrated in appendix 6 and described here in table 2.

Table 2. Description of the four types of dialogues

Types of meetings	Participating organisational affiliation	Location	Frequency	Data sampled
Type A	Preschool units (staff members and managers)	At the preschools	Various: 2–6 times a year	Data from quality dialogues at three preschools
Type B	Preschool units and LEA at the geographical administration plus quality analysts from the central administration	At the preschools	Annually in September	Data sampled at five quality dialogues in four geographical areas
Type C	LEA at the geographical administration and LEA at the central administration	At the central administrative headquarters	Annually in October	Data sampled at one quality dialogue
Type D	LEA at the geographical administration and LEA at the central administration and presiding members of the school board	At the central administrative headquarters	Annually in November	Data sampled at one quality dialogue

Type A dialogue meetings take place at preschool units between members of the preschool management group and staff members at various times of the year. Type

B dialogue meetings take place at the intersection of the authoritative level and the unit level once a year. Types C and D take place at the authoritative level once a year. For practical reasons, it became important that, during the autumn of 2019, the focus would only be on quality dialogues in the intersection between preschool units and the authoritative level (type B) and quality dialogues at the authoritative level (types C and D).

Prestudy

The very first observation that I made can be described as a prestudy. It was conducted in geographical area 5 with the sole purpose of testing and refining the observation guide, individual written reflection guide and interview guide. Afterwards, a few necessary refinements could be made. An agreement was made with three of the participants (area manager, quality analyst and team leader) of the prestudy that I could use general sayings in the interviews as data but sayings about the specific preschool or quality dialogue would be excluded. It turned out to be a very wise decision to make that agreement because many of their general and historical descriptions of quality work, quality dialogues, and the organisation were valuable to the analysis.

Observations

Five dialogues of type B were observed. Before the quality dialogue started, I introduced myself to everyone, repeated the purpose of the study and double-checked that everyone had signed a consent form (Appendix 1) and were still willing to participate. The quality dialogues were audio recorded and later transcribed. During the observation, I used a semistructured observation guide (Cohen et al., 2011, 2018) to make my own notes during the observations (Appendix 3). In addition to noting, for example, who sat where, my attention was directed at the nodes of the activity system. How they used physical artefacts like quality reports, books or pictures were noted in the observation guides. Gestures at certain points in time might be used as a tool. Eye contact in relation to something said, use of body language and facial expressions might indicate rules, tools or division of labour. All those notes were made in relation to either time or something said so that I later would be able to connect what had been said with what happened in the room at certain points in time. If I thought about following up something later in the interviews, I made a note of that as well. It was a very intense task for me to manage to make notes of that many things happening in a

room full of people. It is possible that I have missed many gestures, eye contact and other forms of interaction, but in the end, I did manage to make notes of many things thanks to my ability to write fast and without looking at the keyboard or paper too many times. My previous experiences of working as a teacher at secondary school for many years also gave me plenty of experience in noticing small signals at all corners of a classroom.

I also made a few field notes of what happened before and after the quality dialogues, for instance, if there was a lot of informal talk or silence, if they had prepared the room or not, if the teachers showed signs of being well prepared or anxious, if they needed to rush off to their classes or could stay for some informal chatting afterwards, if teachers and area managers interacted once the formal dialogue meeting was over and so forth. The same procedure was repeated for quality dialogues C and D.

Observations of the preschool units' quality dialogues (type A) started in December 2019 and lasted throughout the spring semester of 2020. Several quality dialogues at three preschool units (1, 3 and 4) were observed following the procedures that I had used for observations during the autumn. Preschools 2 and 5 did not arrange quality dialogues at the time. Instead, they had arrangements where the working teams wrote quality reports together. I observed those meetings but decided to not include them in the analysis. The meetings cannot be defined as quality dialogues because the focus was on writing and the working teams worked on their own, with management only checking in for a few minutes to see that if they needed any help.

Individual Written Reflections

On the same day as quality dialogue types B-C-D had taken place, all the participants were asked to write an individual reflection in a template that I had created with questions inspired by CHAT (Appendix 4) with bearing on the nodes in an activity system; that is, questions were directed at the object, tools, community, division of labour and rules. The template had large, empty squares on 7 pages which could be filled in, at the respondents' preference either by hand or on the computer. At the top of each page was a sentence that explained the theme of the page. Under that sentence were suggested questions which the respondents could answer as many as they wanted. Respondents were asked to first write their reflections on page 1 before looking at the other pages because the first page focused on the respondents' greatest and most important impressions

from the meeting. That gave them a possibility to write whatever was in their minds without any direction from me. Then followed six more pages which focused on the respondents' expectations, the arrangement/design of the meeting, quality aspects discussed during the meeting, tensions and challenges, and everyone's participation. The respondents were instructed to not feel obligated to answer all questions, not even write on each page, but rather to start on the theme that appealed them most and write as much as they could and wanted to. The final page encouraged the respondents to again write their reflections without guidance from me, because the questions asked was if they had anything else to tell.

All participants had exactly 60 minutes for the individual reflections. Most participants chose to stay in the same room and write down their reflections. They stayed silently in the same room even if they were finished writing before the hour had expired. Some participants, mostly top managers, chose to go back to their offices and return their written reflections to me later the same day or the following day.

Individual reflections were not written after type A quality dialogues for several reasons. I had found the individual reflections from teaching staff after type B dialogues to have rather short descriptions. I could also spend more time at the preschool units during the spring of 2020 and come back several times, which allowed for informal talks with participants during breaks, in the corridors or staff rooms and when walking to the bus or car at the end of the day (cf. Cohen et al., 2007, p. 260). I made a few notes of participants' reactions during such informal talks in my field notes if they corresponded with what had been said in formal interviews with other participants. For ethical reasons, it should be noted that I did not write the names of individuals in my field notes. I had also informed participants that I would make field notes before they consented, both orally and in the consent letter, and I repeated to them on each occasion what kind of field notes I was making.

Interviews

All interviews were conducted after the observed meetings. How long after depended on how fully booked I and each participant was. A full account on the dates for observations and interviews can be found in Appendix 7. The general interview guide consisted of several activity-theoretically inspired questions, related to the nodes of an activity system. Questions were thematically arranged which contributed to an open semistructured interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009),

with room for follow-up questions (Appendix 5). The interview guide was ambitious, and many respondents had much to say. The fact that the interviews were semistructured allowed for flexibility depending on the respondents. Not all questions were necessarily asked in each interview, but all themes were covered. For those respondents who had worked a long time in the studied municipality, questions focusing on the historical developments were allowed to take a lot of time during the interviews.

Interviews lasted on an average for 50 minutes up to 1.5 hours, depending on who was interviewed. The teaching staff had shorter interviews while principals and other managers had longer interviews because they had worked for a long time in the municipality and could contribute with more historical accounts.

Before the interviews, I read the individual written reflections and selected quotes that could complement the interview guide. The selected quotes from the participants' own reflections and examples from the observation guides were used to elicit the interviews; as stimulated recall (Haglund, 2003; Johnson & Weller, 2001; Meade & McMeniman, 1992). This meant that the interviews could refer to participants spontaneous reactions after the quality dialogues as described in the individual written reflections as well as the participants' more thought trough reflections several weeks after the quality dialogues.

As mentioned before, individual written reflections were not made after quality dialogues type A in the spring of 2020. Instead, examples from field notes on the participants' immediate reactions were used to elicit interviews. Furthermore, after quality dialogues type A, individual interviews were replaced by group interviews because I wanted to test if a collective conversation in which the participants interacted with each other could add something. A group discussion could have the potential of focusing on the activity instead of individuals' opinions, and the respondents were able to create meaning and supplement each other's descriptions (Beitin, 2012). All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed.

In Table 3, the interviewed participants are presented. The participants' organisational affiliation and professions are presented in columns one and two. This is followed by a presentation of how professions change positions, depending on which quality dialogue they attend, assuming the position of either superiors or subordinates. The last column is a presentation of how many respondents have been interviewed from each profession.

Table 3. Participants

Organisational belonging	Professions	Position in dialogues		Number of respondents
		Superior	Subordinate	
Preschool units: Preschool staff members	Preschool teacher		A and B	8
	Child minder and pedagogue		A and B	6
	Preschool chef		B	1
Preschool units: Local management group	Principal	A	B	9
	Assistant principal	A	B	7
	Lead teacher	A	B	6
LEA at the geographical administration	Area manager	B	C and D	5
	Team leader of supporting team	B		7
LEA at the central administration	Quality analyst at the central Quality Department	B		5
	Head of Quality Department	C	D	1
	Superintendent	C	D	1
	Official at the Quality Department			4
School board	Presiding members	D		3

It should be noted that individuals who participated in more than one type of dialogue were interviewed after each type of quality dialogue, for example, area managers who were interviewed three times (after quality dialogue types B, C and D). It should also be noted that four additional respondents working as officials at the Quality Department were interviewed. They did not participate in quality dialogues but were interviewed because they could contribute with added perspectives, not least the historical development.

Processing and Analysing the Data

Processing and analysing the data were carried out in several steps with the help of several software programmes such as NVivo, Excel and Word. I choose the word steps here instead of phases because some steps have been conducted parallelly. The first step was an analysis of the municipal documents that describe

the systematic quality work in general and quality dialogues specifically. The analysis focused on the first research question on the purpose of the quality dialogues. First, the search function was used to search for Swedish words that can be related to purpose, for example, purpose, goal, intention, ambition, direction, sense, and function. Then, the documents were read thoroughly in search of descriptions of how the quality dialogues were arranged, what was intended to happen, how work was divided among participants and what documents, or other tools could be used to promote dialogue. This was done to create an understanding of how different nodes of the activity system serve the object of the activity (Engeström, 1987).

The second step was an analysis of the observed dialogues. I started by reading through the observation guides. I also listened through the audio recordings of the observed quality dialogues and made additional notes. Then, I analysed the individual reflections that the participants had written on the same day as — or the day after — each quality dialogue. This step was guided by the research questions and the different nodes of the activity system (Engeström, 1987) with the aim of scanning for patterns, tensions, discursive manifestations of contradictions and examples that could be useful for eliciting the interviews.

The third step of the analysis consisted of repeated listening, transcription, reading of transcripts, and note-taking of the interviews and of the audio recorded quality dialogues. This step of the analysis was conducted parallel with the following steps of the analysis and served as a means of scanning statements and actions relating to the aim and research questions. I searched for patterns, tensions, discursive manifestations of contradictions and relationships between different nodes in the activity system (Engeström, 1987).

Activity systems are in constant movement, and a cultural-historical analysis entails a search for the activity's origins and major transformational shifts. This is why the fourth step of the analysis entailed a cultural-historical analysis of the development of local quality dialogues in the studied municipality. Through descriptions in the municipal documents and historical descriptions in interviews, a historical periodisation in the form of a timeline could be made. Because individuals' recollections are situational and seldom linear, it was not always easy to pin down descriptions in the right period, especially not recollections prior to 2010. Several versions of the timeline were tested before I finally decided on a timeline that could describe how and when quality dialogues first emerged and their major qualitative transformations in relation to changes in national policy and in the municipal organisation as well as traces of possible historical contradictions.

Identifying the expansion of the object and historical contradictions that could have contributed to the major transformations of the quality dialogues was the focus in the cultural-historical analysis. Examples of these contradictions could, for instance, be between use value and exchange value or when intended tools no longer mediated an expanded object or because they had become rules.

After having explored the local history of the quality dialogues, an analysis process began where I investigated the quality dialogues as they were conducted in 2019–2020. The fifth step of the analysis was to make a description of how each quality dialogue was arranged and how the purpose of each quality dialogue was perceived by the participants. Statements in the interviews and actions described in the observation guides and field notes were analysed. This analysis was made in an extensive cross-case matrix (Miles et al., 2014), where I used headlines such as time, place, participants, division of labour, artefact use, rules, relationship building actions and perceptions of purpose and outcomes.

To further deepen the understanding of how the participants' modes of action aligned with the intended purpose, an analysis of the possible systemic contradictions was carried out. The sixth step of the analysis focused on tool-mediation and the coherence between different nodes of the activity system. The seventh step of the analysis was to further identify discursive manifestations of contradictions in the interviews. The eighth step of the analysis was to analyse contradictions as primary, secondary, and tertiary contradictions. The ninth step of the analysis entailed a search for cultural-historical explanations for the identified manifestations of contradictions.

After all these analytical steps, some issues remained to be described and explained. The tenth step entailed complementing the analysis with figures representing the identified objects, interconnected activity systems and their contradictions in Engeström's (1987, 2001) triangular model of the activity system(s). The eleventh step of the analysis was to complement the analysis with analytical concepts such as substitute objects (Engeström & Escalante, 1996), procedural display (Bloome, 1989; Bloome et al., 1990) and relational agency (Edwards, 2011, 2017). As the twelfth step, I finalised the analysis by including a four-field matrix in the results chapter's concluding summary. The matrix was used to display the analysis of each studied quality dialogue in relation to the tension of support versus control as a foundational inner contradiction (Cole & Matsumiya, 2007, 2008).

Considerations of the Study

Good research quality relies on several aspects, and considerations of the study are made throughout the research process, from planning the study and its design to presenting the findings. This section provides information on ethical considerations that have been made, self-reflections on my role as a researcher and reflections on the credibility of the study.

Ethical Considerations

For the protection of the individual, the principles of research ethics provided by the Swedish Research Council (2017) were followed. All participants were given information about the planned study, its purpose, the research object and methods of data collection before being asked to participate and sign written consent forms (Appendix 1). Because audio recordings constitute the handling of personal data, written consent forms were also designed according to the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016/679). In addition, I have informed the respondents that the data will be used only for research purposes, and it will be documented, sorted, and archived according to the procedures of the Faculty of Education (Swedish Research Council, 2017).

There was no need to receive approval according to the act concerning the ethical review of research involving humans (SFS 2003:460) because children were not included in the study and no sensitive personal data were sampled. When talking with respondents prior to the dialogue meetings, they described the discussions to have an overall focus on quality and that there would be no focus on individual children. Just in case, I did ask the participants to be careful about not mentioning individual children's names or showing me any pictures of children during the dialogue meetings, should the urge to do so arise.

As for confidentiality, I informed the participants that the collected data will be used in a study on quality dialogues. In the transcripts, I have protected the identities of individuals by using code keys and depersonalising answers. I have not written the name of the municipality in the thesis. However, because Sweden is a small country, it will be rather easy to figure this out anyway. Therefore, the participants were informed both orally and in writing that the municipality could be known.

Role of the Researcher

While working on the thesis, I held a jointly funded doctoral student position, which means the third-cycle courses and study programmes were provided by the university, at the same time as I was employed at the studied administration. The situation could perhaps be compared with what the Swedish Research Council (2017) describes as interaction with a funding or commissioning body. The council advises researchers to be open about the situation and take a clear stand about their roles as researchers and not compromise with any hidden agendas. The current thesis can also be described as an insider research study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Fleming, 2018) because the present study has been conducted on an organisation which I have been working in for many years and still do. Insider research raises issues of objectivity and potential bias. This section therefore contributes with transparency of how I have worked and reflected on my role as an insider researcher.

The fact that I have, for many years, worked as a principal, and also at times substituted as area manager for longer and shorter periods of time, in the studied administration has undoubtedly resulted in me having relations with principals, area managers and administrators within the administration. Having worked in the studied context gives me preunderstandings that meant I could easily understand many things and see patterns which would be near impossible for outsiders to comprehend. Knowledge about and experiences of a specific context can often favour the understanding of tacit knowledge, which is largely unarticulated and manifested in nuances, nods, gestures, silences, and sense of humour (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014). It was especially valuable to have a preunderstanding of the administration's history when I interviewed the participants about the development of the quality dialogues. Individuals' recollections are situational and seldom linear, so my preunderstandings made it easier to pin down descriptions in the right period. My preunderstandings were also especially helpful when the respondents in the interviews related to other professionals and managers in the administration. I knew whom they talked about and what they had been working before they got the position they currently had.

Because my preunderstandings of the organisation, culture and quality dialogues were based on my own perspectives, it initially became essential that neither the principals from my own geographical area nor other principals with whom I had close work relationships would be included in the study. However, in

the prestudy, it was acceptable to use one of the quality dialogue meetings in my old geographical area.

My own understanding about the administration facilitated the analysis, but I was very much aware of the fact that my knowledge about quality dialogues, the organisation and the culture originated from my personal perspective. Therefore, throughout the research process, it was essential for me to consciously distance myself from my own preconceptions so that I could approach the data as objectively as possible. The hermeneutic circle (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018), where preunderstandings affect understandings, inspired me to make notes on my previous experiences of participation in quality dialogue meetings before I started sampling the data. During the research process, I continued to write down my own reflections to separate them from the sampled data. During the interviews, I was especially aware of the risk that my preconceptions entailed. Therefore, I intentionally let the Dictaphone become an actor. During the interviews, I sometimes thought, 'Ok, I know this thanks to experience, but does the Dictaphone?' Often, this helped me see if I needed to ask a follow-up question.

At the initial phases of my third-cycle studies, I did have plans of taking on the role as an interactive researcher. If I had followed, for example, Sandberg and Wallo's (2013) descriptions of the interactive research process, both my own research process and the administration's development of the quality dialogues could have gained from each other. However, as the analysis phases intensified, it became clearer to me that demands for objectivity (Cohen et al., 2018; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018) in the research process put more pressure on me to distance myself from my own preconceptions. I simply needed to limit my engagement in discussions on the research process, systematic quality work and the municipal organisation so that I could approach the sampled data as a researcher, not as a practitioner.

My manager and I made an agreement that the work I conducted for the employer during my PhD years would be limited both in time and to tasks not directly related to the research. Most of the time, I mainly focused on developing the municipal organisation for preservice teachers. Having other tasks during the third-cycle studies helped me distance myself so that I could analyse the data as it were. Around the time of my final seminar, I felt comfortable returning to my employment as principal yet part-time and additionally led the municipal preparations for the future national programme for principals', teachers', and preschool teachers' professional development.

Giraud et al. (2019) discuss the challenges some researchers face, including feeling pressured by actors in the research setting to impact their data to conform to someone's interest. One could easily think that might be the case when conducting a study on an organisation with which one is familiar. I have, however, not experienced any such pressure, neither directly nor indirectly. Throughout the third-cycle studies, I have felt that my employer and colleagues have great respect for the research process.

Credibility

Research is a boundary-crossing cooperation between several actors and should be guided by principles such as credibility, sincerity, respect, and accountability (ALLEA, 2017). The credibility of a research study concerns issues such as validity and reliability. Validity is created through the research design and the researcher's utilisation of theory and methodology (Cohen et al., 2018; de Vaus, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). In qualitative studies, reliability concerns the dependability and auditability of the study (de Vaus, 2001; Miles et al., 2014). This chapter provides detailed descriptions of the considerations made throughout the research process, methods for data collection and procedures for processing and analysing data. The appendices provide all the templates I have used for data collection so that they can be audited and replicated by other researchers. The extent to which findings can be replicated by other researchers is referred to as reliability. The study's design can be replicated but the findings cannot because specific events happened in a specific context and time, much like with a case study (Eysi, 2016; Yin, 2018). Because of the detailed descriptions posed in this chapter and the templates included in the appendices, I argue that I have met the critique posed by Postholm (2015) that CHAT researchers often do not provide sufficient methodological detail.

Reliability also concerns the consistency and stability of the research process (Miles et al., 2014). A thesis is the result of a research process that lasts many years, and throughout the research process, this one has been an activity theoretical study. Activity theoretical concepts inspired the design of the interview guides and the template for the individual written reflection but formulated in everyday language. CHAT guided all steps of the processing and analysing of the data as well as the presentation of findings. There are, however, some major things that have changed during the research process. It is important to focus on and clarify research questions before developing a research design (de Vaus, 2001). At my

planning seminar, I had four activity-theoretically inspired research questions, and now, there are only two. I can, however, still see the initial ones in the two that are posed in the final manuscript. The initial four research questions had been formulated for an intended compilation thesis of four articles. Later in the research process, I decided to change to a monography that suits the theoretical framework and complexity of the studied organisation much better. The format of a monography has contributed to credibility because the results chapter provides thicker and more detailed descriptions than was possible in an article. One such example is the presentation of key findings on the local cultural-historical development of quality dialogues in the studied administration. CHAT is a theory that emphasises the historicity of activities (Sannino & Engeström, 2018; Scribner, 1985), which, in my attempt at writing an article, was not given much attention at all. Thanks to the format of a monography, validity has increased because the presentation of key findings on the cultural-historical development and major qualitative transformations of the quality dialogues could be elaborated on.

Data were sampled across a range of settings, and triangulation was used to strengthen the analysis and findings (Anderson et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2007; Miles et al., 2014). Triangulation strengthens the construct validity because many sources are used as evidence (Yin, 2018) and the internal validity of the study because it helps the researcher draw unambiguous conclusions from the findings (de Vaus, 2001). By combining observations, individual written reflections, interviews, field notes and document analysis, triangulation provided complementing perspectives. The individual written reflections provided an uninfluenced ‘here and now’ perspective, while the interviews provided retrospective meta-reflection. By using examples from observations and individual written reflections to elicit interviews, the respondents had a chance to further develop their initial reflections. Ellingson (2009), Richardson and St Pierre (2018) and Tracy (2010) favour the concept of ‘crystallisation’ over triangulation; they propose crystallisation as a central imaginary for validity because crystals are prisms that create different colours, patterns, and cast-off arrays in different directions. What we see depends on our angle, just as what we see in our research and write about is just what we can see from the perspective we have and the theoretical concepts we use. Their understanding of crystallisation aligns with the activity theoretical conceptualisation of the object, that is, how differently participants understand the long-term purpose of quality dialogues.

External validity concerns the objectivity of the study and the researcher’s sincerity and reflexivity (Miles et al., 2014; Tracy, 2010). In the previous section,

‘the role of the researcher’, I have transparently described my self-awareness of potential subjective bias (Flyvbjerg, 2011) because of my insider role. I have consciously processed and made transparent my own preunderstandings so that any potential bias could be erased or at least diminished.

Respondents are in a vulnerable position, and researchers must respect this. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue that any potential harms to participants in qualitative social research are often subtle and stem from the interaction between the researcher and participant (p. 272), which can be hard to predict. This highlights the importance of the researcher’s reflexivity. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) discuss reflexivity in relation to observations as an active, ongoing process that should saturate every step of the research process in relation to observations. They refer to Bourdieu’s suggestion that the reflexive process entails a process of two steps (Jenkins, 1992). First comes the objective observation and next the reflection on the observation itself. The researcher can use two questions when doing this: ‘What do I know?’ ‘How do I know?’ I have found this to be useful, and my supervisors have challenged me many times with similar questions.

A threat to the validity of the study is unavoidably the presence of a researcher during quality dialogues, that is, the so-called ‘researcher effect’. Participants who were aware of my presence might have withheld opinions or acted in other ways than they otherwise would have. An activity theoretical, dialectical interpretation of this would be that my presence could very well be shaping the activity that I am studying. Marx (1845) criticises philosophers for interpreting the world without attempting to change it. Perhaps this is why many activity-theoretical studies have used the interventionist method of Change Laboratories (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013), in which a team of researchers affect the trajectories and outcomes. However, activity theoretical studies can be conducted *with* participants, *in* the processes taking place or *on* the activities (Postholm, 2015), and the present thesis is a study on quality dialogues. Although fully visible at observations, I had some distance from the actors, and if anyone sought eye contact, I looked away. Afterwards, I asked several participants if what we all had experienced was true to reality, and they answered affirmatively. At some point, a suspicion was close at hand that adaptations in the design of a dialogue meeting had been made because of my presence. Yet when I asked about this, no one admitted to it but assured me it was the same as for other similar quality dialogue meetings with other people and other locations. I had been very clear beforehand that I wanted to observe real, ordinary dialogue meetings, with no adaptations for the purpose of the research.

Chapter 6 Results

This chapter presents the findings that provide answers to the research questions. The chapter first provides findings of the local cultural-historical development of the quality dialogues — their genesis and major shifts over time — in the studied context as described in the municipal documents and interviews. The findings on the local cultural-historical development contribute with knowledge on the qualitative transformations of the purpose of the quality dialogues and what culturally historically shaped systemic contradictions have influenced the emergence, development, and function of the quality dialogues over a decade.

Thereafter, the chapter provides findings concerning quality dialogues as they unfolded and were described by participants in 2019–2020. The presentation of the findings has been organised to describe how differently the quality dialogues unfold at and between each level. First, I present findings on the quality dialogues at the preschool units (type A), then the quality dialogues at the intersection of preschool units and the authoritative levels of the studied organisation (type B) and, finally, the quality dialogues at the authoritative level of the administration (types C–D). Type B dialogues have been given more attention in the chapter because the analysis revealed a greater complexity than types A and C–D respectively. The findings contribute with knowledge on how quality dialogues in the studied administration were arranged at the time I sampled data, how the purpose of the quality dialogues was perceived by respondents, how tools, rules and division of labour mediate the actions of the participants and what systemic contradictions could be identified that influence the achievement of the purpose, the function and further development of the quality dialogues. Finally, the chapter ends with a concluding summary of the key findings.

Part 1. Local Cultural-Historical Development

To answer the present thesis' first research question on the purpose of quality dialogues, I present findings from the cultural-historical analysis of the genesis and major qualitative transformations of the quality dialogues over time in the studied context. The local cultural-historical analysis of the descriptions in municipal documents and interviews resulted in a periodisation that is summarised as a

timeline in Table 4. The first column shows the periodisation in years, and the second column shows changes in national policy and municipal organisation that influenced the development of the quality dialogues in the studied administration. To answer the current thesis' second research question on culturally historically shaped contradictions, the third column presents traces that could be found in the data of historical contradictions. The assumptions of historical contradictions are based on the respondents' descriptions of matters that needed to be dealt with. The fourth column of table 4 presents the major qualitative transformations that were made under the influence of the historical contradictions.

Table 4. Timeline with summary of the development of local quality dialogues

Period	Changes in national policy and the municipal organisation	Historical contradictions	Transformations of the quality dialogues in the local context
Before and around 2010	Preschools were transferred to the educational sector in the late 1990s, and the first national curriculum policy document for preschools was introduced in 1998.	No traces of contradictions in the data before time around 2010. Quality work depended on teachers' initiatives. The LEA had little or no involvement in preschool quality work.	No quality dialogues.
2010–2013	A new Education Act with national demands for local systematic quality work was introduced in 2010.	<i>Primary contradiction:</i> Participants did not see the point of meeting to discuss quality. <i>Secondary contradictions:</i> Reports had become a rule rather than a tool. No tools for dialogue on preschool quality. <i>Quaternary contradictions:</i> Interorganisational communication needed to be improved. Systematisation of quality work according to the Education Act was needed.	Dialogues (cf. type D) between top managers start around 2010. A municipal model for systematic quality work was developed.
2013–2016	Heavy critique from the Schools Inspectorate resulted in a new preschool administration.	<i>Secondary contradictions:</i> Only top managers participated in quality dialogues. Artefacts in the form of a large set of detailed questions were introduced because top managers needed to control curricular goal achievement of preschool units.	Quality dialogues (type B) and quality visits started around 2013–2014. Detailed assessment documents and new quality reports were introduced. Quality dialogues (type D) changed, and an overall evaluation and assessment document was introduced.
2016–2019	Municipal reorganisation: Preschool leadership changed in 2016 to fewer principals assisted by a preschool management group.	<i>Secondary contradictions:</i> There was need for more data to control curricular goal achievement. From the preschool units, only principals participated in quality dialogues. Representatives from the central administration did not participate in quality dialogues with preschool units.	Introduction of statistical data. B dialogues included more professions. Quality analysts were employed. Dialogues type A emerged.
2019–2020	A national reform introduced the title of superintendent. Municipal focus on equity.	<i>Secondary contradictions:</i> Insights on how strong horizontal boundaries counteracted division of labour and emphasis on equity. <i>Quaternary contradictions:</i> Emphasis on shared responsibilities.	New guidelines for dialogues at all levels, with fewer questions which focused less on details. Dialogue type C was introduced. Role of area manager changed, to become more of an assistant superintendent. Dialogue type D changed so that all area managers participate in the same dialogue.

The summary presented in Table 4 is elaborated on in the following sections. The findings are presented for each period described in the timetable.

Before 2010

In Sweden, ECEC has a long history of being a socio-political responsibility. As shown in Table 4, it was not until the late 1990s that preschools were transferred to the educational sector, and the first national curriculum policy document for preschools was not introduced until 1998. Historical descriptions in municipal documents and in interviews show no proof of quality dialogues before 2010. The respondents described how the LEA and managers of the preschool units had little or no involvement in preschool quality work, which depended on teachers' initiatives.

The respondents' descriptions of their work in the 1970s and 1980s show how preschool teachers were driven by an ideological belief in a democratic and inclusive society. Children should be involved in democratic decision processes, and staff members were treated equally, regardless of education or formal responsibility. The respondents described how the quality of the teaching developed mostly thanks to the initiatives of the preschool teachers, with very little or no involvement at all from managers and politicians. In several cases, it was not even clear who the preschool manager was because everyone was regarded as being equal.

Principal 5: Back then, we had an invisible manager. In those days, everyone was equal. When I was newly employed, I did not know who was going to be my manager, who was a preschool teacher and who were child minders. It was only on the third day, when something was delivered to the preschool, and the manager had to sign the paper. Then she got up, and that is how I found out who was the boss.

Interviewer: How did the manager's 'invisibility' affect the educational quality?

Principal 5: I must say, we worked rather consciously anyway. In hindsight, I think the quality was quite good, simply because we thought everything was so much fun and exciting. We wanted the children to have fun, to develop and learn. It was natural for us. We had momentum and did not need anyone to push us.

The citation shows how teachers experienced the preschool quality work as depending on their initiatives. The respondents neither remembered having felt

any expectations or demands from managers, nor could they recollect any signs of quality dialogues or other types of municipal auditing on the quality of the preschools. On the contrary, the analysis shows signs of teacher autonomy and agency.

Those who worked as preschool teachers at the time describe how they mainly focused on developing the aesthetical teaching and children's language and motor skills. Some respondents note how they used diagnostic tests to assess children's developing phases, especially their language and motor skills, before planning how to work with children.

Team leader 4: Before the curriculum, cognitive development was in focus and the assessment of children's motor skills. Can everyone crawl? We drew a pen under the feet to see if they had reflexes. We also assessed their language skills: Several words? Whole sentences? Single words?

The testing was influenced by Piaget's theory. The preschool teachers assessed the children's development phases with the help of tests, and the results of the tests affected the planning of the work.

Principal 5: We had a test to see if they had missed any stages in their development. Maybe we found out that some children had never crawled. Then, we had to practice crawling with the children, and if they did that, then we could understand why they did not do something else. A lot of testing of the children's developing stages. We tested a lot. And checked their reflexes. Because if they did not have any reflexes, then that could explain why they did not crawl. Then, we worked a lot to practice their motor skills. They crawled in many ways and jumped on one leg and so on.

In the late 1990s, a national curriculum for preschools was introduced, and preschools were transferred from the responsibility of municipal social services to municipal education. The respondents describe how the curriculum made them feel that they were being given status and a sense of work pride they had not had before. Several respondents also described how the Reggio Emilia approach influenced their work in the early 2000s in terms of ideological ideas such as children's rights to all their languages or ways of expression. According to the respondents' descriptions, less testing of development phases was done, and instead, the focus was on letting children express and develop their '100 languages', that is, all their skills. There was also great focus placed on how the pedagogical play environments could function as 'a third pedagogue'. Several preschool managers started discussing pedagogical improvements in new ways, but still, no

quality dialogues, auditing or involvement from managers or municipal evaluators can be found in the data.

2010–2013

The studied municipality was organised into 10 separate administrations from the late 1990s, each with a separate political board that could make local decisions and follow up on educational quality. The boards and administrations were responsible for preschools and compulsory schools as well as for social services and elderly care. In some administrations, preschools were independent from schools and had their own principals. In other administrations, preschools were organised under a school principal. At the time that principals had to write quality reports, the preschool staff felt left out because focus was mainly on the results and improvements made at the school.

Principal 4: No one asked about the quality status or what we did. We were lucky if our preschool was mentioned at all, in a few sentences, in the principal's quality report. The report was only about the school.

A central administration coordinated educational issues for the whole municipality, including all 10 administrations. Around 2009–2010, the central administrators realised that the interconnected parts of the municipal organisation knew very little about each other's work beyond what was written in different types of documentation.

Head of Quality: We realised that we did not really understand how they worked, and they did not understand the system they were part of. We sent reports to them that they did not read or understand, and we did not seem to understand what they wrote about or did not write about in their reports. It was like we worked on parallel paths and did not have enough communication, at least not to understand each other fully. And yet, we worked in the same municipality, and we all had the same goal: to improve quality in our schools and preschools.

The fact that the interconnected parts of the municipal organisation knew little about each other's work became a matter that the top-ranking officials in the central administration felt needed to be dealt with. They simply saw the need for face-to-face communication instead of just sending documents back and forth across the different parts of the organisation. The fact that unit levels and authoritative levels should communicate on educational quality was also emphasised by a national reform introduced a new Education Act (SFS 2010:800)

in 2010, with demands for local systematic quality work. These new demands needed to be addressed by the municipality.

The emergence of quality dialogues arose from lack of interconnection between the quality work conducted in separate parts of the municipal organisation before and around 2010. Work conducted in the geographical administration and in the central administration, respectively, from a CHAT perspective, can be understood as separate activity systems (see Figure 5).

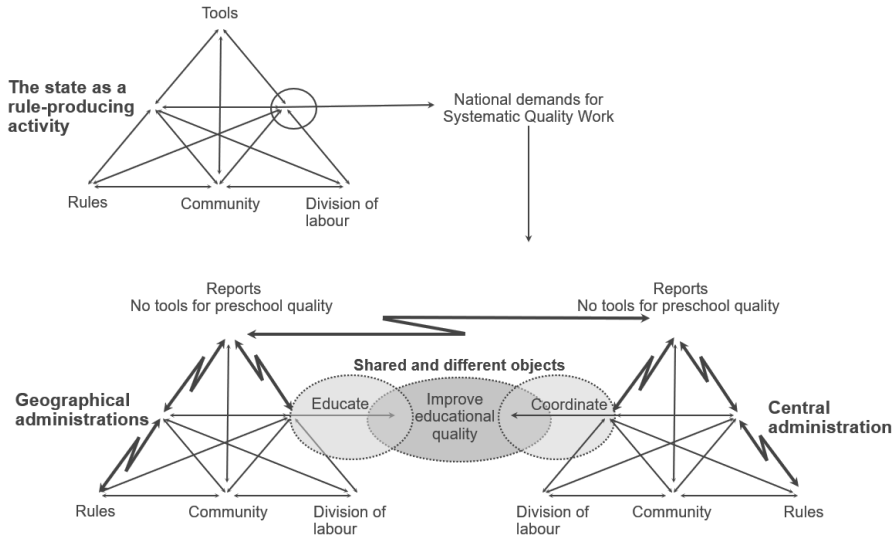


Figure 5. Objects and contradictions in and between activity systems before and around 2010, when quality dialogues emerged in the studied municipality.

The activity systems shared the generalised object, that is, to strive to improve the educational quality, but they also had different, specific objects. The central administration coordinated the municipality, while the geographical administrations were responsible for providing education for the children. In this case, one activity system was superior to the other because the central administration represented the central municipal governance and the other represented the local administrations. They shared artefacts in the form of reports that did not serve the interorganisational communication. This type of contradiction between the two activity systems can be identified as a quaternary contradiction. In activity theoretical studies, contradictions are illustrated by broken arrows figures when activity systems are illustrated as triangular models. The reports functioned as rules rather than as tools in both activity systems. There

was also a lack of tools and signs for discussing preschool quality. This was not only a quaternary contradiction between activity systems but also a secondary contradiction within the activity systems. For the central administration, this meant they could not adequately coordinate the work of the different administrations. One way to overcome the mentioned contradictions was to improve the interprofessional communication on the shared object and improve their shared tools. The manager of the central authority made a top-down decision to invite top managers in the geographical administrations to quality dialogues, which will be described in the next period. Figure 5 also shows another quaternary contradiction around 2010, that is, a contradiction between the central activity in the form of the municipality's quality work and a rule-producing activity in the form of the state, which had imposed new legal demands for local systematic quality work.

In 2011, the city board decided that systematic quality work needed to be improved in accordance with the new regulations of the Education Act. This initiative led to a three-year municipal project (project quality work) that would suggest improvements for the systematic quality work. The project resulted in a 'quality model', which included improved surveys, new templates for quality reports, ideas of quality visits², models for self-evaluation and other support material. In its final report (2013), the project concluded that quality reports were neither appreciated nor enough but must be complemented by communication.

A common critique from the units during the time when there were demands for quality reports, was that no one read them anyway and that the reports were written because one had to. Project quality work concludes that the communication between units and the local authority about the needs for improvement and areas of success according to the documentation of units (plans, reports, and statistics) is essential also onwards. (Municipal document final report, 2013, p. 15)

The citation above shows how, in activity theoretical terms, artefacts in the form of quality reports had become a rule instead of functioning as tools serving the object of activity, that is, to improve educational quality. The analysis identifies this problem as a secondary contradiction because it is a contradiction that has been developed between the different nodes (rules and tools) of an activity system. Quality dialogues between top managers (cf. type D dialogues) had emerged, and the newly produced tools were to be utilised in the quality dialogues instead of the

² Quality visits is a form for peer review based on organised observations during which goal achievement according to all curricular areas were assessed.

old artefacts. At first, the idea of crossing organisational boundaries in a novel, dialogical way met resistance because all the participants did not fully grasp the necessity. In the following quotation, the then head of the central authority describes the resistance which arose:

Head of Quality: There was resistance from my coworkers at the central administration who had been there for a long time, not the new ones, but the experienced ones because they did not see the point. Though not from all, there was resistance from school directors and their managers, too, because they did not see the point either.

In activity theoretical terms, this resistance — caused by lack of deeper understanding for why quality dialogues should be implemented — could be identified as a primary contradiction, that is, a contradiction between use value and exchange value. Even though the introduction of quality dialogues met some resistance, they were still implemented. Quality dialogues started on a small scale between a few officials at the central authority and the school directors in each of the 10 administrations. The respondents describe how, in the beginning, the focus was mostly on getting to know one another. The quality dialogues were met with curiosity from the directors of the 10 administrations and politicians, so eventually, more dialogue participants were added each year. The quality dialogues did, however, not focus on preschool education, mainly because there was no support material for assessment of preschool quality.

The point of departure for the dialogues in 2013 was statistical material produced by the project regarding different levels and reports from the units and a guide for conversation that were distributed to the administrations before the dialogue meeting. Project quality work has produced support material for quality dialogues at different levels. The support material focuses on compulsory school, compulsory school for pupils with intellectual disabilities and leisure-time centres. (Municipal document final report, 2013, p. 7)

The described lack of support material for dialogue on preschool quality can, in activity theoretical terms, be described as a lack of artefacts that could mediate the dialogue on improved educational quality. The lack of such artefacts can be identified as a secondary contradiction, that is, a contradiction between the tool node and object node of the activity system. This secondary contradiction possibly resulted in limited focus on preschool quality. The discussion was limited to whether enough preschool places could be provided.

Superintendent: Ninety-eight percent of follow-up was on schools and grades. ‘Are there enough places for the preschool children?’ ‘No, there are not’. ‘No?’ ‘No!’ And then they just continued.

Despite a limited focus on preschools, the quality dialogues were positively received and believed to be in accordance with the new national demands for a functioning local systematic quality work, which were introduced in the new Education Act (SFS 2010:800), in which the need for communication between organisational levels was explicated. In short, the cultural-historical analysis shows how the introduction of a municipal model for systematic quality work, including annual quality dialogues between top managers, was seen as having resolved the primary, secondary and quaternary contradictions over a period of approximately three years.

2013–2016

As shown in Table 4, the National Schools Inspectorate audited education in the studied municipality in the beginning of the 2010s, which resulted in heavy critique on lack of quality, equity and systematic quality work. The need to improve work procedures for improvement of educational quality and achieve equity had become a matter that needed to be dealt with urgently. The 10 municipal administrations had very different routines and ways of working. The heavy critique from the National School Inspectorate led to a process that would rather quickly result in a municipal reorganisation. When, in 2013, municipal preschools were separated from schools and transferred to a new educational administration with its own school board, a new era began. A preschool administration had been formed. Because of its size, the administration was divided into geographical areas, each led by an area manager. The managers at the administration’s central authority realised that its first task was to change the many different routines and set the same standards for all. Managers and professionals at the authoritative level realised they lacked knowledge about the quality and curricular goal achievement of each of the municipal preschools. This lack of knowledge is a secondary contradiction because they lacked tools to assess preschool quality and did not share an understanding of what preschool quality is. The cultural-historical analysis also reveals a secondary contradiction between the subject node, the division of labour node and the object node of the activity system. It was no longer enough to only have top managers participate in quality dialogues.

Area manager 2: We needed to involve the principals. It was essential that principals took part in quality dialogues with area managers because principals are responsible for the overall quality at their preschool units.

This quotation shows how the solution to the identified secondary contradiction was to involve principals in quality dialogues with the area managers. Therefore, a new type of annual quality dialogues between area managers and principals³ was introduced, and the activity was consequently qualitatively transformed. However, there was another secondary contradiction to be resolved because tool mediation was not seen as being adequate to mediate the dialogue on preschool quality. New tools in quality dialogues type B were modelled, tested and implemented. Artefacts used as points of departure for dialogue on preschool quality were both principals' quality reports on curricular goal achievement and a large set of detailed questions on curricular goal achievement that had been produced by a newly established Quality Department.

There was no longer the need for the previous quality dialogues between top managers in different administrations. Instead, a new dialogue⁴ was introduced, during which area managers made detailed presentations of their separate geographical areas to the Director of Education and presiding members of the political school board. During this dialogue, area managers presented an assessment analysis of what had been discussed during quality dialogues with principals (type B). The officials at the central administration subsequently finalised a novel — and since then annual — 'evaluation and assessment document' that could serve as a basis for political priorities and financial decisions. In the beginning, this new document met some resistance because it was not requested.

Head of quality: The evaluation and assessment document in 2014, the very first that was produced. We were two officials, a colleague and I, who wrote it. We did that because we had received all quality reports and we wanted to make an overall assessment in relation to the responsibility of the LEA. But it was not requested. And it was not even appreciated. By the administrators.

Interviewer: Why was it not appreciated?

Head of quality: Because they did not see the point of it. And it was almost the same as the initial phase of the quality dialogues. Sometimes, people say no because they do not understand what it is for. So I guess I was stubborn, and maybe, we did not follow orders because I said, 'We are going to produce

³ The studied B dialogues.

⁴ Equivalent with the studied D dialogues.

it anyway'. It had to do with me being responsible for us following the national demands. And I knew what the Schools Inspectorate demanded. You must make an assessment using both quantitative data and qualitative data so that the LEA can make assessments of the situation at the units. It is natural for someone who needs to make decisions. I was not comfortable with us just following up the municipal goal achievement because it said nothing about our preschools. And I was comfortable with having the support of the city board to introduce a quality model as knowledge-based governance.

To sum up, the results show how artefacts used in the quality dialogues can be seen as top-down control mechanisms that were needed by managers to ensure their control of the curricular goal achievement and their power by enforcing uniformity and standard procedures across the administration. Another control mechanism that was introduced at the same time was quality visits. A group of evaluators read preschools' quality reports and made whole-day visits to each preschool, during which they assessed the quality by grading different curricular areas such as mathematics, language, science and so forth on a scale.

The extensive work on controlling curricular goal achievement in several ways made the central authority realise that preschools had very different ways of working and that several preschool units lacked high-quality education. Equity was not in sight, and one reason was thought to be unequal prerequisites for preschool management. The insights that had been achieved through the extensive control mechanisms of quality dialogues and quality visits resulted in reorganisation of preschool leadership, which will be described next.

2016–2019

As the summarising timetable shows (Table 4), top managers had understood how unequal preschools' curricular goal achievement was and how this was a result of various ways of working and unequal prerequisites for preschool management. This resulted in a large reorganisation of preschool management in 2016 so that hands-on, instructional, and organisational leadership as well as strategic leadership could be ensured.

Principal 3: Some principals had too few preschool units to be able to work strategically, and some principals had too many preschools to be able to be close. Some Reggio Emilia-inspired preschools had pedagogistas or atelieristas⁵, who could lead their colleagues, but other preschools had no middle leaders. The principals were also on their own, so the preschools needed a management group so that all preschools could have both strategic and close leaders.

The leadership of all municipal preschool units changed in 2016. The number of principals decreased, but the number of leaders increased. Principals became responsible for a cluster of preschool units and supported by a newly introduced local management group of assistant principals and lead teachers. Assistant principals were, among other things, given the responsibility of preschool organisation according to given prerequisites. Lead teachers were expected to both work with children and lead the pedagogical improvements while assisting the principal with systematic quality work. Many principals started relying on lead teachers to write the preschools' annual quality reports.

Following the reorganisation of preschool leadership, the managers at the central administration realised they needed to find forms to support school improvement through broad participation and an understanding of shared responsibilities. Thus, the quality dialogue in the intersection between preschool units and the authoritative level of the organisation⁶ changed to include both the local management group and teaching staff members. Additionally, area managers were accompanied by team leaders of supporting teams from their geographical areas and quality analysts from the central administration. The activity theoretical analysis explains this change regarding quality dialogue participants as an attempt to resolve a secondary contradiction because the previous participants were no longer enough and needed to be changed so that more professionals became involved. It could also be explained as a tertiary contradiction because the activity (systematic quality work) had been qualitatively transformed into a more advanced form while, at the same time, remnants of the old form were kept.

The main task of the newly employed quality analysts was to improve the central administration's overall assessment (or control) of educational quality by producing a more accurate overall evaluation and assessment document through a collegial process in which different types of documentation and discussions during quality dialogues were analysed.

⁵ Pedagogista and Atelierista are two roles similar to lead teachers in preschools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. (Elfström, 2013; Häikiö, 2007; Vecchi, 2014)

⁶ The studied B dialogues.

The quality analysts' primary task is to have an overall and deepened idea of the geographical areas' strengths and challenges based on the available facts and analyses and to reflect these facts and analyses in relation to the current situation and needs for improvements in the preschools in the whole municipality. (Municipal Assignment Description for Quality Analysts, 2016)

The type of fact documentation that the quality analysts produced and that was utilised as artefacts during quality dialogues was statistical data describing how the total number of children at the preschool units changed during a year as well as how many younger and older children there were. In addition, statistical data were produced, describing the number of teaching staff, the percentage of licensed preschool teachers and substitute child minders, average of sick leave, resources because of index according to parents' socio-economic status, number of parental complaints, parental surveys of satisfaction and number of suspected violations against children. The cultural-historical analysis shows how these new artefacts were introduced because of a secondary contradiction regarding the tool node. The quality dialogue participants simply did not have enough purposeful artefacts that could mediate the achievement of the object of activity. The object of activity had also been transformed from mere control of curricular goal achievement to control of prerequisites for educational quality.

As the results have shown so far, systematic quality work as an activity had been qualitatively transformed. Quality analysts had been employed. Quality dialogues involved participants from various parts of the organisation, and several artefacts had been introduced that were intended to mediate dialogue on preschool quality. There had been a strong emphasis on controlling curricular goal achievement and shared routines, but by inviting more participants to the quality dialogues, focus had also been put on support and shared responsibilities for improved quality.

Inspired by positive experiences from quality dialogues with area managers, many principals started arranging or developing quality dialogues at their preschools (type A dialogues). The principals describe how they had learned that it was necessary to broaden the participation so that quality work would become important to everyone working at the preschool. Thus, the activity theoretical analysis sees broad participation as a means for support.

2019–2020

As shown in Table 4, a new director had been employed in 2019 and given the title of superintendent because of changes in the Education Act concerning superintendents' responsibilities regarding systematic quality work. The new superintendent saw the new title as an opportunity to emphasise and raise awareness of preschools national mission, here in relation to the municipal mission.

Superintendent: I thought this new legislation was a golden opportunity to, as a new director of the preschool administration, emphasise the national assignment, where the title of superintendent is another level. Experienced directors of education in other municipalities are saying 'well, we have been superintendents all the time so there is no big difference, I have not made a big deal of it'. But I have. I have stressed it, so that we can profile, emphasise the important mission of preschool as a school form in the Education Act and our national mission.

Additionally, there was a greater emphasis on shared responsibilities for prerequisites affecting goal achievement and equity in the entire municipality, which was contested by strong horizontal boundaries between geographical administrative areas. Following both these changes, the superintendent initiated a changed role for area managers. They were now expected to support the superintendent's focus on equity in the entire municipality at a higher degree. Almost working as an assistant superintendent, the area managers were expected to care about more than just their own geographical areas.

Superintendent: I realised that the areas work very differently. Area managers care very a lot about their own areas. That is their job, but the job also entails working for the whole municipality. That is a challenge.

An activity theoretical explanation to the superintendent's changed focus is that two rule-producing activity systems — the state and the top management of the municipality — had caused secondary and tertiary contradictions in the activity system. The changed municipal focus on equity and the introduction of the superintendent's title and national mission had influenced the superintendent to initiate qualitative transformations of systematic quality work as an activity. The activity system's division of labour node needed to be changed, resulting in a changed mission for area managers. Subsequently, a new artefact was introduced in 2019, that is, the new guidelines describing expectations for the dialogues.

The new guidelines describe the purpose of dialogue meetings as an ‘opportunity to learn from each other’ and as ‘the foremost forum for analyses’; and that analysis is intended to deepen the understanding of shortcomings, prerequisites, and outcomes as the basis for further priorities when promoting high quality and equity. The knowledge gained during all dialogues is described to be documented in reports, which can later be used to mediate succeeding dialogues. A deeper understanding beyond descriptions in subordinates’ reports were described as a condition for informed managerial and political decision-making. In several municipal documents, content-related issues were formulated as the evaluation and assessment of both goal achievement and prerequisites for quality.

The purpose of the quality dialogue meetings is to have a dialogue about the goal achievement of the preschools and about various prerequisites’ impact on quality. (Municipal Document on Quality Dialogues, June 2019)

To achieve the new purpose of equity and improve how labour was divided and understood, a new artefact was needed. This is a sign of a secondary contradiction because the existing tools were not enough. Novel guidelines were agreed on in 2019, which include five overall questions. The five questions were intended to guide the conversation in the area managers’ dialogues with preschools⁷ and which subsequently would be synthesised in a document from each area manager prior to the dialogue with the superintendent⁸. The five questions are as follows:

- (1) Within which areas in the national curriculum and the Education Act do you see the greatest needs for improved goal achievement at the preschools?
 - (2) What reasons are there for the lack of goal achievement, and what prerequisites are the most important ones for increased goal achievement?
 - (3) Do the same prerequisites need to be improved at all preschools, or what differences are there between the preschools?
 - (4) What priorities are made in the geographical area to increase equity according to identified needs?
 - (5) What short-term and long-term prerequisites need to be improved from the LEA’s perspective?
- (Municipal Document on Quality Dialogues, June 2019)

The five questions focus both on control and support. The first three questions focus on the identification of and reasons for lacking curricular goal achievement and preschools’ greatest improvement needs. The last two questions focus on what

⁷ The studied B dialogues.

⁸ The studied C dialogues.

priorities are already made in the geographical areas and what further improvements the LEA can provide. It can be concluded that four questions have the potential of functioning more as a control mechanism than as a means of support to preschool quality work.

The transformations of the activity system that had been made so far were not seen as enough by the superintendent, who added a new dialogue⁹ in October 2019. The superintendent saw the type C quality dialogue as an opportunity for area managers to learn about each other's areas in the timeslot between dialogues with preschools¹⁰ in September and the dialogue with presiding members of the school board¹¹ in November. The latter dialogue was also changed from one dialogue per geographical area to only one dialogue for all together because it had become important for the superintendent to ensure that everyone had the whole municipality's interest in the centre, here with an increased focus on improved quality for all and focus on equity.

Summary

In sum, the intended overall purpose of quality dialogues — or generalised object of activity — in the studied context has all along been to improve the educational quality through interorganisational communication. In addition, the purpose — or object of work activity — has also been expanded or transformed over time. Initially, control of first curricular goal achievement was in focus and later control of prerequisites for quality and equity. I conclude from the cultural-historical analysis that rule-producing activity systems, such as the state and municipality itself, influence the quality dialogues' function and development. The systemic contradictions have changed over time. Figure 6 illustrates a summary of systemic contradictions over a decade, as divided into four periods.

⁹ The studied C dialogue.

¹⁰ The studied B dialogues.

¹¹ The studied D dialogue.

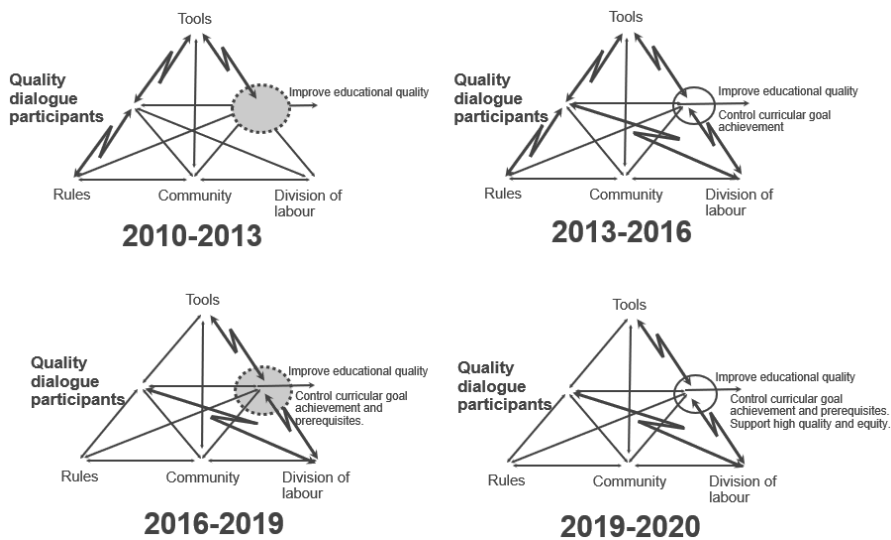


Figure 6. Object and contradictions in the periods 2013–2016, 2016–2019 and 2019–2020.

Figure 6 shows how the contradictions relating to the tool node and division of labour node of the activity system are central to the development and function of quality dialogues. Primary contradictions (use value versus exchange value) are marked with a large circle in the object-node. The broken arrows connected to the figures’ tool nodes show contradictions that concern artefacts’ functions as tool or rule, if new artefacts need to be developed and whether old artefacts need to be replaced or improved. The broken arrows connected to the figures’ division of labour nodes show contradictions concerning who participated in the quality dialogues and who did what. It should be noted that, even though broken arrows remain the same in the figure’s different activity systems, contradictions have emerged and been resolved, for example, when new tools have been produced or more professionals have been invited to participate. However, the results of the local cultural-historical analysis still show that the tool node and the division of labour node have a crucial impact on the development and function of the quality dialogue.

Part 2. Quality dialogues at preschool units (type A)

In this section, I present the findings regarding quality dialogues at preschool units (type A) as they unfolded and were described from 2019 to 2020. This section first presents the quality dialogue arrangements, then the participants' perceptions of the purpose of the quality dialogues and, finally, an analysis of systemic contradictions that influence the achievement of the purpose, and the function and further development of the quality dialogue type A. The section ends with conclusions of the key findings.

Arrangements

At the time of data collection, type A quality dialogues were arranged throughout the year at three of the five preschools units but in various manners. Preschools 2 and 5 did not arrange quality dialogues at the time but instead had arranged time for the work teams to cowrite reports on the work they had done during the semester and how they intended to carry out this work. The quality dialogues at preschools 1, 3 and 4 were hosted by representatives of the preschool management group, who invited the preschool staff to regular quality dialogue meetings. The preschools arranged the quality dialogues differently, and preschool 4 had two different types of quality dialogues. The arrangements are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue type A

Preschool unit	Participants	Frequency	Setting
1	Principal Assistant principal <u>Two lead teachers</u> A preschool teacher and two child minders	Once a year for each work team	A one-hour quality dialogue with work teams, preceded by a quality visit where the management group visited the classroom for a whole day. The dialogue meeting was framed by a full-day conference for several work teams.
3	(Principal) Lead teacher <u>Assistant principal</u> Three preschool teachers or child minders representing different work teams	Once every semester	A one-hour quality dialogue which was preceded by all work teams answering a couple of questions in writing.
4a	<u>Two lead teachers</u> <u>Assistant principal</u> A preschool teacher and two child minders	Several times a year	A one-hour quality dialogue with each work team.
4b	<u>Two lead teachers</u> <u>Principal</u> All preschool teachers from the units which share the same principal	Once every semester	A two-hour quality dialogue as a follow-up of quality dialogues type 4a.

At preschool 1, the whole management group first made observational visits to the classroom during a whole day, together with teachers from another preschool. They planned the observations such that the managers replaced each other throughout the day from the early morning until the end of day. In this way, not too many visitors attended the classroom at the same time, but there was a constant visitor present. The management and visiting teachers then met to discuss their observations so that they could draw conclusions together. In this way, the management group could hear what the visiting preschool teachers from another unit had experienced, which became a learning opportunity for those who observed their colleagues. A full-day conference followed for several work teams, all of whom had been observed. The day was filled with different content related to the development of teaching. One of the sessions during the conference day was set for a quality dialogue between the management group and work team. The actual quality dialogue with feedback from the quality visit took one hour, and then, the work team was given time on their own to start planning their future actions to continue developing their teaching. The conversation focused on

follow-up of the unit's prioritised goals for the year. The management group conducted several quality dialogues a year. Because dialogues were preceded by much preparatory work and because they were responsible for several work teams at many preschool units, the management group said it was only possible to conduct a limited number of quality dialogues. For the management group, this meant they conducted quality dialogues several times a year, but each work team only had classroom visits followed by quality dialogues once a year.

At preschool 3, the quality dialogues took place once a semester and were usually led by the principal. Because of circumstances, in the studied year, it was not possible for the principal to participate. The observed quality dialogues were hosted by the other members of the management team, namely the lead teacher and assistant principal. One representative from various work teams met in the same quality dialogue, which both teachers and management said gave added value because the teachers could listen to their colleagues and became an opportunity to assess the overall quality of the whole unit. Prior to the quality dialogues, each work team answered several questions in writing. The questions concerned the work that had been done since the last quality dialogue several months ago, what signs of learning the teachers had noticed for both teachers and children regarding the preschool unit's prioritised development area 'sustainability' and how they intended to continue working. The questions also concerned teachers' cooperation, whether everyone was engaged in the work and the function of children's pedagogical learning environments. The final question focused on what support the teachers felt they needed from management.

Preschool 4 had two different types of quality dialogues. The lead teachers and assistant principal met each work team on a regular basis several times a year (4a) to follow-up the unit's prioritised goals for the year. The meetings took place in the morning and most work teams brought children's drawings, photographs, teaching material or other hands-on material to illustrate their work. Once per semester, another type of quality dialogue (4b) was arranged in which preschool teachers from several units in the area met the lead teachers and the principal. In this quality dialogue, the assistant principals did not participate. The conversation evolved around the overall pedagogical work of the different preschools in relation to shared prioritised goals for the year.

Participants' Perceptions of the Purpose

In this section, I present findings on how the participants described the purpose of quality dialogue type A. The analysis shows that most participants describe the purpose as a discussion on how teaching is developing in accordance with the preschool units' prioritised objectives for the school year, as presented in the preschool's annual quality report. Teachers and management describe the purpose of their participation in quality dialogues as giving and receiving formative feedback on writing skills and improvement processes. There is also a slight difference in the way the teachers and management describe the purpose of their participation: The teachers describe the purpose behind their participation as telling the management about their work, whereas management adds another dimension to the purpose of their participation, namely verifying (or controlling) the curricular quality.

The respondents describe the quality dialogue as one of the best-liked tools for joint reflection and formative assessment of education and teaching and how it fulfils the goals and intentions of the national curriculum and preschool units' priorities for the year. When hands-on everyday examples are discussed, the respondents describe how immediate improvements usually follow. The analysis shows that the respondents' perceptions of the purpose of the quality dialogues can be related to whether there is coherence between the artefact node and object of the activity system or rather what preparations had been made and how those preparations were utilised in the quality dialogues. Table 6 shows how preparations came in three different forms, that is, in the form of observational visits, work team documentation or teachers bringing children's pictures or other classroom artefacts to the discussions.

Table 6. Use of preparations in quality dialogues type A.

Preschool	Type of preparation	How were the preparations used during the quality dialogue?	Coherence between the artefact node and the object node?
1	Observational visit by the management group and teachers from another preschool in the area during a whole day	As a primary artefact	Yes
3	The work teams' documentations	As a primary artefact	No
4	Children's pictures and other classroom artefacts	As a primary artefact	Yes

The analysis shows that the preparations function as primary artefacts in the quality dialogues. In preschool unit 1, preschool quality dialogues were preceded by focused observations by management and preschool teachers from other preschools in the same area. The method of peer review during the quality visits in each other's classrooms was inspired by municipal quality visits, leading to discussions on hands-on examples. The focus of attention was both on specific curricular areas that the preschool had prioritised for the year, such as language education, and the projects each class was working on. For reasons of transparency, a matrix for self-evaluation was used by the managers to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Assistant principal 1: We use a matrix for self-evaluation when we make our observations. In addition, then the management group gathers to discuss: What did you see? We have visited them at different times of the day; as a group, we have seen their whole day. In addition, we agree on three things we think are their strengths and three things that we think they need to reflect more about. In addition, perhaps something that is general. It becomes hands-on for the teachers what they need to do.

The purpose of the type A quality dialogue is described from the principals' point of view as an opportunity to increase, encourage and support the teaching staff more than to point out what is not good.

Principal 1: Our critical thinking develops. We have made our observations now and have our first quality dialogue with teachers on Friday. It is important to us that our teachers grow. They already know what is not top-notch, but we need to encourage and support their development. ‘This you have done well, but this is something we would like to know more about how you think and how we can support you in that’. Now, we cannot wait until Friday, when we will meet our work teams. I want to give them that because I think it is so important. I am so proud of this because we succeed every year.

Even though no focused observations were conducted prior to the quality dialogue, hands-on teaching examples were also discussed at preschools 3 and 4. Preschool teachers at preschool 4 expressed satisfaction with how hands-on teaching material or childrens’ drawings helped them illustrate their work to the management.

Teacher 4: When I show the lead teachers the pictures that the children have made, it helps me talk about my work. Because then they can see what we have done, and I feel like the children are with me in the conversation. I am not nervous anymore, because I talk about children’s learning and that is what we are here for. I become proud of our work.

As the citation shows, the hands-on materials mediate a focus on the children’s learning and the children become part of the quality dialogue even though they are not present in a physical form. Hands-on examples seem to be especially valuable for teachers who are a bit nervous about meeting the management, and for child minders who were described to not be as talkative in quality dialogues as preschool teachers. Although it did not happen in the observed quality dialogue meetings, in the interviews, preschool teachers from preschool 3 praised the effects when the principal usually provided hands-on feedback in classrooms, not least because it released tensions and allowed child minders to talk more.

Teacher 11: Once, when we were in the classroom, I truly felt that the child minders shone. Oh my! They talked and talked! I did not say that much. It was such a great feeling, and they received so much praise from the managers. I can get that at other occasions, but this was their time to shine. That was the best!

Teacher 7: Yeah, and NN [the principal] was actually truly great. She asked ‘what is the idea behind this and why does it look like this here?’ She was ... yeah!

Teacher 6: Yes, there was an added value because they could ask us what the purpose of putting the tables where we had put them. And yeah, we did have a purpose and then it became ... hands-on.

The managers expected the teaching staff to develop a deeper understanding of the connection between everyday work and prioritised goals. The motivation for further improvement is expected from hearing accomplishments and practical examples. There was also evidence of how teachers immediately started to make improvements, such as changing daily routines, teaching materials, or placing furnishings. In short, the activity-theoretical analysis shows that hands-on teaching examples mediate the achievement of the object to a high degree at all preschool units. However, the work teams' written documentation at preschool 3, where they had answered the management group's questions on their work, did not mediate the achievement of the object the same way and can be understood as a secondary contradiction. This will be explained in the next section.

Contradictions

The analysis shows that the participants in quality dialogue type A, whether from the preschool management group or teachers, described the dialogue similarly and seem to experience use value similarly. Teachers seemed, however, to experience use value to a lesser degree than management did and some criticised the discussions for being too vague and not addressing pressing issues. They requested a more challenging, critical and philosophical dialogue on educational quality and what truly can make a difference. Below is an excerpt from a group interview where the teachers question the value of the quality dialogues based on what is discussed. They point out that the concept of quality is a matter they should discuss more.

Teacher 11: In my experience, we talked a lot about what we do. I did try to question whether what we do makes a difference. How can we see that all our efforts make a difference?

Teacher 6: We never talk about what quality means. What is quality for us, here at our preschool? This question is interesting. I think the questions in the dialogue are the same as we are asked to write about before the dialogue. I would like the dialogue to be something more. It feels like I am just rambling on about the same things. There must be more! If the management had actually read what we have written as preparation, then they would not have asked those questions. I would like more critical discussions, deeper questions or more, I do not know how, but more philosophical so that we talk about more than just what we are doing.

Teacher 11: Yeah! Make you think. What makes a difference?

Additionally, in most cases, teachers do not address prerequisites such as having enough time for planning and following up their teaching or being provided with

substitute teachers when colleagues are absent. These topics were described as highly affecting their ability to achieve high-quality teaching. Without these resources, their teaching would suffer because more responsibilities would fall on them and they would have to handle more children. In a group interview, two teachers explained that these topics were avoided simply because they saw the quality dialogues as an opportunity to be encouraged. They also enjoyed 'being in the pedagogical bubble', which the quality dialogue provided.

Teacher 8: The dialogues are pedagogical discussions, and that is our foundation. However, to improve education, we also need to talk about other important issues, which we never have time for. Because when we have pedagogical meetings where we talk about what we do with the children, then we do not want to destroy that with our bad prerequisites. Because if you only have these few occasions, then you want to shield them and be happy about what we have and encourage each other.

Teacher 4: You sort of want to stay in a comfortable feeling.

Teacher 8: The bubble.

Interviewer: And now both of you are smiling big.

Teacher 8: These meetings are important for encouragement. However, afterwards, it is obvious that we have no prerequisites, and then the bubble bursts.

The excerpt above reveals how teachers consciously avoid addressing important issues that constrain them from achieving high-quality education so that they can enjoy pedagogical discussions and be encouraged for a job well done. The desire for encouragement in the form of positive feedback seems to be a substitute object that has semi replaced the intended object of evaluation and improvement of educational quality. However, in all the type A quality dialogues, there was one example in which the teachers tried to address the issue of how their work was affected by the constant absence of a colleague and lack of substitute teachers. Their attempt to discuss this during the quality dialogue was quickly stopped by the principle of referring to the issue having been discussed before, and now, it was time to discuss the pedagogical issues. Discussing pedagogics has become more valued than discussing the prerequisites that affect the improvement of educational quality. Some teachers also said in interviews that the quality dialogues are determined by what the management wants the quality dialogues to be. From a CHAT perspective, the avoidance of discussing prerequisites, in favour of getting

and receiving positive feedback, can be understood as a secondary contradiction between the rule node and the object node.

Summary

In summary, the analysis shows that work conducted in the A dialogues can be understood as two interconnected activity systems. The teachers represent one activity system and the local management group another (see Figure 7).

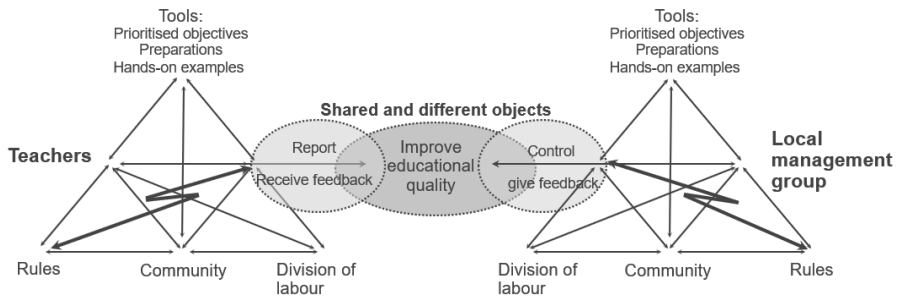


Figure 7. Quality dialogue type A. Objects and contradictions.

The two activity systems share the generalised object of discussing improvements in educational quality and the importance of giving and receiving positive feedback. In addition, teachers report to management how they teach, and management uses quality dialogues to control or verify curricular goal achievement and support further improvements by providing feedback. The tools that mediate the discussions are the preschools' prioritised objectives for the year, hands-on examples from the classrooms and preparations in the form of quality visits or teachers' written documentation. A secondary contradiction between the rule node and object node has been found in both activity systems. Previously presented results from the presentation of the historical development, have shown that discussing prerequisites for quality and equity is an intended purpose of quality dialogues, but this topic is avoided in quality dialogues of type A. The feeling of being boosted and staying in a comfortable pedagogical bubble takes precedence over discussions on the prerequisites, which can constrain the dialogue participants from achieving high-quality education.

In addition, teachers have a desire to engage in more philosophical, challenging discussions, but there is an unspoken rule that the enactment of quality dialogues cannot be questioned and that managers decide how quality dialogues should be conducted. From a CHAT perspective, these examples can be characterised as a

rule that does not serve the object of activity. Despite this secondary contradiction, the participants' actions overall align rather well with the intended purpose of the quality dialogues, that is, to improve educational quality education, not least because the tools utilised in the quality dialogues support improvements. After a quality dialogue, the teachers start changing routines, refurbish the classrooms and improve their teaching. Because these improvements are particularly quick and long-lasting at preschools A1 and A4 and less so at preschool A3, hands-on examples and feedback from classroom visits are more productive as mediating tools than teachers' written documentation. As for the issue of control versus support, quality dialogues type A are oriented towards innovative support but also entail mechanisms of control.

Part 3. Quality Dialogues at the Intersection of Preschool Units and the Authoritative Level (Type B)

In this section, I present the findings on quality dialogues at the intersection of preschool units and the authoritative level of the organisation (type B) as they unfolded and were described from 2019 to 2020. This section first presents the quality dialogue arrangements, then the participants' perceptions of the purpose of the quality dialogues and, finally, an analysis of systemic contradictions that influence the achievement of the purpose, and the quality dialogues' function, and further development. The section ends with conclusions of the key findings.

Arrangements

At the time of data collection, type B quality dialogues were arranged annually in September and took place at preschools of the principals' choice. Five quality dialogues in four geographical areas were observed. Each quality dialogue was arranged differently, except for the two that belonged to the same geographical area. In all the quality dialogues, administrators participated as a group. All dialogues were hosted and led by the area manager, who was supported by a quality analyst from the central administration and a team leader from the geographical area. Table 7 describes how the quality dialogues differ in terms of whom administrators met, the duration of the dialogue and the number of participants.

Table 7. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue type B

Quality dialogue meeting	Whom did administrators meet?	Duration	Number of participants
1	Teachers and principal	1.5 hours	8
	Preschool Management Group (preschool management group)	1 hour 10 minutes	8
	Principal	25 minutes	4
2	Teachers and Preschool Management Group (preschool management group)	3.5 hours, incl. 15 minutes break	15
3	Principal	30 minutes	6
	Children and teachers during classroom visits	30 minutes	Not noted
	Teachers and Preschool Management Group (preschool management group)	1 hour 15 minutes	19
	Preschool Management Group (preschool management group)	55 minutes	11
	Principal	15 minutes	6
	Preschool Management Group (preschool management group)	1 hour	8
4 + 5	Children and teachers during classroom visits	30 minutes	Not noted
	Teachers and principal	1.5 hours	8
	Principal	30 minutes	5

Administrators met children and teachers during classroom visits at some quality dialogues (3, 4, 5). In one quality dialogue (2), all participants stayed in the same room for the duration of the meeting, whereas the other three quality dialogue meetings (1, 3 and 4) were divided into separate sessions for administrators to meet different groups of participants. Regardless of how the dialogue meetings were arranged, discussions should depart from the following documentation according to the newly introduced routines for quality dialogue type B: the preschool's quality report, statistical reports provided by the quality department, results from an annual parental survey and possible parental complaints and reports of suspected violations against children.

Participants' Perceptions of the Purpose

In this section, I present the findings on how the participants describe their perceptions of the purpose of quality dialogue type B. The motive for participating in the dialogue differed somewhat for the participants. The motive of preschool

teachers was related to the reporting of their teaching, whereas the motive for management groups was related to the overall quality of teaching and the management of the preschool units. Administrators' motives were related to auditing the overall preschool educational quality, curricular goal achievement, and needs for improvement of prerequisites, which are decided upon by politicians and the administration's top managers. Quality dialogue type B was complex to analyse because the participants described different purposes and because of the many contradictions. In the following, the findings are presented thematically as boundary-crossing, controlling the truth, learning opportunities, and displaying.

Crossing organisational boundaries and build relationships

The purpose of quality dialogue type B is described as an opportunity to decrease distances by hearing about and experiencing everyday realities. The preschool administration is organised in several departments and geographical areas, with strong boundaries both vertically and horizontally. All the quality analysts at the quality department seemed irritated about how strong borders between the central administration and preschool units affect relationships with principals and teachers. They all refer to having been told not to cross organisational boundaries and contact preschool management and staff at their own initiative.

Quality analyst 3: We have been told not to contact the preschools unnecessarily.

The strong borders and little contact between the quality department and preschool units affect the knowledge that professionals have about each other's work.

Area manager 2: We do not know much about each other's challenges.

Strong organisational boundaries explain why the administrators appreciate the sense of closeness to the practice and the teachers when visiting the preschool premises in connection with the boundary-crossing dialogues. The teachers and preschool management groups also acknowledge the need to overcome distance.

Teacher 4: Administrators are too distant from reality. They need dialogues to know more about reality.

The administrators consider the dialogues to be their most desired, energising and sense-making task because it gives them the mandate to cross the strong borders that otherwise exist between professionals. Administrators who usually analyse

overall shortcomings, complaints or suspected violations seem to be especially appreciative of the mandated crossing of borders. The dialogues also remind superiors of the ultimate purpose of their work.

Area manager 1: This is great fun because it is the reality. My work is not real all other days, considering the educator I am at heart.

The administrators describe how being encouraging, curious and knowledgeable about preschools helps when approaching teachers. The desire to bridge vertical distances is strong in type B, in which the participants represent several hierarchical levels and have distant work relationships. Area managers' conscious strategies include being humorous, approachable, and familiar to others by dressing and acting the same way as subordinates. One should, for example, not overdress in comparison with the teachers.

Area Manager 2: I, too, wear sneakers. I am not an alien.

The fact is that relationship-building actions pervade dialogues 1, 2 and 3 to the extent that the creation of good relationships and a sense of intimacy between levels with different responsibilities in the education system *in itself* seem to be what the area managers are aiming achieve. Relationship building has become a substitute for activity, which has replaced the value of quality dialogue in improving educational quality. When a substitute object replaces the intended object of activity, the quality dialogue becomes a procedural display.

Controlling the truth or creating common knowledge

It is particularly appreciated when teachers bring pictures or children's material because doing so gives 'life and meaning' to the discussions and assessment of curricular goal achievement and overall quality. Superiors want to use their own senses to gain first-hand information about teachers' experiences. Only then can they draw their own conclusions and determine whether systematic quality work makes sense to everyone. Superiors want to hear practical examples about everyday situations, challenges and lessons learned, both good and bad.

Area manager 4: For me, the big win is to get flesh and blood to what is written. I want to hear that it is urgent for them.

Descriptions made by administrators resemble a desire to verify or unveil the truth. Here, one must not only listen to teachers and leaders but also make classroom visits, which would bring about truth beyond the documentation. One example of

how the truth is revealed is when multiple written descriptions of documentation displayed on actual classroom walls cannot be observed. Another example is how classroom visits reveal that the children are not allowed to play freely with the material. In addition, first-hand experiences of interactions between the principals and their staff are described as a source for managers' evaluation of principals' leadership.

Although their actions in the dialogues indicate that what they do during the quality dialogues is verification of the truth, the participants describe their intentions and desires to create common knowledge on how to improve educational quality through dialogue. This common knowledge is intended and desired to mediate, or support, the responsive actions needed to support school improvement. There are, however, no signs in neither observations nor interviews that common knowledge is created which can support relational agency or school improvement processes. Common knowledge is mainly described as being created through broad participation and an increased understanding of shared responsibilities. In the B dialogues, area managers explain how the dialogues at four levels of the vertical hierarchy are connected.

Area managers 3 and 4 proposed the participation of an additional principal during quality dialogues so that principals could learn from each other's examples. On the one hand, the interviewed principals appreciate the opportunity to gain insights into colleagues' organisations. On the other hand, they also question the purpose because no arrangements were made for preparations or follow-up.

Improve writing skills

The municipal documents describe quality dialogues as an opportunity for learning. However, in the interviews, the respondents do not describe the quality dialogues as settings for learning. The respondents note the quality dialogues as homework tests, after which they could continue doing the same as usual or as opportunities for confirming the knowledge they already possess. The only learning opportunity that is clearly expressed in the interviews is how quality reports should be written. The analysis shows that feedback on — and the development of — writing skills has become a substitute object of activity. Quality reports are the focus of all dialogues; they are physical artefacts that are to a high degree used as a mediating tool for dialogue. The reports are placed on the table, and the participants repeatedly browse through them. The superiors often point at details and ask about intentions and 'Why did this happen?' Additionally, in the B dialogues, the lead teachers stand out as having a strong desire to obtain hands-on

feedback on how to improve their skills in producing texts that meet the expectations of the area managers, team leaders and quality analysts.

Lead teacher 1: These texts are part of one's soul. I would not have improved my writing skills if it had not been for the dialogues.

From a CHAT perspective, the improvement in writing skills and the text of the quality report itself could be characterised as a substitute object that has replaced the actual improvement in educational quality. What happens when a substitute object replaces the intended object of activity, can be understood as procedural display. In the B dialogues, the management groups and teachers expressed a strong desire for more learning opportunities. Management wants challenging questions about leadership and further improvements. The fact that the need for learning opportunities is not perceived as sufficient indicates a contradiction where the desire to build good relationships by boosting and complimenting takes precedence over learning, support, and innovation. All the superiors report that they measure the success of the dialogues by how encouraged staff members appear afterwards.

Displaying accomplishments

In some cases, displaying accomplishments in exchange for positive feedback is highly valuable, leading to the risk of dialogues becoming procedural displays instead of settings for knowledge work.

Administrator 1: It can become more of a show and tell. 'Look at all our excellent accomplishments! All the good we have done at the preschool units'. They sort of present only the good. That is, of course, truly important but not in a dialogue with the purpose of improvement or analysis. Perhaps rather, a display window.

Most subordinates describe the B dialogues as displays, after which they return to ordinary tasks without feeling the need to make changes. From a CHAT perspective, the display of accomplishments could be characterised as yet another substitute object that replaces the generalised object of improving the quality of educational practice. The symbolic display seems to relate to how much the discussions concern one's own work. The assistant principals stand out in the B dialogues as the most silent participants. They feel less included because only a few questions are directed at their work on staff-related and organisational prerequisites.

Assistant principal 2: It did not feel like it was my place to say anything. There was no room to discuss my work and my role. Maybe I would have talked more if I had gotten questions about how the organisation of staff enables quality.

Additionally, the B dialogues are the most socially and analytically complex to describe, with the most evident procedural and symbolic display. The teaching staff testifies about their nervousness in participating. This may be explained by the fact that several dialogue participants are unknown to them. This is acknowledged by the superiors, who describe their strategies as relationship building and encouragement, which, in turn, impedes the intended content-related analysis, turning the dialogue into a display.

Primary Contradictions

Primary contradictions reflect the tension between the use value and exchange value of the quality dialogue in the preschool administration's overall systematic quality work. The interviews conducted several weeks after the observed dialogues aimed to capture the participants' perceptions of whether the dialogues contributed to achieving the object. Clearly, some participants perceive and express use value to a greater degree than others. Above all, administrators express a greater use value, whereas principals and teachers perceive the use value of the quality dialogue to a much lesser degree. Even among the participants who express use value, however, it is mostly loosely connected to the purpose that has been described in the municipal documents as a learning opportunity.

Administrators' perceptions

All administrators foremost describe how they use their senses to assess quality when meeting teachers face to face at preschool premises:

Area manager 1: We have seen with our own eyes.

Area manager 2: I could sense the atmosphere myself.

Area manager 4: I could listen to them using my own ears.

The administrators have also experienced practical examples of preschool work, triggered mainly by quotations and examples from the quality reports and from having had the opportunity to give feedback through praise in the dialogue. None of administrators 1, 2 or 3 express that the dialogues gave them any new knowledge about or increased understanding of preschool practices or prerequisites:

Area manager 1: I think it is so valuable to hear them talk about it, but I did not learn anything I was not already aware of.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the quotation above is that dialogues can hardly be understood as constituting a basis for responsive actions on their part.

Administrators who participate in quality dialogues in geographical area 4, on the other hand, expresses satisfaction with having learned more, compared with previous years, about the preschool management group's work with preschools' varied prerequisites, knowledge that they claim will be relevant for their own work and that of others. They describe how the questions in the novel guidelines in combination with thorough common preparations, halfway through follow-up meetings and the distribution of tasks among themselves contributed to new knowledge beyond the documentation of both curricular goal achievement and prerequisites:

Quality analyst 4: I think we learned more about how the preschool management group works with the preschool units' different prerequisites.

Furthermore, the administrators emphasise the positive symbolic value of conducting classroom visits and meeting teachers at preschool premises. Symbolic value seems to be more important than intended knowledge work on educational quality improvements.

Area manager 4: The signal value is very important for our organisation. It might be more symbolic value than an analysis of facts. But it affects me as an area manager, too, so in some sense, we must have this meeting to show the closeness between the preschool and me, the area manager, who is the superintendent's representative.

Preschool management groups' perceptions

The interviews with preschool management groups also show variation regarding what the dialogues are perceived as contributing. Preschool management group 1 gives a somewhat contradictory picture, where, on the one hand, they claim that a different type of feedback would be required to give them new insights, but on the other hand, they describe how feedback from administrators made them change both their own and staff's work procedures regarding templates in which teachers document children's learning. Preschool management group 2 express that the dialogue 'is not their forum', and preschool management groups 2, 3 and 4 claim that the dialogue has no direct impact on their work.

Principal 4: It is like, phew, now that is done, now we can continue our work as usual.

The assistant principals and lead teachers not only question the relevance of the quality dialogues for their work but also dispute administrators' curiosity and what the dialogues contribute to the LEA. Additionally, they feel the need to be loyal to their principal and act as s/he expects them to.

Interviewer: In your written reflection, you wrote, 'I do not know if these dialogues are the best way to increase the quality of our preschools. What do they contribute to the teachers? What do they contribute to preschool management groups, and what do they contribute to LEA? Are they only a shelf warmer [Swedish: *hyllvärmare*]¹²?' Please elaborate.

Assistant principal 3: I do not think it has ever ... I sort of feel more like 'Check, I have ticked the box on that one. Well, we have managed this, too'. I am exaggerating a bit now, but I do not know, I think something else is needed. Maybe if we had focused on one or maybe a few issues and then tried to dig deeper into them, like 'We thought it was very interesting when you wrote this. It is going to be exciting to see how you can work with this in the coming year. Do you need any support or anything else?' In addition, that is partly done but not so distinctly. And it is also sort of like we are holding back, we think, at least I think so, let us see what the principal brings up. And then we follow her. We are very solidary and loyal to the principal. I do not mean we think ... we do not have any disagreements in our management group, but there is a special atmosphere. I think it is expected somehow; we do not sit there and quarrel with each other. Quarrel is a wrong expression, but you understand what I mean. Dialogues do not occur every week. There is some tension. We must have read and thought about it, and at the same time, you go there and do not know exactly what will happen. I wrote about that too. I sort of missed a 'We are going to focus on this from having read your reports, or these issues are what we are going to talk about with everyone'. So that we can be prepared. The conversation and dialogue could be better then.

Compared with other preschool management groups, preschool management groups 1, 3 and 4 express a strong desire for the dialogue to function as a learning opportunity but also as an opportunity where they can obtain feedback on their work. Many preschool management groups describe the modes of action as rather instrumental, with a lack of genuine questions from the administrators:

¹² The Swedish word '*hyllvärmare*' could be described as paperwork that you put on a shelf because you must have it but of no actual importance in daily work.

Principal 3: I missed the wow. I mean, enthusiasm and commitment. Curiosity about us. I missed that from them, so I had to prompt it myself, but I did not get any response.

Furthermore, when asked if and how preschool management groups might affect how quality dialogues are conducted, the response is that they cannot influence the quality dialogues.

Assistant principal 2: We cannot change them; the area manager decides how they are done.

The quotation above shows that the area manager determines how quality dialogues of type B are to be conducted. In fact, the analysis of the data regarding type B dialogues is very clear about managers' understanding of the quality of dialogue's purpose and their intentions, here with the dialogue meeting as a condition for the enactment.

Teachers' perceptions

The interviewed teachers express relief that area managers were kind and that they were able to answer all the questions and were praised afterwards. It makes them proud of their work and like they have passed a test.

Teacher 3: We passed the homework test.

The teachers do, however, recognise the importance of the dialogues for the administrators, who are otherwise quite distant from the work in the preschool practice but do not express that the meetings have any direct impact on them, apart from possibly boosting their pride in their work. The teachers from preschools 1, 3 and 4 emphasise how little of an impact these dialogues have on their work compared with the dialogues they usually conduct with their respective preschool management groups.

Preschool teacher 4: This was very different from when we have a quality dialogue with our principal¹³. When we leave that kind of dialogue, we go straight to the classroom and start changing things.

¹³ Meaning type A dialogue

Teachers in quality dialogue 2 avoid describing the content of the conversation and instead return to the meeting's positive atmosphere and describe the area manager as humorous and kind. Teacher 3 reveals little knowledge about the purpose of the meeting and the work of the administrators:

Teacher 7: I do not know what they work with and what happens afterwards.

To summarise, the descriptions made by the principals and teachers indicate a perceived low use value, that is a primary contradiction, whereas those for the administrators, especially area managers, seem to be greater use value. It is difficult to understand the perceived use value as it is related to the object, as defined by the high-ranking officials, because dialogue implementation and artefact usage do not unfold in a way that allows for achieving the object. Rather, there seem to be other motives for participating in the dialogues that drive the participants, such as for the administrators to obtain a sense of closeness to the practice by crossing otherwise forbidden organisational boundaries and controlling the curricular goal achievement, for the principals and teachers to display their accomplishments and feel that the administrators are interested in their work and, above all, for the teachers to feel boosted and proud of their work. The activity-theoretical analysis has shown that these other motives can be identified as unintended, specific substitute objects that replace the intended, generalised object of activity, that is, the improvement of educational quality. These substitute objects indeed seem to deviate from the core use value, but they do not seem to be direct expressions of exchange value either. In the case of quality dialogues, the exchange value is not related to traditional financial value. Instead, the substitute objects seem to be an indirect expression of exchange value.

Secondary and Tertiary Contradictions

The analysis of the recorded and observed dialogues as well as follow-up interviews with various dialogue participants indicate systemic contradictions that prevent achieving the object, that is, an improvement of educational quality. The quality dialogues have developed over time, which has brought about the introduction of new mediating artefacts. The artefact-mediation described in this section concerns novel guidelines which describe the purpose and enactment of the quality dialogues in the studied year, quality reports, and statistics.

The guideline's questions as mediating artefacts

One new artefact in the studied year's quality dialogues is the so-called *novel guidelines*, which have been drawn up and agreed upon by area managers and the head of evaluation at the central LEA as a response to the superintendent's stated need for greater collaboration across organisational boundaries. The novelty of the guidelines is the five questions directed at the achievement of curricular goals and equity, questions that are supposed to act as mediators to direct the dialogue towards gaining the object. The guidelines furthermore state that the preschool units' quality reports and sets of descriptive statistics should, just as in previous years, constitute artefacts that are expressly intended to mediate the achievement of the object. Parts of the content of the novel guidelines can also be understood as rules for the composition and implementation of the dialogue. The guidelines stipulate that the area manager should function as a meeting host and that the principal and quality analyst are mandatory participants. Other professionals, such as teachers and team leaders, may also be invited.

The activity theoretical analysis clearly reveals secondary contradictions regarding the artefact node, the rule node, and the division of labour node. Additionally, the administrators' approach to and use of the novel guidelines also exposes tertiary contradictions between the newly established mode of activity and the remnants of a previous mode of activity. The guideline's questions are used differently in the four quality dialogues, which results in different levels of coherence between the artefact node and object node of the activity system. In Table 8, the findings are summarised regarding the use of guideline questions during the quality dialogues and if there is coherence between the artefact node and object node of the activity system.

Table 8. Use of questions in the guidelines.

Quality dialogue meetings	Are the guideline's questions used during the quality dialogue?	Coherence between the artefact node and the object node?
1	No. Principals will discuss the questions later.	No
2	No. Area Manager has sent other questions concerning the area's priorities.	No
3	No. Principals should answer question by email afterwards.	No
4 and 5	Questions are explicitly used as primary artefact and renew the dialogue.	Yes

Coherence between the artefact node and object node can only be found in dialogue 4 and 5, where the questions in the guidelines are explicitly used by administrators when meeting the preschool management group. A secondary contradiction regarding the artefact node can be identified in dialogues 1–3, where the principals are instead invited to answer the questions by email or during regular management meetings not attended by quality analysts. This mode of action can be understood as marginalisation of the quality analyst whose job it is to analyse the discussions in all quality dialogues regarding the questions in the novel guidelines. The role of the quality analyst is dependent on the invitation and benevolence of the area manager. Area manager 2 took this one step further and sent out other questions, which subsequently came to be discussed in the quality dialogue. Those questions were not directed at achieving the object but rather at following up with work conducted in the geographical area. Although the questions in the novel guidelines mediate and renew dialogue 4, dialogues 1–3 are instead organised in ways aimed at the maintenance of previous dialogue traditions, which identifies a tertiary contradiction. Old ways of arranging the meetings contributed to what area managers 1–3 perceived as well-performing dialogues in which the participants seemed pleased and proud of their work and the improvement efforts made in their geographical areas. In follow-up interviews, area managers 1 and 2 explicitly express that they prefer to continue the way in which the dialogues have been carried out in previous years.

Area manager 2: Why change a successful recipe?

The citation is an example of a tertiary contradiction because it shows how old modes of action are kept even though the object of activity has expanded and given cause for other nodes of the activity system to change accordingly. The area manager's quotation shows how one person's refusal to change a rolling mill affects the actions of all the participants in the quality dialogue. Again, the quotation highlights the importance of the area managers' intentions and understanding of the purpose of the quality dialogues as a condition for the enactment and outcome.

Quality reports as mediating artefacts

The quality reports of each preschool are used differently to prompt dialogue when meeting teachers than when meeting management groups. In Table 9, the findings on how quality reports are used during the quality dialogues with teachers in the

preschool management group and if there is coherence between the artefact node and object node of the activity system are summarised.

Table 9. Use of quality reports.

Quality dialogue meeting	How are the quality reports used during the quality dialogue with teachers?	How do superiors use the quality reports during the quality dialogue with preschool management group?	Coherence between the artefact node and the object node?
1	As a primary artefact	As a primary artefact first, with an attempt at tertiary artefact	No/Yes
2	As a primary artefact	X	No
3	As a primary artefact	As a primary artefact	No
4 and 5	As a primary artefact first, with an attempt at tertiary artefact	As a primary artefact	No/Yes

Prior to the dialogues, administrators read each preschool unit's quality report, and many of them have marked passages that they find interesting. In several of the observation protocols, I have noted that administrators' copies of the quality reports have been colour marked and that some have stickers on several pages. In all dialogues, the reports are browsed and referred to, and specific sentences are quoted and asked for elaboration upon. Quality reports are used explicitly to prompt detailed questions of a clarifying nature.

Team leader 1: Here, on page 3, in the middle, you have written that it is difficult to see what the children are interested in and to uphold their interests. What do you mean?

Area manager 1: Why have you written on this page that your planning time is stressful?

Secondary contradictions can be identified regarding the artefact node and the rule node. The fact that the modes of using quality reports are similar across all four quality dialogues suggests that report usage has become a rule, which suggests it is a tertiary contradiction. Tertiary contradictions emerge when, for example, the object has changed, new tools have been produced but not fully utilised, and the subjects continue working the same ways as they used to. It takes time and dedication to change habits. As the quote above shows, old modes of action have not changed, even though the object has expanded, and the five new questions have been agreed upon to guide the dialogues. Only in dialogue 4, which is towards the end of the meeting, does the area manager go beyond the quality reports, as the issue of (improved) prerequisites for the teachers' pedagogical work is

addressed. The answers the teachers provide are, however, very brief and relate to preschool culture.

The secondary contradictions identified in administrators' dialogue with teachers are also identified in the meetings with the preschool management groups. In the dialogue with preschool management groups, the four groups of administrators use the reports differently. Group 1 administrators give feedback on the preschool management group's writing skills to elaborate on the school improvement processes described in the reports. Towards the end of the dialogue, the quality analyst asks the preschool management group for their assessment of curricular goal achievement because it has not been clearly expressed in the report nor during the dialogue. The managers describe their struggle with the template's deadline, design, and usability for both them and the teachers. The area manager comments that the report lacks descriptions of what the teachers verbally described in the dialogue as the most important to them, that is, good relationships with children and parents. The principal opposes by relating to how they are bound to the template.

Principal 1: The template does not allow us to do that; we are all shaped in a mould.

This triggers the area manager to encourage the principal and management group to challenge the system and use the template as they see fit.

Area manager 1: Challenge the system! Turn the report into your own tool.

From a CHAT perspective, this exclamation by area manager 1 shows an attempt to bring the substitute object — the quality report — back to its place as an instrument. This exhortation could have functioned as a tertiary artefact if it had led to an exchange between the dialogue participants about how the design of the quality report can be developed into a more fruitful tool relative to the object. However, right then and there, the issue was not commented on further. Instead, the administrators started praising and boosting the management group for having done a great job, which they should just continue doing.

Administrator 2 does not meet the preschool management group separately and does not address them directly either. In area 3, the conversation with the preschool management group departs from the details in the quality reports. Only with respect to the preschool management group's initiative does the conversation move beyond the documentation when the preschool management group describes how they cooperate when hiring staff and how curricular understanding

matters most when they distribute teachers to each classroom. In dialogue 4 and 5, the administrators only depart from the reports when they ask for elaboration on strategies for improving ICT use.

Statistics as mediating artefacts

The statistics that, according to the guidelines, should underpin the dialogue concern, for example, circumstances related to personnel resources, number of children, budgetary issues, parental surveys, complaints, and suspected violations against children. The statistics are used in different ways in the four dialogues.

Table 10. Use of statistics.

Quality dialogue meeting	How are the statistics used during the quality dialogue with teachers?	How are the statistics used during the quality dialogue with preschool management group?	Coherence between the artefact node and the object node?
1	Not used	Briefly mentioned, except for the parental survey, which triggers a discussion beyond the documentation.	No
2	Only one question on financial resources is briefly addressed	Questions are not directed at the management.	No
3	Not used	Only one question on complaints from parents is briefly addressed.	No
4 and 5	Not used	Systematically used as primary artefacts, which renews the dialogue.	Yes

None of these methods seem to lead to common knowledge beyond documentation. The analysis shows that the statistics seem to be used because they should be used; that is, they are used as a rule. Hence, a secondary contradiction between the artefact node, rule node and object node can be identified. In dialogue 1, the results of the parent survey trigger a discussion about the different ways of collaborating with parents, whereby aspects beyond the documentation are apparent. The other statistics are addressed only briefly. When the quality analyst questions why no suspected violations have been reported, the preschool management group describes teachers' good work. The area manager quickly ends the discussion by praising their relational work. This moment could also have taken the dialogue beyond documentation, yet the area manager's choice is to praise and then move on to gained superiority.

In dialogue 2, statistics are used only once: when the area manager asks teachers how they have changed their work because of the extra monetary resources they have received owing to the statistically evaluated needs of the children. The teachers confirm that they know about the resources but instead start talking about children's thematic projects. In dialogue 3, statistics are mentioned only when the preschool management group is asked whether they are aware of the number of registered complaints from parents. The preschool management group confirms this, but it does not lead to further discussion.

In contrast to the other dialogues, the statistics are addressed more systematically in dialogue 4, where the quality analyst repeatedly asks the preschool management group the same question, merely exchanging the different types of statistics at hand.

Quality analyst 4: What do you think about, and how do you work with, the differences between your preschools as for [licenced teachers, sick leave numbers, number of complaints and violations, etc.]?

All the answers concern the school culture, teachers' (in)competence and management's thoughts about their own and preschool teachers' leadership. The administrators comment on the answers but do not take the discussion further.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the novel guidelines that specify how the dialogues are to be conducted, which are based on five overarching questions, on the one hand, and quality reports and statistics, on the other hand, cannot be said to mediate dialogues 1–3 in the way that has been agreed upon, and in dialogue 4, this is only partially. To a low degree, the dialogues move beyond the documentation, and it is only in dialogue 4 and 5 that prerequisites are touched upon to an extent that could lead to further insights. The secondary contradictions between the artefact node, the rule node and the object are evident. In addition, a tertiary contradiction can be traced through the remnants of a previous mode of activity that are still clearly present. It seems that the doings of 'doing a quality dialogue' have become a rule that does not serve the expanded object.

The findings show how different ways of conducting quality dialogues have developed in different geographical areas. A cultural–historical analysis revealed that the administration's geographical areas have a history of working independently according to the needs of the areas' preschools and visions of each

area manager rather than by the superintendent. Striving for all professionals' sense of cultural belonging within the geographical area has permeated their work.

Area manager 1: We have striven to establish a sense of area identity.

However, in the studied year, the superintendent has made it clear that area managers need to 'raise their gaze' and, to a greater degree, work more collectively for the benefit of all preschools within the administration, not just their own geographical areas. Therefore, the previously mentioned novel guidelines with their included questions are an artefact intended to mediate the actions towards an expanded object. This new artefact can be explained as challenging the old ways of working. In striving to maintain a sense of cultural belonging within the geographical area among the participants, area managers often refer to the geographical areas in the quality dialogues. This is most evidently observable in the actions and statements of area managers 1 and 2, who repeatedly use the expression 'we in this area' and in how the teachers are asked to describe why they are proud of working 'in this preschool area' and 'in this geographical area'. Additionally, a sense of intimacy is created through body language and a sense of humour, for instance, when area manager 2 occasionally touches the teacher, for example, by taking their hands when something delicate is being discussed. When successes are discussed or something funny is said, the area manager confirms the teachers' reactions by jokingly saying, 'I can see you like that'. Additionally, area manager 2 often stands in the middle of the room to perform comic acting, leading to many laughs. When saying goodbye, area manager 2 embraces the participants.

Summary

The activity-theoretical analysis of how the participants perceive the purpose (object) of quality dialogue type B has shown three interacting activity systems, two of which have been found at the preschool unit level and one at the authoritative level. At the preschool units, the local management group is in the subject position of one activity system, and the teachers (teaching staff) are in the subject position of the other activity system. Figure 8 illustrates that the shared, generalised, object for all activity systems is to support an improvement of educational quality and, in addition, that the different activity systems are guided by substitute objects, which can be described as displaying accomplishments, crossing organisational boundaries, and building relationships, controlling the

truth, giving/receiving feedback, improving prerequisites and improving writing skills.

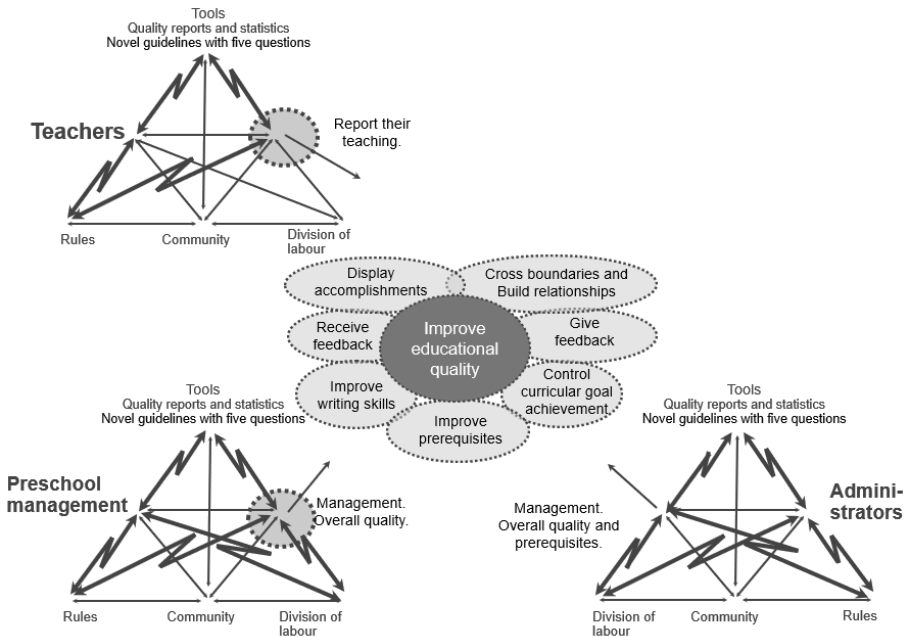


Figure 8. Quality dialogue type B: Objects and contradictions.

Figure 8 also provides an illustration of the identified contradictions in each of the three activity systems. Primary contradictions are marked with a large circle in the object-node while secondary and tertiary contradictions are marked by broken arrows. Because substitute objects have taken precedence over the shared object there is a secondary contradiction regarding the rule node in all activity systems. In two of the activity systems, there is also a secondary contradiction regarding the division of labour node. First, since it is the area manager's perception of the purpose that rules how labour is to be divided which makes other participant's opinions less valued. Second, because some of the quality analysts take a rather silent role in the administrator's work and are also excluded from the for a where the novel five questions are discussed. Third, because the assistant principals are rather silent and also not asked many questions. They do not see the point of their participation since it is their experience that their work is not discussed in the quality dialogue. The tools that mediate the discussions are primarily the preschool

units' quality reports which are predominantly discussed retrospectively. From a CHAT perspective this could be understood as both a secondary and a tertiary contradiction, since the reports seem to have become a rule rather than a tool, and that old modes of action have not been changed even though a new artefact in the form of new questions have been introduced – questions that have been created to serve an object that has expanded into including the issue of educational equity. As for the issue of control versus support, the type B quality dialogues are oriented towards retrospective control and upholding old modes of action.

Part 4. Quality Dialogues at the Authoritative Level (Types C-D)

In this section, I present the findings regarding two types of quality dialogues at the authoritative level of the organisation as they unfolded and were described from 2019 to 2020. One of the two quality dialogues was called 'the Superintendent Dialogue' by the respondents but is here called type C to align with the previously presented quality dialogues. The other one was called 'the Presiding Members Dialogue' by the respondents but is here called quality dialogue type D. This section first provides the findings on the quality dialogue arrangements, then the participants' perceptions of the purpose of the quality dialogues and, finally, an analysis of systemic contradictions that influence the achievement of the purpose, and the function and further development of the quality dialogues. The section ends with conclusions of the key findings.

Arrangements

As mentioned above, at the time of data collection, two types of quality dialogues were found at the authoritative level. Both were arranged at the authoritative level of the organisation and, therefore, are presented in this section, but there are also differences between them in terms of who participated, when they were arranged and what artefacts were utilised to promote conversation. The participants of dialogue types C and D are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11. Meeting arrangement quality dialogue types C and D.

Organisational belonging	Professions	Number of participants	
		Type C	Type D
LEA at geographical administrative areas	Area manager	5	5
LEA at central administration	Head of quality department	1	1
	Superintendent	1	1
School board	Presiding members	0	3

As seen in the table, all the participants in type C dialogue also took part in type D dialogue, with the difference being that the presiding members of the local school board were added in the type D dialogue.

Both types of dialogues were hosted by the superintendent. Each dialogue lasted approximately three hours, including a coffee break in the middle. Dialogues C and D took place in a long, narrow meeting room at the central administration’s headquarters. This was the same room where the superintendent hosts management meetings every two weeks with area managers and the heads of departments at the central administration, that is, the heads of quality, accounts, communication, and human resources.

The type C dialogue was arranged in October, and the type D dialogue was arranged in November. Type C was described in interviews and municipal documents as a sequel to the B dialogues. Prior to the type C quality dialogue meeting, each participant received documentation from the five area managers, with conclusions from the type B quality dialogues in each geographical area. The quality dialogue type C was additionally described as a prequel to type D dialogues. A draft of the central LEA’s overall assessment of educational quality was discussed in quality dialogue type D before it would be finalised. The final version would then be discussed by the entire school board in December at the annual budget meeting. This is an annual event where politicians discuss the coming year’s goals and prioritisations before actual decision-making during an ordinary school board meeting.

Participants’ Perceptions of the Purpose

In this section, I present the findings on how the participants described the purpose of and what was to be achieved through quality dialogues of types C and D. The analysis shows that most participants describe the purpose of the quality dialogues as a setting for discussing and assessing the prerequisites provided by the

LEA that impact the overall educational quality at all the preschools in the city so that equity can be achieved in the long term. The type C dialogue was newly introduced by the superintendent at the time of data collection as a natural step of the administration's development after preschool units and geographical areas could have the opportunity to make improvements for the past six years. Now, the turn had come for everyone to work for discussing how improvements on an overall level, here regarding the whole city, could be made to achieve high quality in the city and, in the long term, achieve equity.

Superintendent: We need to talk about equity, and we need to talk about the whole city. In this administration, we first talked about the necessity of letting each principal organise and improve their preschool unit areas. Each area manager then organised and improved their geographical areas. Now, it is my assessment that I, as a superintendent, need to organise and improve the wholeness of the city. I think the process has been necessary. We needed this process. Now, we are at a point in time where we need to focus on the whole city. The principals want that, too. However, it is neither easy for the principals nor for me, the superintendent.

In the interviews, the purpose was described as a discussion of the overall prerequisites that the LEA provides and can improve rather than curricular issues or preschools' internal organisations, which the principals are responsible for. The balance between — and the boundaries of — LEA responsibilities and principals' responsibilities was an issue that everyone needed to be aware of in the dialogue.

Head of quality: We needed to raise up to the occasion and talk about overall prerequisites without stepping into the arena for which the principal is responsible.

The purpose of the C dialogue was described as a sequel to the B dialogue and prequel to the D dialogue. Prior to the C dialogue, conclusions of the B dialogues in each geographical area were documented by the area managers together with team leaders and quality analysts. The administrators had no template to use but should address the previously mentioned 'five overall questions'. The five documentations were read by all participants of the type C dialogue prior to the dialogue. In particular, the area managers appreciated reading each other's texts, which they described in interviews as a learning experience. They learned about the work and ambitions of their colleagues and gained more insights into the challenges and successes of other geographical areas.

Area Manager 3: I had the world's best literature to read this weekend! Yes! I got to read my colleagues' texts about this and about that. In addition, we were all so curious about each other's work and areas. 'Yes! This is new to me'. I understand them better, and I am emotionally affected by what I have read.

The purpose of the type C dialogue was also described by the participants as a prequel to type D dialogue with the presiding members (politicians) of the local school board, a sort of preparation where the participants could come to conclusions of what was important to raise with the politicians.

Area Manager 5: We discussed things that we need to continue working with, and we agreed on the things we should discuss with the politicians. Things they need more knowledge about, such as the problematic situation with some child minders' lack of language skills in the Swedish language. This affects the quality of education. That is something you cannot describe fully in writing. You must explain in your own words, face to face. The politicians must realise the limitations of what is possible to achieve when the situation is the way it is. I do think I managed to get the message through to them in the dialogue. I could see that on their reactions.

As the excerpt indicates, the dialogues were described by many as an opportunity to talk more freely about things that cannot be described satisfactorily in documentation. Some things are better told in person so that one can use body language, tone of voice and layman words. Meetings in person also offer an opportunity to evoke and respond to emotions.

For politicians, it is the opportunity to meet area managers in a more relaxed, appreciated situation. It gives them the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge about the everyday realities and challenges of preschools. Hence, the knowledge they gain from the dialogue is discussed with peers in their political parties, which leads to changed prioritisations and distribution of financial resources.

Politician 2: The purpose, as I see it, is for us politicians to gain in-depth knowledge into the realities and opportunity for a dialogue with the area managers. Normally, we do not sit down with the area managers like that because at the school board meetings, we have an agenda to follow. Therefore, this dialogue is an opportunity to learn more about the background of the text in the overall assessment report, which is the basis for how we distribute financial resources. Therefore, after this dialogue, we can go to our peers in the political parties and discuss problems, challenges and changes in resource distribution. This means that the dialogues nourish the political work outside of the school board as well. It matters for our discussions on the budget and how the school board prioritises and distributes resources.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that the purpose of dialogues types C and D is to establish settings for learning the prerequisites that LEA is responsible for and to discuss issues of equity and prerequisites for quality. The analysis shows that the prerequisites discussed during dialogues C and D concern staff's teaching competence and language skills, the necessity of prioritising ICT, what shared educational contributions the LEA can provide and for what categories of staff members, distribution, and acquisition of resources in the form of skilled and licenced preschool teachers and distribution of financial resources.

Contradictions

The analysis has identified a secondary contradiction regarding the tool node of the activity systems. This contradiction concerns the relationship between curricular goal achievement and the prerequisites. As previously shown, dialogue types C and D are intended to focus on the prerequisites provided by the LEA. This new focus was introduced in the year of the data collection and was manifested in the five questions that should guide the dialogues. As mentioned in the local historical account of the development of the quality dialogues, previous years' quality dialogues at the LEA level had been focusing on curricular goal achievement and arranged such that each of the area managers had their own dialogue with the presiding members of the school board. This year, the superintendent gathered all area managers in the same dialogue with politicians, and the focus of the discussion was on the prerequisites provided by the LEA. During dialogue C, three of the five area managers recurrently initiated and responded to descriptions of curricular goal achievement, with special emphasis on children's influence and pedagogical learning environments, whereas the other two area managers recurrently turned the discussion back to the prerequisites. After dialogue C, the head of quality explained the reasons for the balancing act between curricular goal achievement and prerequisites during the dialogue.

Head of quality: I had a feeling this would happen because I could conclude from the differences in their documentation from the B dialogues that they had approached the concept of quality differently. I could see that those who wrote more about the prerequisites would be able to turn around the discussion from those who were emotionally touched by the curricular discussions. Those who are closer to the practice usually think it is rather boring to talk about prerequisites. They are uplifted by meetings with professionals at preschools because that is where they get the energy to carry on. In meetings with preschool units, they become emotionally inspired by pedagogical discussions. However, that is not what politicians need to talk

about; they should not tell professionals how to do their job. Additionally, there is a long tradition and much experience with how quality dialogues should be conducted, which is what they want to continue with.

As the excerpt shows, the area managers' different understandings of the concept of quality and their intentions with respect to the school improvement process have directed their understanding of what should be raised with the superintendent in the type C dialogue and with the politicians in the type D dialogue. As the head of quality described, the documentations of conclusions from the B dialogues in their respective geographical areas, which were to be read before the C dialogue, differ in how the area managers interpreted the concept of quality as either curricular goal achievement or as prerequisites provided by the LEA. Here, the connection between the two interpretations seem to be lacking. In previous years, quality dialogues have primarily focused on curricular goal achievement, which is also what area managers are emotionally affected by in the B dialogues when they meet professionals and managers at the preschool units. The analysis of the interviews also shows that the area managers are conscious of their struggle in trying to get a focus in the discussion. The area managers struggle in a balancing act between curricular goal achievement which is relevant for discussions with principals about their responsibilities, and prerequisites which are relevant for discussing the LEA's and superintendent's responsibilities.

Area Manager 1: I cannot help it. I am drawn to these issues. Maybe it is not relevant. Maybe it is relevant for another level, and we just need to elevate ourselves, just as at the beginning of the dialogue. To think about if this is an issue relevant for the principals or for the superintendent.

When asked about interpretations of the quality concept and what the changed focus of the quality dialogues towards prerequisites entails, the area managers describe that they seldom engage in such discussions with their peers.

The analysis also reveals other contradictions within the activity system. Strong norms between the area managers, the superintendent and the head of quality seem to have been established, hindering them from taking on new perspectives, roles, and positions. The analysis reveals secondary contradictions between the rule node and tool node of the activity system as well as a secondary contradiction regarding the division of the labour node. For example, during type C, the participants chose to place themselves at their usual places in the room, even though this dialogue had previously — and at multiple times — been described by the superintendent as a new type of meeting, a 'round table-discussion' where new perspectives could

be taken. In the interviews, several participants commented that the location and seating were the same as every time the group met, which influenced them to take the same positions, roles, and perspectives as usual.

Area Manager 1: We sat at the exact same positions as where we always sat in the room. If we had been at another location and at the expected round table, then I think it would have become something else. It is a bit funny that we are so used to our routines that it is hard to change them. In addition, we take on the same roles as usual. We all know how we function, who speaks much and who needs to think more before speaking and who is somewhere in the middle of that. In addition, we know what each one of us cares the most about.

When participants describe the C dialogue as following the same established norms as an ordinary management meeting, some area managers describe a feeling of not being encouraged enough to break barriers and see new perspectives, whereas others say that the changed focus introduced by the superintendent is a sufficient challenge. Here, dialogue C does not become a setting for critical thinking and knowledge creation because the discussion remains in a knowledge transfer mode. The seating arrangements and established norms during the type D dialogue were not mentioned in the interviews in the same way as type C. The participants seemed to think that the mere presence of the politicians made type D dialogue stand out from the ordinary.

Summary

In sum, the analysis shows that work conducted in the C/D dialogues can be understood as different interconnected activity systems. The administrators represent one activity system in both C and D dialogues and the politicians represent another activity system in the D dialogue (see Figure 9). The two activity systems share the generalised object of discussing improvements in educational quality. The administrators' object is also to provide knowledge to the politicians who in turn provide resources and feedback to the administration.

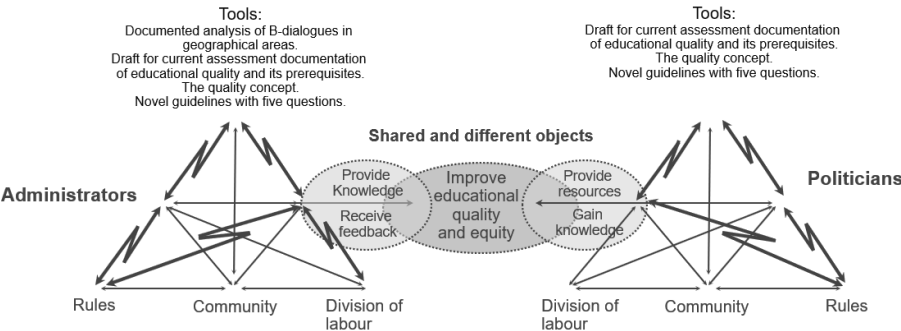


Figure 9. Quality dialogue type C/D: Objects and contradictions.

Figure 9 further shows that there are secondary and tertiary contradictions in the activity systems. The participants do not share a common understanding of what quality concept and what quality aspects should be discussed in the quality dialogue (secondary contradiction). Therefore, a balancing act between detailed curricular goal achievement and everyday actions at the preschool units versus overall prerequisites that affect the quality and equity is conducted. Old routines are dominant even though a new tool in the form of new guidelines have been introduced (tertiary artefact) but is regarded as a rule rather than a tool (secondary artefact). Established norms constrain the area managers from breaking barriers and seeing new perspectives. As for the issue of control versus support, quality dialogues type C/D are oriented towards innovative support but also entail mechanisms of control.

Conclusion

The current thesis' first research question examines the intended purpose of quality dialogues and how this purpose aligns with the actions of the quality dialogue participants. The analysis has shown that there is not just one purpose. In fact, the findings reveal that there are several purposes so strong that they have taken precedence over the intended purpose of improving educational quality. The quality dialogue type B stands out as being the most complex to analyse because three activity systems have been identified to have multiple substitute objects.

The second research question concerns the culturally and historically shaped contradictions that influence the development and function of the quality dialogue. It can be concluded that also in this case, the type B quality dialogue stands out, having most systemic contradictions which influence the function to a high degree.

The aim of the current thesis is to contribute knowledge on quality dialogues in local education administration's systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control results. A four-field matrix has been used to analyse the position of each observed quality dialogue in relation to the support of innovation versus control and retrospection versus future orientation. In Figure 10, I have included all the previously presented conclusions so that a comparison of the different types of quality dialogues can be made.

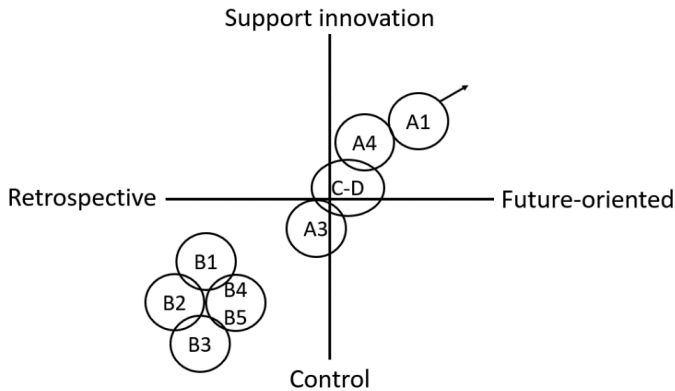


Figure 10. Quality dialogue types A–D in the field of control versus support.

The analysis has, on the one hand, shown that type B quality dialogues are oriented towards the past. The quest for improvement in the type B quality dialogues is based on the idea that improvements stem from the evaluation of what has been achieved, which is why the mediating artefacts are mainly retrospective quality reports. The discussions are detailed and controlling in nature and cannot be said to promote future-oriented innovation. The analysis has also revealed that the type A dialogues, which had more hands-on teaching examples, are future-oriented and support innovation and school improvement processes. Type C/D quality dialogue concern both retrospective and future-oriented dimensions of work but are most focused on the future and therefore more supportive of innovative aspects.

Chapter 7 Discussion

The overall aim of the present thesis was to contribute knowledge on the ‘quality dialogue’ in local education administrations’ systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control. Two research questions were posed. Empirical data were sampled from quality dialogues conducted at preschool units; between the preschool units and the authoritative level of the studied administration; and at the authoritative level. The empirical data were then analysed through a CHAT lens which was complemented with the framework of relational agency and the construct of procedural display. This chapter first discusses the key findings and then provides methodological and theoretical reflections. Then follows a discussion of knowledge contribution, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. The chapter ends with a discussion on implications for practice.

Multiple purposes

The first research question posed was: What is the intended purpose of the quality dialogue, and how does this purpose align with the actions of the quality dialogue participants? Findings show that there is one intended purpose — the generalized object — namely that of improving the educational quality. However, findings also show that there is not just one purpose but several specific objects which have developed over time in different contexts, under the influence of systemic contradictions, for example when the purpose expanded, there was also a need for new or adjusted tools. The results show that the object of activity, or purpose, expanded due to changed national demands, changes in the municipal organisation or societal demands, and that the major transformations occurred in periods of approximately three years.

The results show that perceptions of the purpose of quality dialogues are different at various levels of the vertical hierarchy of the administration. At preschool units, quality dialogues focus more on the processual quality in relation to curricular goals and local priorities. Here, the support of improvements of teaching, pedagogical environments and children’s participation and influence is

in focus. At the authoritative level, the focus of discussion is instead on the prerequisites that condition the education's quality and the work of the teaching staff, even though a balancing act is performed between discussion the curricular goal achievement at preschool units and the prerequisites that the authoritative level is responsible for. That balancing act is also visible in quality dialogues that take place in the intersection between preschool units' level and the authoritative level, that is quality dialogues which are led by the area managers whose understandings of the purpose orient the actions of all participants.

The findings further show that the purpose of quality dialogues in the current study could be understood as for example relationship building actions, improvement of writing skills, display of achievements, control, feedback, etcetera, rather than an opportunity for equal parties to achieve the intended object of educational quality that could make an actual difference for the preschool education. In many cases, these perceptions of the purpose have turned into substitute objects which take precedence over the intended, shared purpose.

By describing the object of work activity, the current study has addressed Edwards' (2007) concern of looking beyond the actions to the purposes and conditions of collaboration. To further understand how the actions of the quality dialogue participants align with the intended purpose, one must also seek for answers regarding the culturally and historically shaped contradictions.

Culturally and historically shaped contradictions

The second research question concerned how culturally, and historically shaped contradictions influence the development and function of the quality dialogue. The findings show that contradictions in and between activity systems have affected the development of quality dialogues under the influence of the state as a rule-producing activity system, the municipalities' reorganisations, societal needs, and gained insights. When the object of activity, that is the purpose, expands, there is need for new or adjusted tools, and adjustments regarding the subject and division of labour. The historical descriptions in interviews show how the tool- and division of labour nodes were most often described by the respondents, and that the contradictions grew into a need-state in periods of three years. Contradictions regarding the rule node were, however, rather more frequently identified in the quality dialogues which were studied in 2019-2020.

The identified contradictions influence the function of the quality dialogues in the studied administration to a high degree. The findings reveal that when there was coherence between the object and the tools such as hands-on teaching examples in the type A dialogue meeting, then the quality dialogues also functioned as future-oriented and supportive of school improvement processes. However, when secondary contradictions made the tool-character obscure and artefacts instead functioned as rules, then the quality dialogues did not function as intended, and in addition, substitute objects took precedence over the intended, shared purpose. Old modes of action in the type B dialogue also prohibited new artefacts in the form of new guidelines to guide the actions of the participants to serve the intended object of activity. Contradictions regarding the tool node of the activity system were the most frequently identified through the activity theoretical analysis. Here, I would like to remind the reader that the activity theoretical concept of contradictions bear potential for further development and should not be regarded as something negative. How we deal with contradictions, is what matters. If they are acknowledged and taken care of, they can be a source for collective, expanded learning (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013).

Support versus control

The identified contradictions in this study furthermore influence the function of the quality dialogues as either means for support or control. The results of this study align with previous research on quality dialogues (e.g., Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Bröms, 2020; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Prøitz, et al. 2021; Åkesson, 2024), which have revealed questions related to the tension between shared knowledge formation and support on the one hand, and governance and control on the other. This study traces more such tensions, for instance, in the B dialogue's detailed, retrospective questions on preschools' descriptive annual reports which most evidently support the control mechanisms of evaluative practice. The controlling aspects of the type B dialogue are confirmed by findings revealing the participants' perceptions of quality dialogues as homework tests one must pass before one can continue working as usual. The philosophical concept of dialogue is grounded in non-objectivizing, and the openness of unfinalizability (Englund and Sandström, 2015), yet the studied quality dialogues type B seem to have become an annual instrumental event and a question of governance and control. Because display of achievements has been identified as a substitute object in this study, Adolfsson

and Håkansson's (2021) findings that principals use dialogues for being acknowledged by superiors that they are in control of their schools has been confirmed.

In contrast, the type A dialogue stands out as being more of a supportive character, much thanks to the fact that hands-on teaching examples were used to mediate the conversations, and that focus was on supporting school improvement processes which could be taken into action directly after the quality dialogue. The different forms of documentation that prompted the discussions in the studied quality dialogues confirm previous studies on what types of documentation is used in quality dialogues (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Bröms, 2020; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen and Paulsen, 2021; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Prøitz, et al. 2021). The current study also confirms findings made in previous research; that narrative descriptions can provide a complementary and better overall picture than quantified data alone (Adolfsson & Wikström, 2007), dialogues can be a tool for administrators to gain insight into — and increased contact with — local units (Adolfsson & Wikström, 2007; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021), and there can be unclear expectations on participation (Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021).

The intimacy- and trust-building actions conducted in the dialogues are in alignment with Henriksen and Paulsen's (2021) and Henriksen's (2018) findings and align well with trust-based public management (Bringselius, 2023; SOU 2018:38; SOU 2019:43). Dialogue as a concept has positive connotations of something good and desirable (Dafermos, 2018; Englund, 2012; Jezierska & Koczanowicz, 2015) and is linked with transparency, inclusion, deliberation, and good governance in evaluation practice. This is a particular view on dialogue - it is not all theoreticians who presume beforehand that dialogue by necessity means 'deliberation' for example (Dahler-Larsen & Boodhoo, 2019). In this study, the supporting, innovative aspects of the quality dialogues, can be interpreted as deliberative.

The fact that the concept of quality has been described by Bornemark (2018), Dahler-Larsen, (2019), and Nyte (2006) as ambiguous and hard to define, has been confirmed in this study. The Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE, 2015) refers to quality in education as how well schools and preschools meet and respond to national goals, requirements, and guidelines, as well as to what degree they are characterized by a strive for renewal and continuous improvement based on prevailing conditions. It is not surprising that respondents make subjective interpretations of the concept of quality and have different

understandings of the purpose. Practitioners could benefit from discussing the purpose of quality dialogues before engaging in them and make plans accordingly because the object is the what and the why of the activity (Kaptelinin, 2005). If the participants gain a deeper understanding that the object shapes, drives, and directs actions (Engeström, 1999), perhaps they would be able to improve what is possible to achieve in and through the dialogues. Furthermore, the current study shows that more things are at play than just knowledge work on quality and school improvement.

Procedural display or relational agency?

To understand the cultural behaviours of those participating in quality dialogues, I turn to Bloome et al.'s (1989; 1990) construct of procedural display which reflects a situation where the functional justification given by participants and others for a specific activity may not necessarily be the function served by the activity or the function to which people orient their behaviour. In short, that quality dialogues could have another value than the knowledge creation which the activity intentionally aims for (by whom, or, possibly, according to what guiding document)? This aligns both with the activity theoretical concept of substitute objects (Engeström & Escalante, 1996) and with research that shows how quality work has become a platform for governance, mostly entailing procedural control, rather than support for improvement (cf. Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Bornemark, 2018; Bröms, 2020; Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Nyttell, 2006; Prøitz, et al. 2021).

The present study confirms the intention of emancipatory aspects of dialogues with broad participation that previous studies have identified before (Forsberg & Nordzell, 2013; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Norqvist & Ärlestig, 2021). Yet the current study also reveals contradictions that challenge the creation of common knowledge and responsive action. Procedural display is at play when the shared object is not known and urgent to all and when the administrators' desire to praise and boost the preschools takes precedence over the intended knowledge work. This confirms Norqvist and Ärlestig's (2021) findings that, when there is room for individual interpretation of the purpose, the intended dialogue is not achieved.

It could be assumed that the dialogue participants display to each other sets of interactionally constructed and content-related procedures that themselves count as 'doing a quality dialogue'. The procedures are neither related to the acquisition of boundary-crossing creation of common knowledge beyond documentation

around curricular goal achievement and prerequisites nor to the intention described in national policy (SNAE, 2012) that quality dialogues should contribute with an extended understanding of results and curricular goal achievement so that LEAs can improve overall prerequisites affecting the results. The mediating artefacts in the form of quality reports and statistics can be understood as mediating rules that preserve traditional modes of action (Engeström, 1990) rather than allowing the dialogue to be a tool for knowledge creation. The procedural rules for conversation have become a rule for maintaining the course of the discussion, which also constrains the conversation from moving beyond the documentation.

Understanding quality dialogues as procedural display (Bloome, 1990; Bloome, et.al., 1989) relates well with Bornemark's (2018), Dahler-Larsen's (2019) and Nytell's (2006) argumentation that quality and quality work over the years have become a platform for governance mostly entailing procedural control. The critique posed by Biesta (2009; 2010) on the age of measurement could very well be relevant to bring to surface in the light of this study's findings. Do we measure and assess what is important in education or has that which we assess become important to education? Dahler Larsen (2019) argues that quality audit has become "a problematic industry itself" (p. 36), that puts demands on organizational coordination and a special kind of knowledge. In this thesis, quality dialogues take place at all levels of the educational organisation and engage a great number of professionals and managers. Quality dialogues and other routines and forms in systematic quality work are time-consuming. The preparations, implementation, and follow-up take a lot of time, and several quality dialogues are conducted annually. The most evident role that was found to be obscure in the study is the quality analyst. I argue that with an increasing number of specialized administrators, or organisational professionals, in the public sector both in Sweden and internationally is (Löfgren, Darrah-Morgan and Hall, 2022; Alamaa, Hall, and Löfgren, 2024) professionals and managers in the whole of the educational system engage in time-consuming quality dialogues.

It can also be suggested that the cultural behaviours in which people engage often remain unexamined and taken for granted, and that procedural display (Bloome, 1989; Bloome et al., 1990) may mask what is occurring in an activity. Following Sandström's (2012) argument that policy texts' unproblematic and very positive descriptions of dialogue could explain why dialogue as a governing technique has been widely spread and hardly met any criticism, I suggest that the cultural meanings and values exposed in the studied quality dialogues can partially

be explained by the positive connotations that the concepts of quality and dialogue bear. They can of course also be explained by the positive experiences which administrators share of hearing, seeing and sensing reality and the experiences of being praised, boosted, and approved that preschool management groups and teachers describe. That quality dialogue participants engage in the dialogue meetings rather uncritically challenges the very idea of a quality dialogue. When findings so clearly show that the way area managers decide the design of the quality dialogues according to their own ideas rather than those of the collective, the quality dialogues cannot be described as open and non-authoritarian which according to Englund (2012) constitutes the ethical-moral dimension of a dialogue. In the studied quality dialogues, participants represent different asymmetrical positions and responsibilities in the education system, with and without close work relationships.

An ideal understanding of quality dialogues as relational agency (Edwards, 2010; 2011; 2017) would have been more attractive than that of procedural display and would have endorsed an understanding of quality dialogues to support school improvement processes. Edwards has defined relational agency as ‘the capacity of aligning one’s own thoughts and actions to those of others to interpret problems and respond to those interpretations’ (2011). Edwards’ framework consists of a trio of analytical concepts: relational agency, relational expertise, and common knowledge. I argue that the ideal quality dialogue could be thought of as a setting for creation of common knowledge on a shared problem, by those whom it matters to, that is through relational expertise, and conducted in such a way that the created common knowledge has potential to stimulate relational agency for collective action. This study’s quality dialogues do align with some of these ideas, and analytical concepts.

The broad participation of the studied quality dialogues can be compared with the Edward’s concept relational expertise which means involving all those whom it matters to. The intended object of improving educational quality and arranging quality dialogues as settings for discussing quality issues also align with the search for what Edwards calls common knowledge. However, the results show that participants do not sense genuine curiosity from their superiors and the multiple substitute objects of the quality dialogue type B result in nothing even close to what could be described as relational agency. I argue that for relational agency to take place in quality dialogues, genuine curiosity, and a true ambition to solve shared problems should be foundational driving-forces for all quality dialogue participants. Genuine curiosity has the potential to create magic.

Methodological and theoretical reflections

In this section, I first reflect on my methodological choices made when designing the research and sampling of the data. Thereafter, I reflect on the CHAT as a theoretical framework in this study and the analytical challenges I encountered.

Reflections on Methods

The present study has a very extensive set of data and I agree with Beitin (2012) who points out that there is a lack of description in qualitative research of how saturation is reached through sample size. The main reason why I sampled so much data relates to my insider role in the organisation. To rightfully reflect the organisation, I wanted to study quality dialogues in all geographical areas. I also assumed that there would be some differences between these geographical areas. In hindsight, it would have been possible to reduce the number of individual interviews. I realised I probably had reached saturation before all the interviews had been transcribed and undergone the first phases of analysis.

In addition, the individual interviews could have focused only on the observed quality dialogues, not on the history of the quality dialogues. CHAT has a method for formative, participatory interventions — the change laboratory — in which history walls are cocreated by work teams (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013). History walls help the participants analyse the origins of the possible contradictions that influence their work. If, during this study's data collection, groups of respondents had cocreated a timeline of major turning points, it would have given the respondents a chance to trigger each other's recollections. They would have been able to create meaning and supplement each other's answers (Beitin, 2012) which would have been in alignment with how I created the interview guides on the idea that thoughts arise from stimulation. Eliciting interviews with examples from the respondents' individual reflections (Haglund, 2003; Johnson & Weller, 2001; Meade & McMeniman, 1992), which were written on the same day as the observed quality dialogues, was very productive. This triggered the respondents' recollections of what they had thought of on that day, giving them the opportunity for meta-reflection later. It also gave me a chance to analyse a group's immediate reflections before deciding what to follow up on in the interviews.

I audio recorded the quality dialogues and used observation protocols. It could, however, be argued that, if the dialogues had been videotaped, an analysis of artefact mediation might have revealed more implicit mediation of nonverbal

communication. Video recording is excellent for analysing interactions between people because the recordings encompass nonverbal interactions in the form of gestures, body language, facial expressions and subtle signals that otherwise can be hard to detect (Heath et al., 2010). However, video recording could have limited my access to the quality dialogues. I noticed that the respondents were relieved when they understood that I had no ambition of video recording them. Video recording also has limitations, just as the human eye does. A camera can never provide a truly objective view of the world because it cannot capture more than what the lens is directed at. Additionally, the Swedish Research Council (2017) advises against video recordings unless other methods are considered inadequate, which is not the case for the present study.

Reflections on the Theoretical Framework

I agree with criticism that the activity system is complex to grasp (Augustsson, 2020; Blunden, 2010; Postholm, 2016; Spinuzzi, 2011). CHAT was a new theory for me when I started my PhD endeavour. Throughout the research process, I have been involved in many discussions with senior researchers on what the activity is in my study. Is it education, systematic quality work or quality dialogue that is the activity? Is the quality dialogue a tool in systematic quality work or an activity in and of itself? How can I conceptualise my findings on multiple objects? In short, as a beginner within CHAT, I struggled to grasp the concepts of activities, activity systems and objects. In the end, what has been helpful is to have read many activity-theoretical studies, to participate in the numerous online seminars that have been arranged within the international CHAT community and to have opportunity to discuss my work with senior researchers at seminars, conferences and elsewhere.

There was also the problem of whether I could illustrate the quality dialogues using Engeström's triangular model (1987, 2001) with one triangle or several. Because an activity is defined by its object (Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978), the analysis of the empirical data led me to the results and figures presented in the results chapter. I also found the concept of 'work activity' particularly helpful. Engeström (2018) refers to health care as an activity and uses the term 'work activity' when describing what happens in doctor–patient appointments. I have been influenced by his conceptualisation and refer to systematic quality work as the activity and quality dialogues as work activity. Some may argue that systematic quality work cannot be an activity and that education is the activity. I cannot

disagree with this, but Dahler-Larsen's (2019) descriptions of quality work as a problematic industry of its own became one of the most helpful key references in my search for what the activity is in my study. I argue that systematic quality work has become such a large, all-engaging, time-consuming endeavour that it has indeed become an activity. It meets new societal needs where humans constantly strive for improvements in quality.

Another activity-theoretical concept I have struggled with is the most important node in the activity system: the object. The object defines the activity system (Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978) and can be identified by the statements and actions of an activity's participants (Spinuzzi, 2011). However, I agree with Vetoshkina et al. (2017) that the difficulty in identifying an object depends on its different manifestations for participants who represent different positions and perspectives. This difficulty can be met with Engeström and Sannino's (2021) argument for a discrepancy between the general and specific object. However, handling empirical findings that suggest that there are multiple objects that seem to have taken precedence over the intended object, the generalised object was a challenge. Once I encountered it, I found the conceptualisation of substitute objects (Engeström & Escalante, 1996) to be very useful.

Bloome et al.'s (1989, 1990) construct of procedural display turned out to be a valuable addition to CHAT when it came to fully grasping the cultural behaviours and meanings in the present study. Procedural display added the understanding that displaying sets of interactional and content-related procedures count as doing a quality dialogue, especially when the doings are bound to culturally and historically emergent traditions. Combining the two conceptualisations of procedural display and the substitute object was productive. This combination explains why and how many purposes can exist in parallel when human beings engage in collective activities.

Creating a timeline was especially valuable for analysing traces of historical contradictions. The key findings confirm the assumption that activity systems are in constant movement under the influence of local, national, and global developments. Furthermore, explicit artefacts, here in the form of various kinds of documentation, were found to be adequate for understanding the doings of quality dialogues. Primary contradictions were identified by analysing the participants' descriptions of the purpose and perceived outcomes. Secondary and tertiary contradictions could be identified by analysing, for example, artefact mediation. The identified contradictions then needed to be explained through a local cultural–historical analysis that revealed strong inner organisational

boundaries and desires to maintain a sense of cultural belonging. In retrospect, I find it somewhat odd that I could not identify any tertiary contradictions by analysing the cultural-historical development of the quality dialogues, but this was possible when I analysed the observed quality dialogues. In future studies, it might be prudent to keep tertiary contradictions in mind when interviewing the major historical turning points of activities so that follow-up questions can be asked.

CHAT has been criticised for not critically addressing power relations (Blackler, 2011). I see CHAT as a theory that addresses empowerment, especially during interventionist change laboratories (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013). I also agree with Augustsson (2020) that many levels of power are embedded in educational organisations, from political policymaking and decision-making to internal struggles in teachers' work teams. Augustsson argues that it is possible for contradictions in activity systems to bring power relations and social tensions to the surface. The results presented in the present thesis confirm his arguments. One example is that area managers' understanding of the quality dialogues is what determines the actions of other participants, even though they have other suggestions. There is also a new routine, the five questions, which potentially could have had the power to change the enactment of the quality dialogues. In addition, knowledge and knowledge production is power. This study has shown how knowledge is created, or not, and passed on among the professionals in different positions as they engage in joint knowledge work. Knowledge is not only transferred upward or downwards in a vertical hierarchy; there are also movements downward and horizontally. Furthermore, the findings show that participants had very different roles in the quality dialogues. Area managers and principals participated in both superior and subordinated positions, depending on what type of quality dialogue the engaged in.

Knowledge contribution, study limitations and suggestions for further research

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to knowledge on 'Quality Dialogues' in local education administration's systematic quality work, with a focus on the tension between support and control. The thesis contributes with in-depth knowledge on the purpose(s) of quality dialogues at all levels of a municipal preschool administration. It also contributes with knowledge on how culturally and historically shaped contradictions influence the development and function of quality dialogues, as well as the supportive and controlling aspects of the quality

dialogues. The study furthermore contributes with an understanding of quality dialogues as procedural display when there are several substitute objects and contradictions which influence the function of the quality dialogues.

The current study focused on one preschool administration within a municipality. How quality dialogues are conducted in other municipalities or independent school organisations has not been investigated in this study. Because this study has shown that quality dialogues can be conducted in various ways in one administration with the same guidelines and routines, it can be assumed that other organisations can add other modes of action and frequencies. Previous research on quality dialogues (Adolfsson & Alvunger, 2020; Adolfsson and Håkansson 2021; Bröms, 2020; Henriksen, 2018; Henriksen & Paulsen, 2021; Håkansson & Adolfsson, 2021; Prøitz et al., 2021) have predominantly focused on schools, but not as in depth as the current study. Preschools differ from schools in the respect that there are no goals for the children to achieve, and thus no test results or grades to discuss. Further studies could focus more on the actual sayings and what aspects of quality are in focus of discussion.

In the present study, an activity theoretical was used to analyse the empirical data, focusing on the purpose and culturally-historically shaped contradictions that influence the function and development of the quality dialogues, and on the tension between support and control. CHAT could be used further if for example a municipality would be interested in participating in the formative, participatory interventionist method of the Change Laboratory (Virkkunen & Shelley Newnham, 2013) as a collaboration between researchers and practice. Because quality dialogues are so common (SNAE, 2021; Tornberg et al., 2022) in systematic quality work, they deserve to be further investigated, using other theoretical frameworks, and focusing on other aspects of the enactment and outcomes of the quality dialogues. It would be especially valuable to go into depth on how power relations influence the dialogical character of quality dialogue meetings, perhaps through a linguistic analysis.

A question evoked by this study is power relations, not least the power that the area managers have, in respect to how quality dialogues are enacted. Not much research can be found about area managers, or deputy superintendents, and still, they exist in the Swedish school system. The balancing act that the area managers conduct between the unit level and the authoritative level, and between curricular goal achievement and prerequisites or quality respectively, is of interest for further studies. As this study shows, the area managers' understanding of quality work and its purpose sets the agenda for the work of many others. The findings show that

the role of the quality analysts from the central quality department is largely influenced by the area managers' invitation to cooperation. How the fact that the area managers' role takes such precedence in a large educational administration's systematic quality work and relates to Englund and Sandström's (2012) argument that the concept of dialogue bears a moral dimension where equal relations prevail, has not been elaborated here. Another role that is of interest in terms of power is the assistant principal who is subordinate to the principal but superior to the teachers. In this study, the assistant principals had an obscure understanding of their participation in the quality dialogues, even though a central part of their work is to provide prerequisites for quality, which is of interest for the authoritative level. I, therefore, suggest that future studies on quality dialogues further seek to explain how the division of labour- and rule-nodes of the activity system mediate the subjects' actions towards the object.

School improvement processes depend on several concurrent factors, of which the quality dialogue is only one. Methodologically, the empirical data was sampled in one school year and focused only on quality dialogues. Another way of conducting a study on quality dialogues could have been a longitudinal study in which quality dialogues and other routines at a school, or preschool, could have been studied for several years.

Implications for Practice

The key findings can be valuable for practitioners because the results show how the work activities in which people engage can be taken for granted and how substitute objects may appear. Personal motives and understandings direct the actions of professionals and managers who engage in systematic quality work. If these understandings are not investigated, problematised and agreed upon, the use value can suffer, and quality dialogues become something one does because one must but do not truly see the point of, that is systematic quality work loses its tool character and becomes a rule instead. The work of those who engage in quality dialogues, regardless of position, could benefit from more thorough preparations before and follow-up after having engaged in the quality dialogues. Discussing the object of activity should be a priority if the administration considers developing dialogues further by entering a new expansive learning cycle. Special attention should also be paid to how tool mediation serves the ultimate purpose of the activity. When managers in local education administrations plan dialogues with subordinates according to the National Educational Agency's general advice for

systematic quality work (SNAE, 2015), they are well advised to discuss the purpose first and then arrange the dialogues accordingly. Without a shared understanding of the object, both intellectually and in action, dialogues risk becoming procedural displays rather than purposeful work activities.

Notably, this is not a study on individual achievements but rather research at a higher level on systemic contradictions and how societal movements affect the work of professionals and managers in the public sector. It is my impression that the participants of the present study are skilled, diligent, and dedicated. They do their best and what they believe is expected of them. The quality dialogues are not the only way in which they communicate and cooperate. However, the quality dialogue has gained such high status within the administration and nationally that there are high expectations for what can be achieved through them. The present study has shown that retrospective control contradicts future-oriented innovation. When a new instrument or technique (artefact or tool) is introduced and enforced from the top down, the purpose should be clarified and well argued for.

The present study also highlights the importance of addressing various understandings of the quality concept, of intended tool mediation and of the enactment of quality dialogues. In the current study, it was the area managers' understandings that set the agenda for the enactment of the quality dialogues, how labour was divided among dialogue participants, what tools they use and how and what rules mediate the actions. All organisations have one or a few key roles that influence the work of others in the same way as the area managers in the current study; a role that has high status and that is not easily challenged by others. Identifying that role in one's own organisation could be crucial for the success of quality dialogues and any other supreme work activity that engages many.

As a final note, I encourage all those who design and participate in quality dialogues to keep the purpose in mind. Well in advance, discuss your different motives, agree on a shared purpose, create a common understanding of what paths to tread, what tools to use and how and what rules to apply. Involve all those whom it matters to and agree on what to expect from each other. In short, the quality dialogues should be designed such that the purpose can be achieved. Do not just repeat or adjust old routines. Step away from what you usually do, think outside the box and be ready to face unknown challenges. Ask yourself if you are truly, genuinely curious about those you are going to engage in a dialogue with. If you do this, I am sure you will succeed in conducting quality dialogues where thoughts move towards enlightenment.

Swedish Summary

Denna avhandling handlar om kvalitetsdialoger i lokala skolorganisationers systematiska kvalitetsarbete, med fokus på spänningen mellan stöd och kontroll.

Bakgrund och tidigare forskning

I Sverige ansvarar skolhuvudmän, såväl kommunala som fristående, för att utbildningen på skolor och förskolor lever upp till och förbättras i enlighet med de mål och intentioner som är framskrivna i skollagen och de olika läroplanerna. Huvudmännen ansvarar för ett välfungerande systematiskt kvalitetsarbete på övergripande nivå medan rektorer ansvarar för det systematiska kvalitetsarbetet på enhetsnivå, samt att lärare, förskollärare och övrig personal medverkar. Skolverket har utfärdat allmänna råd för systematiskt kvalitetsarbete i vilket det framhålls att det krävs dialog mellan rektorer och huvudmannen för att den senare ska kunna analysera resultat och måluppfyllelse på övergripande nivå. Det skrivs även fram att rektorer behöver ha dialog med personalen om vad enhetens insatser ska leda till och vad som är realistiskt att uppnå. I undersökningar om det systematiska kvalitetsarbetets utformning har det framkommit att en majoritet av alla skolhuvudmän använder sig av så kallade kvalitetsdialoger, även kallade resultatdialoger. Kvalitetsdialoger sker även mellan skolhuvudmän och de tre statliga skolmyndigheterna, det vill säga Skolverket, Skolinspektionen och Specialpedagogiska skolmyndigheten. Således har kvalitetsdialogen intagit en tämligen självklar plats i det svenska utbildningsväsendet.

Kvalitetsdialoger genomförs inom det systematiska kvalitetsarbetet, vilket kan liknas vid det som inom forskningen kallas skolförbättringsarbete. Skolförbättringsarbete finner sina rötter i Kurt Lewins verk på 1940-talet. Dagens skolförbättring innehåller också tydliga drag av utvärderingsmetodik som växte fram under 1960-talets industriella utveckling. Kvalitetsdialogens ursprung kan framförallt återfinnas i dialogpedagogiken från 1970-talet och som påverkade utvärderingspraktiken i den offentliga sektorn till att bli mer dialogbaserad. Även New Public Management-rörelsens krav under 1990-talet på ansvarsutövning har spelat roll för kvalitetsarbetets framväxt. Inom det så kallade tillitsbaserade

perspektivet på ledning och styrning förväntas ledare ha tillit till professionens kompetens och dialogen spelar en viktig roll vid såväl uppföljning som utveckling.

Ett brett deltagande i skolors förbättringsarbete, liksom i kvalitetsdialoger, har visat sig vara betydelsefullt. Skolorganisationer är komplexa system som är utsatta för både interna och externa krav. För att hantera komplexiteten har många rektorer och skolhuvudmän infört nya mellanledare och tjänstepersoner som specifikt arbetar med kvalitetsarbete. Allt fler är således involverade i flera positioner i skolors arbete och därför behöver deras röst höras i dialogerna för att fånga komplexiteten och förbättra utbildningen.

Kvalitetsarbete inom förskola har framför allt vuxit fram efter att förskolan övergick från att organiseras under Socialdepartementet till att i slutet av 1990-talet tillhöra Utbildningsdepartementets ansvar. Detta fick till följd att förskolan fick sin första läroplan 1998. En ny skollag introducerades 2010 och med den kom även en reviderad läroplan för förskolan; båda med krav på systematiskt kvalitetsarbete. Skolinspektionen har kritiserat skolhuvudmän för att inte ta tillräcklig hänsyn till förskolans särart när de bedömer förskolornas kvalitet. Förskolans särart bygger på att omsorg, utveckling och lärande bildar en helhet och till skillnad mot skolan finns det inga uppnåendemål för barnen. Det är istället verksamhetens kvalitet som ska bedömas och hur den förmår ge barnen förutsättningar att lära och utvecklas i enlighet med läroplanens mål och intentioner. Eftersom kvantitativa data inte finns i förskolan i samma utsträckning som i skolan, behöver kvaliteten istället i hög grad bedömas med hjälp av kvalitativa och narrativa data.

Trots att kvalitetsdialoger är vanligt förekommande i den nordiska kontexten finns det relativt lite forskning om dem; hur de genomförs och vad de leder till. Den begränsade forskningen om kvalitetsdialoger visar att samtalen ofta tar sin utgångspunkt i någon form av dokumentation som exempelvis skolornas årliga rapporter, åtagandeplaner, observationsprotokoll eller kvantitativa data som enkätundersökningar, betyg eller provresultat. Kvalitetsdialoger har visat sig stärka skolornas eget förbättringsarbete, bidra med underlag till huvudmännens arbete och också stärka huvudmännens närhet till verksamheterna.

Syfte och frågeställningar

Denna avhandling syftar till att bidra med kunskap om kvalitetsdialoger i lokala skolorganisationers systematiska kvalitetsarbete, med fokus på spänningen mellan stöd och kontroll. Forskningsfrågorna som ställs är:

1. Vad är det avsedda syftet med kvalitetsdialoger och hur överensstämmer detta syfte med deltagarnas handlingar?
2. Hur påverkar kulturhistoriskt framtagna motsättningar kvalitetsdialogernas utveckling och funktion?

Syftet och forskningsfrågorna besvaras genom en studie som genomförts inom en stor kommunal förskoleförvaltning. Studien fokuserar på kvalitetsdialoger som regelbundet arrangeras på enhetsnivå respektive huvudmannanivå samt mellan dessa nivåer.

Teoretiskt ramverk

I den här studien utgör verksamhetsteori det teoretiska ramverket. Verksamhetsteori bygger på det ontologiska antagandet att världen och den kulturhistoriskt formade kontexten ständigt förändras samt det epistemologiska antagandet att kunskap formas genom människors handlingar i kollektiva verksamheter. Människor deltar i kollektiva verksamheter som drivs och definieras av sina objekt. En verksamhets objekt kan i vardagligt språk förstås som det övergripande syftet med eller strävansmålet för det gemensamma arbetet. Det verksamhetsteoretiska begreppet objekt skiljer sig från mål på det sätt att objekt förstås föreligga på systemnivå, medan mål är kopplat till handlingsnivå. Svårigheten med att definiera ett objekt ligger i att det är föränderligt och kan te sig olika för verksamhetens deltagare.

Yrjö Engeström har skapat en triangulär modell som illustrerar ett verksamhetssystem. Modellen visar hur verksamhetens kollektiva subjekt interagerar med andra samverkande dimensioner såsom objektet, medierande redskap, regler, andra som ingår i arbetsgemenskapen och arbetsdelning. De olika noderna i modellen har inbördes relationer och det kan uppstå systemiska motsättningar mellan dem. En verksamhetsteoretisk analys kan exempelvis visa om en artefakt fungerar som redskap eller regel, det vill säga att vi använder artefakten för att den hjälper oss åstadkomma något eller för att vi uppfattar att vi måste. Ibland kan även något som ursprungligen var avsett som ett redskap eller en regel istället oavsiktligt fungera som ett substitut-objekt som tillmäts sådan stark drivkraft för arbetet att det värderas högre än det avsedda objektet.

Kulturhistoriskt skapade systemiska motsättningar inom ett verksamhetssystem eller mellan verksamhetssystem kan påverka verksamhetens funktion och utveckling. Motsättningar finns på systemnivå och bär potential till utveckling om man uppmärksammar och arbetar med dem. När en verksamhet förändras kan

exempelvis redskapen, reglerna eller arbetsdelningen behöva utvecklas eller bytas för att tjäna verksamhetens objekt ändamålsenligt. Det finns olika typer av motsättningar. Primära motsättningar finns inom separata noder i verksamhetssystemet och handlar om spänningen mellan användarvärde och bytesvärde, det vill säga vilka mänskliga behov som verksamheten täcker och vad den skulle kunna ge i utbyte mot något annat. Sekundära motsättningar uppstår mellan verksamhetssystemets noder, till exempel om en artefakt fungerar som en regel istället för som det redskap det var avsett som, eller om arbetsdelningen inte stödjer strävan efter det gemensamma objektet. Tertiära motsättningar uppstår när verksamhetssystem transformeras och nya arbetssätt kolliderar med gamla, exempelvis då gamla arbetsredskap inte förändras eller byts ut. Kvartära motsättningar finns mellan ett verksamhetssystem och ett annat, angränsande verksamhetssystem. Sådana motsättningar kan uppstå om exempelvis staten ställer nya krav på skolhuvudmän som då måste förändra sina arbetssätt.

Metod

Studien genomfördes i en kommunal förskoleförvaltning där kvalitetsdialoger på och mellan olika nivåer inom förvaltningen har utvecklats över tid och genomgått både mindre och större förändringar. Inledningsvis analyserades kommunala dokument som beskriver förvaltningens systematiska kvalitetsarbete i allmänhet och kvalitetsdialoger i synnerhet. Fyra typer av kvalitetsdialoger studerades, vilka i denna redovisning benämns med bokstäverna A, B, C och D. Kvalitetsdialoger typ A skedde på enhetsnivå och typ B i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå. Typ C och D skedde på huvudmannanivå med skillnaden att endast tjänstepersoner deltog i typ C medan typ D även inkluderade nämndens presidium, det vill säga de ansvariga politikerna.

I den studerade kommunen har en förskolenämnd bestående av lokala politiker ansvar att utöva huvudmannans (kommunens) ansvar för utbildningens kvalitet. Förskoleförvaltningen omfattar samtliga tjänstepersoner, enheter och avdelningar inom nämndens ansvarsområde. Den högste tjänstepersonen är skolchefen, en titel som återinfördes i skollagen 2019 och som innebär ett särskilt ansvar på huvudmannanivå för att kvalitet och kvalitetsarbete följer de krav som finns i nationell policy. Den studerade kommunen är så stor att det har införts en roll, utbildningschef, mellan skolchefen och rektorerna. I den studerade kommunen beskrivs utbildningschefen vara skolchefens representant eller företrädare och kan således förstås som en biträdande skolchef. På enheterna har rektor och

förskollärare särskilt ansvar för utbildningens kvalitet och det systematiska kvalitetsarbetet. Utöver rektor utgörs i den studerade kommunen enheternas ledningsgrupper även av biträdande rektorer och förste förskollärare. I arbetslagen finns utöver legitimerade förskollärare även barnskötare med gymnasial utbildning och pedagoger som har viss högskoleutbildning inom det pedagogiska området.

Empirin samlades in under läsåret 2019–2020. En observationsguide användes under observationerna av kvalitetsdialogerna som också spelades in och transkriberades. Direkt efter genomförd kvalitetsdialog skrev deltagarna sina reflektioner i en mall med verksamhetsteoretiskt influerade frågor. Efter kvalitetsdialogerna genomfördes individuella intervjuer med representanter från varje deltagande yrkeskategori. Intervjuer genomfördes med totalt 63 personer. De utbildningschefer, förskollärare och barnskötare som deltog i flera kvalitetsdialoger blev intervjuade en gång för varje observation. Intervjuguiden innehöll verksamhetsteoretiskt inspirerade frågor som kompletterades med konkreta exempel från varje observerad kvalitetsdialog och citat från deltagarnas individuella reflektionsmallar. Etiska ställningstaganden gjordes utifrån Vetenskapsrådets forskningsetiska principer och god forskningssed och deltagarna gav både muntligt och skriftligt samtycke. Deltagarna informerades dessutom om hur empiriinsamlingen genomfördes i enlighet med dataskyddsförordningen.

Resultat

Avhandlingens resultat presenteras i fyra olika delar. I del ett redovisas resultat som visar hur kvalitetsdialogerna i den lokala kontexten uppstod runt 2010 och därefter utvecklades under ett decennium under påverkan av systemiska motsättningar. De därpå följande delarna rör kvalitetsdialogerna som de beskrevs och genomfördes under hösten 2019 och våren 2020. I del två redovisas kvalitetsdialogerna på enhetsnivå. Del tre handlar om kvalitetsdialogerna i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå och den fjärde delen redovisar kvalitetsdialogerna på huvudmannanivå.

Del 1. Den historiska framväxten av lokala kvalitetsdialoger

Kvalitetsdialogerna i den studerade kommunen uppstod runt 2010 och därefter utvecklades dialogerna under ett decennium. Resultatet visar att kvalitetsdialogernas kvalitativa transformationer kan delas in i perioder om ungefär tre år.

Före 2010

I respondenternas beskrivningar av kvalitetsarbetet före 2010 återfinns inga kvalitetsdialoger i den studerade kommunen. Förskolornas kvalitetsarbete skedde på personalens initiativ utan inblandning av huvudmannanivån. Runt 2009–2010 insåg kommunens centrala ledning för utbildning att det saknades fungerande kommunikation mellan dem och kommunens olika nämnder om förskolornas och skolornas kvalitetsarbete (kvartär motsättning). Rapporter skickades inom organisationen på ett sådant vis att de fungerade som regler, inte som redskap för arbetet (sekundär motsättning). Det saknades också redskap för att bedöma och diskutera förskolornas kvalitet (sekundär motsättning). Därför initierade den centrala ledningen kvalitetsdialoger mellan dem och de högsta cheferna i kommunens olika förvaltningar.

2010–2013

Runt 2010 infördes nationella krav på systematiskt kvalitetsarbete i och med införandet av den nya skollagen (kvartär motsättning mellan kommunen och den regel-producerande staten). Det ställde krav på kommunen att ta fram en modell för det lokala systematiska kvalitetsarbetet och nya redskap behövde införas (sekundär motsättning). Det togs fram förbättrade enkäter, en modell för kollegiala kvalitetsbesök samt nya mallar för årliga kvalitetsrapporter som skol- och förskoleenheter skulle lämna in till huvudmannen. Kvalitetsdialogerna ingick i kommunens kvalitetsmodell, men inledningsvis mötte de visst motstånd då flera deltagare inte förstod syftet (primär motsättning). Eftersom det saknades ändamålsenliga underlag för samtal om förskolans kvalitet (sekundära motsättningar) var fokus främst på skolans resultat.

2013–2016

År 2013 förändrades utbildningsorganisationen på grund av kritik från Skolinspektionen avseende kommunens styrning och ledning, bristande likvärdighet och låg måluppfyllelse. En förskoleförvaltning formerades och nya, gemensamma rutiner infördes för samtliga förskoleenheter. Förvaltningschefen ledde den centrala huvudmannanivån och utbildningschefer¹⁴ fick ansvar för geografiska utbildningsområden vilka utgör en geografisk del av förvaltningens huvudmannanivå. Huvudmannanivån insåg att de saknade tillräcklig kunskap om, och redskap för att bedöma, förskoleenheternas måluppfyllelse (sekundär

¹⁴ En roll som motsvarar verksamhetschef i andra kommuner.

motsättning). Det räckte heller inte med att bara högre chefer deltog i kvalitetsdialogerna (sekundär motsättning) utan det behövde införas kvalitetsdialoger (typ B) mellan den geografiska huvudmannanivån och rektorerna. För det syftet utvecklades kvalitetsrapporternas mallar (sekundär motsättning), för att tillsammans med ett nyproducerat batteri av detaljerade frågor om olika läroplansområden, utgöra underlag för kvalitetsdialogen (sekundär motsättning). Kvalitetsdialogen hade nu förändrats till att inte bara innebära kommunikation mellan olika delar av organisationen (olika verksamhetssystem) utan också till att noga kontrollera förskoleenheternas måluppfyllelse. För att följa upp den samlade bilden av typ B-kvalitetsdialoger omvandlades den tidigare kvalitetsdialogen, mellan högre chefer, till det som 2019 motsvarade typ D-kvalitetsdialog. I detta möte deltog representanter från både den geografiska och den centrala huvudmannanivån samt även nämndens presidium. En ny rapport infördes också som gav den samlade bilden av förskolornas måluppfyllelse och dess förutsättningar eftersom detta hade saknats (sekundär motsättning). Utifrån nyvunnen kunskap drogs slutsatsen att förskolornas ledarskapsorganisation behövde utvecklas.

2016–2019

Under 2016 minskade antalet rektorer och det infördes biträdande rektorer och förste förskollärare. Detta resulterade i insikter om att för få yrkeskategorier deltog i kvalitetsdialogerna (sekundär motsättning). Förskolornas medarbetare, biträdande rektorer och förste förskollärare bjöds in att tillsammans med rektorerna delta i kvalitetsdialoger med huvudmannanivån. Från huvudmannanivån deltog utbildningschef, teamledare för de geografiska utbildningsområdenas stödteam samt kvalitetsanalytiker från den centrala huvudmannanivån. Förvaltningens kvalitetsavdelning producerade statistik avseende personal, resursfördelning, klagomål från vårdnadshavare och kränkingsutredningar som skulle utgöra underlag i kvalitetsdialogerna. Kvalitetsdialogernas övergripande syfte (objekt) hade nu ytterligare förändrats från kontroll av måluppfyllelse till att också kontrollera förutsättningar för kvalitet och måluppfyllelse. Samtidigt fanns också visst fokus på att stödja förskolornas förbättringsarbete som det ökade antalet deltagande yrkeskategorier skulle bidra till. Många rektorer upplevde också att kvalitetsdialogerna typ B var positiva för förbättringsarbetet, så det började utvecklas kvalitetsdialoger även på förskoleenheterna (typ A). Inledningsvis var det dock svårt för några att förstå syftet (primär motsättning).

2019–2020

Titeln skolchef infördes i skollagen 2019 och blev, tillsammans med kommunledningens uttalade inriktning mot likvärdighet i kommunen, incitament för skolchefen att förändra inriktningen på kvalitetsarbetet och därmed också syftet med kvalitetsdialogerna. Eftersom det hade funnits starka gränser mellan utbildningsområdena och även en icke ändamålsenlig arbetsdelning mellan utbildningschefer och den centrala huvudmannanivån (sekundär motsättning) signalerade skolchefen stark förväntan på att kvalitetsdialogerna skulle fokusera på likvärdighet. Det behövdes ett nytt redskap (sekundär motsättning) varför det gjordes en överenskommelse om nya skriftliga rutiner för kvalitetsdialogerna, med fem övergripande frågor som fokuserade likvärdighet. För att förstärka kvalitetsdialogernas förändrade objekt införde skolchefen en ny kvalitetsdialog, typ C, mellan den geografiska huvudmannanivån och den centrala. Typ C var tänkt att fungera som preludium till typ D, vilken också ägde rum på huvudmannanivå och inkluderade även presidiet.

Del 2. Kvalitetsdialoger på förskoleenheterna (typ A)

Kvalitetsdialoger på tre förskoleenheter studerades. På den första förskolan genomförde den lokala ledningsgruppen observationer på avdelningarna under en heldag varefter arbetslagen och ledningen möttes för att diskutera utbildningens kvalitet. På den andra förskolan möttes ledningen och representanter från olika arbetslag för att samtala om utbildningens kvalitet utifrån ett skriftligt underlag med frågor från ledningen som arbetslagen hade besvarat. På den tredje förskolan fanns två slags kvalitetsdialoger. Flera gånger om året mötte ledningen ett arbetslag i taget för att diskutera kvalitetsarbetet. Därefter samlades samtliga förskollärare från rektors förskolor för att föra övergripande samtal om förskolornas kvalitetsarbete. På samtliga tre förskolor utgick samtalen till största del utifrån enhetens för året prioriterade utvecklingsområden.

Både ledningen och medarbetarna beskrev att syftet med kvalitetsdialogen var att samtala om arbetslagens arbete utifrån förskolornas prioriterade utvecklingsområden för året. De beskrev också syftet som att arbetslagen skulle ge information till ledningen om sitt arbete, för att ledningen skulle kunna följa upp (kontrollera) måluppfyllelsen. En viktig aspekt av syftet var att ledningen skulle kunna ge återkoppling till arbetslagen. Deltagarna beskrev hur förberedelserna och konkreta undervisningsexempel medförde att medarbetarna såväl blev mer aktiva under samtalet som att de gjorde förändringar i sitt arbete direkt efter

kvalitetsdialogerna. Deltagarna beskrev kvalitetsdialogerna som en höjdpunkt i arbetet, en möjlighet att få befinna sig i en 'pedagogisk bubbla'. Men arbetslagen beskrev också att de önskade djupare, mer utmanande och kritiska samtal. Arbetslagen upplevde att angelägna frågor om förutsättningar undveks av såväl dem själva som av ledningen. Det kan i verksamhetsteoretiska termer förstås som en sekundär motsättning mellan regel- och objektsnoderna eftersom vad som värderas högt respektive lågt har blivit en regel som inte stödjer uppnåendet av objektet. Det har blivit viktigare att få positiv återkoppling och att stanna i den pedagogiska bubblan än att diskutera det som påverkar utbildningens kvalitet. Det kan också förstås som att önskan om att få positiv återkoppling från ledningen har blivit ett substitut-objekt. Avseende frågan om kontroll kontra stöd i förbättringsarbetet är kvalitetsdialoger typ A orienterade mot innovativt stöd.

Del 3. Kvalitetsdialoger i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå (typ B)

Kvalitetsdialoger i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå ägde rum varje år i september. Enhetsnivån representerades av den lokala ledningsgruppen och medarbetare från arbetslagen. Huvudmannanivån representerades av utbildningschefen och en eller två teamledare från de geografiska utbildningsområdenas stödteam för pedagogisk utveckling, specialpedagogik och administration samt en kvalitetsanalytiker från den centrala huvudmannanivån. Fem kvalitetsdialoger observerades och de arrangerades på olika vis. I ett utbildningsområde befann sig alla deltagare i samma rum hela tiden, medan de andra kvalitetsdialogerna delades in i olika konstellationer så att huvudmannanivåns representanter fick möta förskolans ledningsgrupp, rektor respektive medarbetarna. På några förskolor gjordes även besök på avdelningarna för att samtala med barnen.

Den verksamhetsteoretiska analysen visar att kvalitetsdialog typ B utgör mötesplats för tre olika verksamhetssystem: huvudmannanivån, förskolans ledningsgrupp och förskolans arbetslag. De tre verksamhetssystemen har såväl gemensamt objekt som olika objekt: Arbetslagens motiv för att delta i kvalitetsdialogerna är att berätta om sin undervisning. Ledningsgruppens motiv är att samtala om sitt ledarskap och den övergripande kvaliteten. Huvudmannanivåns motiv för att delta är att kontrollera måluppfyllelsen och övergripande kvalitet samt att få kunskap om de förutsättningar som huvudmannen kan förbättra.

Deltagarna beskrev flera olika objekt: Att korsa, eller minska, de organisatoriska gränserna genom att samtala om förskolornas vardag och bygga relationer mellan medarbetarna och cheferna på olika nivåer. Ge och ta återkoppling, kontrollera måluppfyllelse, undersöka och skapa gemensam kunskap om vilka förutsättningar som kan förbättras av huvudmannen, uppvisa framgångar, samt förbättra den skriftliga förmågan vad gäller kvalitetsrapporter. Flera av dessa syften visade sig vara så starka att de kan förstås som så kallade substitut-objekt som värderas högre än uppnåendet av det avsedda syftet att förbättra utbildningens kvalitet. De möjligheter till gemensamt lärande för huvudmannanivån och enhetsnivån som beskrevs i de kommunala dokumenten var svåra att identifiera genom deltagarnas beskrivningar i intervjuerna. I stället får retrospektiva samtal om kvalitetsrapporterna stort utrymme under dialogmötena, vilket snarare kan förstås som kontroll av kvalitet än som stöd i förbättringsarbetet. Flera deltagare upplever kvalitetsdialogerna som ett läxförhör efter vilket de kan pusta ut och därefter återgå till det vanliga arbetet. Det finns dock ett stort önskemål om att kvalitetsdialogerna ska innebära mer utmanande och utvecklande samtal. En anledning tycks vara att det i flera fall saknas äkta nyfikenhet från huvudmannanivån.

Den verksamhetsteoretiska analysen visar att huvudmannanivån upplever ett större värde i kvalitetsdialogerna än vad ledning och medarbetare från enheterna gör. Detta indikerar en primär motsättning. Analysen visar också att det finns sekundära och tertiära motsättningar avseende redskapsnoden, regelnoden och arbetsdelningsnoden i de olika verksamhetssystemen. Inför årets kvalitetsdialoger hade förvaltningsledningen kommit överens om att nya rutiner med fem övergripande frågor skulle vara vägledande för kvalitetsdialogerna. I tre av de fyra utbildningsområdena användes dock frågorna inte i kvalitetsdialogerna utan behandlades i andra forum som kvalitetsanalytikerna inte deltog i. Detta är tecken på sekundära motsättningar mellan regel- och redskapsnoderna samt arbetsdelningsnoden. Att ett nyinfördt redskap inte används som det var tänkt visar på en tertiär motsättning då gamla rutiner föredrogs. Förskolornas kvalitetsrapporter används flitigt som en primär artefakt och citeras detaljrikt under kvalitetsdialogerna. Kvalitetsrapporterna står i fokus och används för att mediera samtalet under kvalitetsdialogen, trots att de fem frågorna i de nya rutinerna har införts. Detta tyder på att användandet av kvalitetsrapporterna har blivit en regel istället för att fungera som redskap (sekundär motsättning) och att gamla arbetssätt föredras (tertiär motsättning) trots att kvalitetsdialogernas syfte har förändrats till att omfatta sökandet efter likvärdiga förutsättningar och att ett nytt redskap (de fem frågorna) har införts för att stödja det nya objektet. De nya fem frågorna är

också kopplade till de dokument som innehåller statistik om utbildningens förutsättningar. Statistiken används mycket lite i de olika kvalitetsdialogerna. Endast i ett utbildningsområde används statistiken systematiskt som en primär artefakt, vilket också förnyar samtalet och leder huvudmannanivån till nya insikter. Avseende frågan om kontroll versus stöd i förbättringsarbetet är kvalitetsdialogerna typ B orienterade mot retrospektiv kontroll och att upprätthålla gamla arbetssätt.

Del 4. Kvalitetsdialoger på huvudmannanivå (typ C/D)

Två typer av kvalitetsdialoger ägde rum på huvudmannanivån. I båda typerna deltog skolchefen, kvalitetschefen och samtliga utbildningschefer. I en av kvalitetsdialogerna deltog också presidiets tre ledamöter, det vill säga. politiker från nämnden. Den första kvalitetsdialogen ägde rum i oktober och här diskuterades utbildningschefernas sammanfattande analys av vad som framkommit under samtliga kvalitetsdialoger typ B som genomförts i utbildningsområdet. Analysen skulle baseras på de fem frågorna i de nya rutinerna för kvalitetsdialogerna. Denna dialog beskrevs som ett förspel till den andra kvalitetsdialogen som ägde rum i november. I den andra kvalitetsdialogen med presidiet bestod underlaget av ett utkast till lägesbedömning av kvaliteten på förvaltningens samtliga förskolor, och de förutsättningar som påverkar kvaliteten. Utkastet skulle efter kvalitetsdialogen färdigställas varpå det skulle användas av hela nämnden i deras budgetmöte inför det kommande året.

Syftet med kvalitetsdialogerna på huvudmannanivå beskrevs vara att diskutera de övergripande förutsättningar som spelar roll för utbildningens kvalitet och likvärdigheten, det vill säga. kvalitetsdialogernas avsedda och expanderade objekt. Särskilt utbildningscheferna och presidiet uppskattade möjligheterna som kvalitetsdialogerna gav dem att prata mer fritt om vad som pågick i de olika utbildningsområdena. Politikerna var särskilt intresserade av att få fördjupad detaljkunskap om förskolornas vardagsarbete för att kunna förklara olika frågor som deras väljare skulle kunna tänkas fråga om. De frågor som framförallt diskuterades rörde medarbetarnas kompetens och språkkunskaper, fördelningen av legitimerade förskollärare på olika områden, prioriteringar vad gäller IKT, samt resursfördelningsmodellen som gav förskolor i socioekonomiskt utmanande områden mer pengar.

En sekundär motsättning kunde identifieras avseende gemensam förståelse för vilka kvalitetsaspekter som var tänkta att diskuteras. Såväl utbildningscheferna som

politikerna återkom till att vilja diskutera detaljerade frågor om förskoleenheternas måluppfyllelse och vardagsarbete, medan skolchefens uttalade syfte var att diskutera övergripande kvalitet och likvärdighet samt dess förutsättningar. Således pågick en balansakt mellan olika intressen under kvalitetsdialogen. Ur ett verksamhetsteoretiskt perspektiv kan det förstås dels som en sekundär motsättning då deltagarna inte delade samma förståelse av kvalitetsbegreppets aktuella aspekter, dels som en tertiär motsättning då gamla rutiner fortsatte leva trots att objektet hade expanderat och att ett nytt redskap hade införts i form av fem nya frågor.

Diskussion

Avhandlingens första frågeställning handlar om kvalitetsdialogens avsedda syfte och hur det överensstämmer med deltagarnas handlingar. Analysen visar att det inte bara finns ett syfte utan snarare flera som är så starka att de i flera fall ersätter det avsedda syftet som handlar om att förbättra utbildningens kvalitet. Den kvalitetsdialog som äger rum i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå (typ B) utmärker sig som mest komplex och med flest objekt.

Den andra frågeställningen handlar om hur kulturhistoriskt framvuxna motsättningar påverkar kvalitetsdialogernas utveckling och funktion. Resultatet visar att flera motsättningar sprungna ur statliga reformer, kommunala omorganisationer samt vunna insikter och kunskaper har påverkat kvalitetsdialogernas utveckling. Flest motsättningar fanns i kvalitetsdialog typ B, det vill säga som genomförs i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå. Resultatet visar att med flera identifierade objekt samt flera motsättningar inom och mellan verksamhetssystemen hämmas typ B kvalitetsdialogens funktion mer än typ A respektive typ C/D.

Avhandlingens syfte var att bidra med kunskap om kvalitetsdialoger i lokala skolorganisationers systematiska kvalitetsarbete, med fokus på spänningen mellan stöd och kontroll. Resultatet visar att kvalitetsdialog typ B som skedde i skärningspunkten mellan enhetsnivå och huvudmannanivå har mest fokus på retrospektiv kontroll av måluppfyllelse och förskolornas pågående kvalitetsarbete. I dessa kvalitetsdialoger läggs stort fokus på samtal om det arbete som pågått och som beskrivits i förskolornas årliga kvalitetsrapporter. Samtalen är detaljerade och kontrollerande och kan inte antas främja framtidsorienterad innovation. Resultatet visar också att kvalitetsdialogerna på enhetsnivå har flera konkreta redskap som är undervisningsnära och stödjer förbättringsarbetet. Även om de kvalitetsdialogerna också blickar bakåt på det arbete som har genomförts är de också framtids-

orienterade och leder till direkta förändringar i arbetslagens arbete. Även kvalitetsdialogerna på huvudmannanivå är både retrospektiva och framtidsorienterade.

Studiens resultat bekräftar befintlig kunskap om kvalitetsdialoger som visat på spänningar mellan stöd å ena sidan och kontroll å andra sidan. Studien bidrar med fördjupad kunskap genom att visa hur detaljerade och retrospektiva samtal om kvalitetsrapporter bidrar till kvalitetsdialogernas kontrollerande roll. Motsättningar avseende redskapsnoden och arbetsdelningsnoden är mest frekventa. Gamla arbetssätt hålls fast vid trots att exempelvis objektet har expanderat och nya redskap införts.

Vidare visar studiens resultat tre yrkeskategorier som särskilt intressanta att studera vidare. Studiens resultat visar att utbildningscheferna har en avgörande roll för hur kvalitetsdialogerna genomförs och därmed också vad de leder till. Utbildningscheferna visar sig också utföra en balansakt mellan enhetsnivåns måluppfyllelse och huvudmannanivåns intresse för övergripande förutsättningar som påverkar kvalitet och måluppfyllelse. Dessutom visar resultatet att den roll som kvalitetsanalytikerna från förvaltningens kvalitetsavdelning får och tar till stora delar beror på utbildningscheferna. Resultatet visar därtill att biträdande rektorer har en marginaliserad roll i de studerade kvalitetsdialogerna trots att deras arbetsuppgifter handlar om att skapa förutsättningar för kvalitet vilket är det som huvudmannanivån avser ha fokus på. En implikation för praktiken är att de som designar och deltar i kvalitetsdialoger kan ha stor nytta av att i god tid skapa en gemensam förståelse för vad syftet med kvalitetsdialogen är och lägga stor vikt vid att designa genomförandet på ett sådant sätt att syftet kan uppnås samt att följa upp det noggrant.

Bibliography

- Adolfsson, C.-H., & Alvunger, D. (2017). The nested systems of local school development: Understanding improved interaction and capacities in the different sub-systems of schools. *Improving Schools*, 20(3), 195–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480217710874>
- Adolfsson, C.-H., & Alvunger, D. (2020). Power dynamics and policy actions in the changing landscape of local school governance. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6(2), 128–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1745621>
- Adolfsson, C.-H., & Håkansson, J. (2021). Data analysis for school improvement within coupled local school systems: Which data and with what purposes? *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 22(3), 714–727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2021.2010101>
- Adolfsson, P., & Wikström, E. (2007). After quantification: Quality dialogue and performance. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 23(1), 73–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0408.2007.00420.x>
- Alamaa, L., Hall, P., & Löfgren, K. (2024). Why are organisational professionals expanding in the Swedish public sector? The role of accountability. *Public Policy and Administration*, 0(0), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09520767241227068>
- Alnervik, K. (2013). *"Men så kan man ju också tänka!": pedagogisk dokumentation som förändringsverktyg i förskolan* [Doctoral thesis: Jönköping University]. <https://hj.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:659182/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Alnervik, K. (2018). Systematic documentation: Structures and tools in a practice of communicative documentation. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 19(1), 72–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949118762147>
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: New vistas for qualitative research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Anderson, G. L., Herr, K., & Nihlén, A. S. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research* (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.
- Andersson, K., Blossing, U., & Jarl, M. (2018). Tillit och misstro i icke framgångsrika skolor. In M. Jarl & J. Pierre (Eds.), *Skolan som politisk organisation* (pp. 67–84). Gleerups.
- Atkinson, P., & Delamont, S. (1990). Procedural Display and the Authenticity of Classroom Activity: A Response to Bloome, Puro, and Theodorou. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 20(1), 63–9. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1179864>

- Augustsson, D. (2020). *Expansive design for teachers: An activity theoretical approach to design and work integrated learning* [Doctoral thesis: University West]. <https://hv.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1468849/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Baker, F. S. (2015). Reflections on the Reggio Emilia approach as inspiration for early childhood teacher education in Abu Dhabi, UAE. *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(6), 982–995. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2014.974036>
- Bastöe, P. Ö. (2024). An evaluation manager perspective – Inspiration from Evert. In M. Danielsson & N. Hertting (Eds.), *Samtal om idéer, utvärdering och samhällsförändring. En vänbok till Evert Vedung* (pp. 101–115). Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1826943/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Beitin, B. (2012). Interview and sampling: how many and whom. In *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2 ed., pp. 243–254). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218403>
- Bergh, A. (2010). *Vad gör kvalitet med utbildning? Om kvalitetsbegreppets skilda innebörder och dess konsekvenser för utbildning* [Doctoral thesis, Örebro University]. Örebro Studies in Education, 29. <https://oru.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:344055/FULLTEXT02>
- Bergh, A. (2011). Why quality in education – and what quality? A linguistic analysis of the concept of quality in Swedish government texts. *Education Inquiry*, 2(4), 709–723. <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v2i4.22008>
- Bergh, A. (2015). Local quality work in an age of accountability – between autonomy and control. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30(4), 590–607. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2015.1017612>
- Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9>
- Biesta, G. (2010). *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Blackler, F. (2011). Power, politics, and intervention theory: Lessons from organization studies. *Theory & Psychology*, 21(5), 724–734. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354311418146>
- Bloome, D. (1990). Toward a more delicate elaboration of procedural display: A rejoinder to Atkinson and Delamont. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 20(1), 71–73. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1179865>
- Bloome, D., Puro, P., & Theodorou, E. (1989). Procedural display and classroom lessons. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 19(3), 265–291. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1179417>
- Blossing, U. (2022). The hierarchist way of school development in Sweden. In C. Brown & J. R. Malin (Eds.), *The Emerald handbook of evidence-informed practice in education* (pp. 97–

- 106). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-141-620221015>
- Blossing, U., & Söderström, A. (2014). A school for every child in Sweden. In U. Blossing, G. Imeses, & L. Moos (Eds.), *The Nordic Education model: 'A school for all' encounters neo-liberal policy* (pp. 115–127). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7125-3>
- Blossing, U., Nyen, T., Söderström, A., & Hagen Tønder, A. (2015). *Local drivers for improvement capacity: Six types of school organisations*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12724-8>
- Blunden, A. (2010). *An interdisciplinary theory of activity*. Chicago: Haymarket books.
- Botha, L. (2017). Changing Educational Traditions with the Change Laboratory. *Education as Change*, 21(1), 73-94. <https://doi.org/0.17159.1947-9417/2017/861>
- Bornemark, J. (2018). *Det omätbaras renässans: En uppgörelse med pedanternas världsberravälde*. Volante.
- Brannick, T., & Coghlan, D. (2007). In Defense of Being “Native”: The Case for Insider Academic Research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 10(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428106289253>
- Bringselius, L. (2023). Trust-based public management: Conceptualization and lessons from the Swedish trust reform. In C. Greve & T. Ysa (Eds.), *Handbook on strategic public management* (pp. 205–222). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789907193.00026>
- Broström, S., Einarsdottir, J., & Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2018). The Nordic perspective on early childhood education and care. In M. Fleer & B. van Oers (Eds.), *International handbook of early childhood education* (pp. 801–818). Springer International Handbooks of Education. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-0927-7_45
- Brunsson, N., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2000). Constructing organizations: The example of public sector reform. *Organization Studies*, 21(4), 721–746. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840600214003>
- Bröms, T. (2020). Principals’ decision-making for organising the educational organisation. In L. Moos, E. Nihlfors, & J. M. Paulsen (Eds.), *Re-centering the critical potential of Nordic school leadership research: Fundamental, but often forgotten perspectives* (pp. 85–97). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55027-1>
- Bröms, T. (2023). *Rektorns beslutsfattande om skolans organisation: Navigering utifrån beslutslogiker i oländig terräng*. [Doctoral thesis, Uppsala University]. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Callewaert, S., & Kallós, D. (1976). The rose-coloured wave in Swedish pedagogy. *Educational Studies*, 2(3), 179–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305569760020301>

- Chaiklin, S. (2019). The meaning and origin of the activity concept in Soviet psychology—With primary focus on A. N. Leontiev's approach. *Theory & Psychology*, 29(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354319828208>
- Cobb, P., Jackson, K., Henrick, E., Smith, T.M., & the MIST team. (2018). *Systems for instructional improvement. Creating coherence from the Classroom to the District Office*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed., Vol. 1). Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K., & Morrison, K. (Keith R. B.) (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K., & Morrison, K. (Keith R. B.) (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge.
- Colasante, M. (2024). Five methodological dilemmas when implementing an activity theory transformative intervention in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2024.2367655>
- Cole, M. (2019). Re-covering the idea of a tertiary artifact. In A. Edwards, M. Flear, & L. Böttcher (Eds.), *Cultural-historical approaches to studying learning and development: Perspectives in cultural-historical research* (pp. 423–439). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-6826-4_20
- Cole, R. E., & Matsumiya, T. (2007). Too much of a good thing? Quality as an impediment to innovation. *California Management Review*, 50(1), 77–93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166417>
- Cole, R. E., & Matsumiya, T. (2008). When the pursuit of quality risks innovation. *The TQM Journal*, 20(2), 130–142. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17542730810857363>
- Dafermos, M. (2018). Relating dialogue and dialectics: A philosophical perspective. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, 6, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2018.189>
- Dahlberg, G., & Elfström, I. (2014). Pedagogisk dokumentation i tillblivelse. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, 19(4–5), 268–296. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/article/view/1396/1240>
- Dahler-Larsen, P. (2019). *Quality: From Plato to performance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dahler-Larsen, P., & Boodhoo, A. (2019). Evaluation culture and good governance: Is there a link? *Evaluation*, 25(3), 277–293. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389018819110>
- Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut. (2002). *Udviklingsdialoger – om læring i praksis*. Vester kopi. København.
- Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut. (2003). *Udviklingsdialoger. Strategi, forløb og effektvurdering*. Vester kopi. København.

- De Vaus, D. A. (2001). *Research design in social research*. SAGE Publications.
- Dunn, R., Ben Jafaar, S., Earl, L., & Katz, S. (2013). Towards data-informed decisions: From ministry policy to school practice. In K. Schildkamp, M. K. Lai, & L. Earl (Eds.), *Data-based decision making in education: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 117–137). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4816-3>
- Ebbeck, M., & Chan, Y.Y.Y. (2010). Instituting change in early childhood education: Recent developments in Singapore. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(6), 457–463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0435-8>
- Edwards Groves, C., & Rönnerman, K. (2013). Generating leading practices through professional learning. *Professional Development in Education*, 39(1), 122–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.724439>
- Edwards, A. (2007). Working collaboratively to build resilience: A CHAT approach. *Social Policy and Society*, 6(2), 255–265. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746406003514>
- Edwards, A. (2011). Building common knowledge at boundaries between professional practices. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 50(1), 33–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2011.04.007>
- Edwards, A. (2017). *Working relationally in and across practices: A cultural-historical approach to collaboration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Elfström, I. (2013). *Uppföljning och utvärdering för förändring – pedagogisk dokumentation som grund för kontinuerlig verksamhetsutveckling och systematiskt kvalitetsarbete i förskolan* [Doctoral thesis, Stockholm University]. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:661443/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Ellingson, L. L. (2009). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research*. SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412991476>
- Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity theoretical approach to developmental research* [Doctoral thesis, Helsinki University]. Orienta Konsultit.
- Engeström, Y. (1990). When is a tool? Multiple meanings of artefacts in human activity. In Y. Engeström (Ed.), *Learning, working, and imagining: Twelve studies in activity theory* (pp. 25–38). Orienta-Konsultit Oy.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). Innovative learning in work teams: Analyzing cycles of knowledge creation in practice. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 377–406). Cambridge University Press.
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080020028747>

- Engeström, Y. (2018). *Expertise in transition: Expansive learning in medical work*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139023009>
- Engeström, Y., & Escalante, V. (1996). Mundane tool or object of affection? The rise and fall of the Postal Buddy. In B. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 325–373). MIT Press.
- Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2010). Studies of expansive learning: Foundations, findings and future challenges. *Educational Research Review*, 5(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2009.12.002>
- Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2011). Discursive manifestations of contradictions in organizational change efforts: A methodological framework. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 24(3), 368–387. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811111132758>
- Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2018). Cultural-historical activity theory: Founding insights and new challenges. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 14(3), 43–56. <https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2018140304>
- Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2021). From mediated actions to heterogeneous coalitions: Four generations of activity-theoretical studies of work and learning. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 28(1), 4–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039.2020.1806328>
- Englund, B. (2012). Dialog och dialogicitet som tankefigur hos tre filosofer. In B. Englund & B. Sandström (Eds.), *Dialogen som idé och praktik* (pp. 13–28). Carlsson.
- Englund, B., & Sandström, B. (2015). Dialogue – Ideal and practiced: How philosophy is transformed into governance. In K. Jezierska & L. Koczanowicz (Eds.), *Democracy in dialogue, dialogue in democracy: The politics of dialogue in theory and practice* (pp. 47–63). Routledge.
- Esaiasson, P., Gilljam, M., Oscarsson, H., Towns, A. E., & Wängnerud, L. (2017). *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera sambälle, individ och marknad* (5th ed.). Wolters Kluwer.
- Eysi, D. (2016). The usefulness of qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in researching problem-solving ability in science education curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(15), 91–100. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1103224.pdf>
- Farrell, C. C., & Coburn, C. E. (2017). Absorptive capacity: A conceptual framework for understanding district central office learning. *Journal of Educational Change*, 18(2), 135–159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-016-9291-7>
- Fleming, J. (2018). Recognizing and resolving the challenges of being an insider researcher in work-integrated learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), 311–320. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/recognizing-resolving-challenges-being-insider/docview/2227915506/se-2>
- Forsberg, E., & Nordzell, A. (2013). Dialogue for school improvement? *Nordic Studies in Education*, 33(3), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-5949-2013-03-04>

- Foss Hansen, H. (2024). Evalueringsbölgers dynamik. In M. Danielsson & N. Hertting (Eds.), *Samtal om idéer, utvärdering och samhällsförändring: En vänbok till Evert Vedung* (pp. 175–188). Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1826943/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Fullan, M. (2016). *The NEW meaning of educational change* (Fifth). London : New York : Toronto, ON: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group ; Teachers College Press ; Ontario Principals' Council.
- Furubo, J.-E. (2024). Utvärdering och annan kunskap. In M. Danielsson & N. Hertting (Eds.), *Samtal om idéer, utvärdering och samhällsförändring: En vänbok till Evert Vedung* (pp. 189–204). Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1826943/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and method* (2nd ed.). Continuum.
- Giraud, C., Cioffo, G. D., de Lettenhove, M. K., & Chaves, C. R. (2019). Navigating research ethics in the absence of an ethics review board: The importance of space for sharing. *Research Ethics*, 15(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1747016117750081>
- Grimm, F. (2020). The first teacher as the elephant in the room – Forgotten and hidden teacher leadership perspectives in Swedish schools. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 5(2), 454–483. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2020.2.5>
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Haglund, B. (2003). Stimulated recall: Några anteckningar om en metod att generera data. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, 8(3), 145–157. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/article/view/1188/1037>
- Hardy, I., & Rönnerman, K. (2019). A “deleterious” driver: The “First Teacher” reform in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 63(5), 805–818. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2018.1452289>
- Hargreaves, A. (2024). *Leadership from the middle: the beating heart of educational transformation*. New York; London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed school leadership. Developing tomorrow's leaders*. New York: Routledge.
- Heath, C., Hindmarsh, J., & Luff, P. (2010). *Video in qualitative research: Analysing social interaction in everyday life*. SAGE.
- Heikkilä, H., & Seppänen, L. (2014). Examining developmental dialogue: The emergence of transformative agency. *Outlines. Critical Practice Studies*, 15(2), 5–30. <https://doi.org/10.7146/ocps.v15i2.16829>

- Henriksen, Ö. H. (2018). Making sense across levels in local school governance: Dialogue meetings between a superintendent and subordinate school leaders. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 2(2–3), 119–133.
<https://doi.org/10.7577/njcie.2752>
- Henriksen, Ö. H., & Paulsen, J. M. (2021). Balancing trust and control through dialogue meetings in Norwegian school district governance. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 20(3), 349–365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-020-09287-1>
- Hirsh, Å., & Segolsson, M. (2019). Enabling teacher-driven school development and collaborative learning: An activity theory-based study on leadership as an overarching practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(3), 400–420.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217739363>
- Hirsh, Å., Liljenberg, M., & Jahnke, A. (2024). Systematisk FoU-samverkan som expansivt lärande. In A. Jacobsson (Ed.), *Att utveckla undervisning inifrån och ut* (Ifous rapportserie 2024:1). Ifous.
- Hirsh, Å (2014). The Individual Development Plan: supportive tool or mission impossible? Swedish teachers' experiences of dilemmas in IDP practice, *Education Inquiry*, 5(3), 24613, <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v5.24613>
- Hooge, E., & Honingh, M. (2014). Are school boards aware of the educational quality of their schools? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(4S), 139–154.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213510509>
- Hopkins, D. (2017). *The William Walker Oration: The past, present and future of school improvement and system reform* (Vol. 56). Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL).
- Hopkins, D., Ainscow, M. & West, M. (1994). *School Improvement in an Era of Change*. London: Cassell.
- Hopkins, D., Stringfield, S., Harris, A., Stoll, L., & Mackay, T. (2014). School and system improvement: A narrative state-of-the-art review. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 25(2), 257–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.885452>
- Hord, S. M. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).
<https://sedl.org/pubs/change34/plc-cha34.pdf>
- Håkansson, J., & Adolfsson, C.-H. (2021). Local education authority's quality management within a coupled school system: Strategies, actions, and tensions. *Journal of Educational Change*, 23, 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09414-6>
- Häikiö, T. (2007). *Barns estetiska läroprocesser: Atelierista i förskola och skola* [Doctoral thesis, University of Gothenburg]. Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

- Iannacci, L. (2007). Learning to “Do” School: Procedural display and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in Canadian early childhood education (ECE). *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies*, 4 (2), 55-76. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-4467.17005>
- Imsen, G., Blossing, U., & Moos, L. (2016). Reshaping the Nordic education model in an era of efficiency: Changes in the comprehensive school project in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden since the millennium. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 61(5), 568–583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1172502>
- Insulander, E., & Svärden Åberg, E. (2014). Vilken kunskap erkänns i det systematiska kvalitetsarbetet? Om oförenliga tankestilar i dagens förskola. *Journal of Nordic Early Childhood Education Research*, 7(12), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.7577/nbf.779>
- Jederlund, U. (2021). *Trustful relationships and school development* [Doctoral thesis, Stockholm University]. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1607354/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Jenkins, R. (1992). Pierre Bourdieu. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.
- Jezińska, K., & Koczanowicz, L. (2015). Introduction. In K. Jezińska & L. Koczanowicz (Eds.), *Democracy in dialogue, dialogue in democracy: The politics of dialogue in theory and practice* (pp. 1–11). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315576404>
- Johnson, J.C., & Weller, S.C. (2001). Elicitation Techniques for Interviewing. In J.A., Gubrium & F. Faber. *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks California: SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412973588.n30>
- Kallós, D. (1979). *Den nya pedagogiken: en analys av den s k dialogpedagogiken som svenskt samhällsfenomen*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand.
- Kaptelinin, V. (2005). The object of activity: Making sense of the sense-maker. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 12(1), 4–18. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327884mca1201_2
- Karanasios, S. (2018). Toward a unified view of technology and activity: The contribution of activity theory to information systems research. *Information Technology & People*, 31(1), 134-155. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-04-2016-0074>
- Klingvall, M.-I., & Pramling Samuelsson, I. (2022). *Den moderna förskolan: Från en kvinnofråga till en samhällsfråga*. Liber.
- Koh, G. A., & Askill-Williams, H. (2021). Sustainable school improvement in complex adaptive systems: A scoping review. *Review of Education*, 1(9), 281–314. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3246>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2014). *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun* (3rd ed.). Studentlitteratur.

- Lager, K. (2010). *Att organisera för kvalitet – en studie om kvalitetsarbete i kommunen och förskolan* [Licentiate thesis, University of Gothenburg].
<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/24068>
- Lager, K. (2015). *I spänningsfältet mellan kontroll och utveckling: en policystudie av systematiskt kvalitetsarbete i kommunen, förskolan och fritidshemmet* [Doctoral thesis, University of Gothenburg]. <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/40661>
- Lander, R., Blossing, U., Jarl, M., Milsta, M., Olin, A., & others. (2013). Skolutveckling och differentiering för skolpersonalen. In I. Wernersson & I. Gerrbo (Eds.), *Differentieringens janusansikte: En antologi från Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik vid Göteborgs universitet* (pp. 115–148). Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Le Fevre, D., Timperley, H., Twyford, K. & Ell, F. (2019). *Leading Powerful Professional Learning. Responding to Complexity with Adaptive Expertise*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Leont'ev, A. N. (1977). Activity and consciousness. In *Philosophy in the USSR: Problems of dialectical materialism* (pp. 180–202).
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/leontev/works/1977/leon1977.htm>
- Leont'ev, A. N. (1978). *Activity, consciousness, and personality*. Prentice-Hall.
- Leont'ev, A. N. (1981). *Problems of the development of the mind*. Progress Publishers.
- Levant, A. (2018). Two, three, many strands of activity theory. *Educational Review*, 70(1), 100–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1388619>
- Lewin, K. (1936). *Principles of topological psychology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Lewin, K. (1947). Group decisions and social change. In T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (Eds.), *Readings in social psychology* (pp. 340–344). Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social sciences*. New York: Harper.
- Liljenberg, M. (2015). Distributing leadership to establish developing and learning school organisations in the Swedish context. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 43(1), 152–170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213513187>
- Lindgren, A., & Söderlind, I. (2019). *Förskolans historia: förskolepolitik, barn och barndom*. Gleerups.
- Lundgren, U. (1999). Ramfaktorteori och praktisk utbildningsplanering. *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige*, 4(1), 31–41. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/article/view/1052/903>
- Löfgren, K., Darrah-Morgan, B., & Hall, P. (2022). The growth of organisational professionals in tertiary educational institutions in New Zealand. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 35(7), 765–782. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-09-2021-0222>

- Marx, K. (1845). *Theses on Feuerbach*.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm>
- Meade, P., & McMeniman, M. (1992). Stimulated recall — An effective methodology for examining successful teaching in science. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 19(3), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03219515>
- Mifsud, D. (2023). A systematic review of school distributed leadership: exploring research purposes, concepts and approaches in the field between 2010 and 2022. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 56(2), 154–179.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2022.2158181>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- National Board of Health and Welfare. (1987). *Pedagogiskt program för förskolan: Allmänna råd från Socialstyrelsen 1987:3*. Allmänna Förlaget.
- Nevo, D. (1998). Dialogue evaluation: A possible contribution of evaluation to school improvement. *Prospects*, 28(1), 77–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02737781>
- Nihlfors, E., & Johansson, O. (2013). *Rektor – en stark länk i styrningen av skolan*. SNS Förlag.
- Norqvist, L., & Ärlestig, H. (2021). Systems thinking in school organizations – Perspectives from various leadership levels. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 59(1), 77–93.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2020-0031>
- Nuttall, J., Henderson, L., Wood, E., & Martin, J. (2024). *Leadership in early childhood education: A cultural-historical theory of practice development*. Springer.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84367-0>
- Nyhan, R. C. (2000). Changing the paradigm: Trust and its role in public sector organizations. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 30(1), 87–109.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740022064560>
- Nytell, H. (2006). *Från kvalitetsidé till kvalitetsregim: Om statlig styrning av skolan* [Doctoral thesis, Uppsala University]. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- OECD. (2019). *Institutionalism, quality and use of policy evaluation: Governance lessons from countries' experience*. GOV/PGC(2019)51/ANN.
- Ouchi, W. G. (1980). Markets, bureaucracies, and clans. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(1), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392231>
- Paulsen, J. M., Nihlfors, E., Brinkkjaer, U., & Risku, M. (2016). Superintendent leadership in hierarchy and network. In L. Moos, E. Nihlfors & J. M. Paulsen (Eds.), *Nordic superintendents: Agents in a broken chain* (pp. 15–32). Springer.

- Postholm, M. B. (2015). Methodologies in cultural–historical activity theory: The example of school-based development. *Educational Research*, 57(1), 43–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2014.983723>
- Prøitz, T. S., Mausethagen, S., & Skedsmo, G. (2021). District administrators' governing styles in the enactment of data-use practices. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 24(2), 244–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2018.1562097>
- Prøitz, T. S., Novak, J., & Mausethagen, S. (2022). Representations of student performance data in local education policy. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 34(1), 89–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-022-09379-x>
- Regulation 2016/679. (2016). Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0679>
- Richardson, G. (2010). *Svensk utbildningshistoria: Skola och samhälle förr och nu* (4th ed.). Studentlitteratur.
- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 818–838). SAGE.
- Ringarp, J., & Nihlfors, E. (2017). *Styrning och ledning av svensk förskola och skola: En introduktion*. Gleerups.
- Rönnerberg, L. (2012). Reinstating national school inspections in Sweden: The return of the state. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 32(2), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-5949-2012-02-01>
- Rönnerberg, L. (2014). School inspection in Sweden: Historical evolution, resurrection and gradual change. *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 186, 35–45.
<https://doi.org/10.4000/rfp.4400>
- Rönnerman, K., Salo, P., & Furu, E. M. (Eds.). (2008). *Nurturing praxis: Action research and school-university partnerships in a Nordic light*. Sense Publishers.
- Sannino, A., & Engeström, Y. (2018). Cultural-historical activity theory: Founding insights and new challenges. *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, 14(3), 43–56.
<https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2018140304>
- Schildkamp, K., Smit, M., & Blossing, U. (2019). Professional development in the use of data: From data to knowledge in data teams. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 63(3), 393–411. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1376350>
- Schools Inspectorate. (2017). *Huvudmannens styrning och ledning av förskolans kvalitet*. Stockholm: Schools Inspectorate. Retrieved

- from https://www.skolinspektionen.se/globalassets/publikationssok/granskningsrapporter/kvalitetsgranskningar/2017/styrning-och-ledning-forskolan/huvudmannens_styrning_forskola_2017_skolinspektionen.pdf
- Scribner, S. (1985). Vygotsky's uses of history. In J. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives* (pp. 119–145). Cambridge University Press.
- SFS 1980:620 (1980). *Socialtjänstlagen*. [The Social Services Act] Ministry of Health & Social Affairs.
- SFS 2003:460. (2003). *Lagen om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor*. Ministry of Education.
- SFS 2010:800. (2010). *Skollagen*. [The Education Act] Ministry of Education.
- Sheridan, S., Williams, P., & Sandberg, A. (2012). Systematic quality work in preschool. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 45(1), 123–150.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-012-0076-8>
- Shiell, A., Hawe, P., & Gold, L. (2008). Complex interventions or complex systems? Implications for health economic evaluation. *BMJ*, 336, 1281–1283.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39569.510521.ad>
- Sisson, J. H., Lash, M., Shin, A. M., & Whittington, V. (2021). Co-constructed leadership in early childhood education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 27(4), 797–819.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2021.1914350>
- Skedsmo, G., Rönnerberg, L., & Ydesen C. (2021) National testing and accountability in the Scandinavian welfare states: Education policy translations in Norway, Denmark and Sweden. In S. Grek, C. Maroy, & A. Verger (Red.) *World Yearbook of Education 2021. Accountability and Datafication in the Governance of Education* (p. 111–129). Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6226-8_5
- SKL. (2016). *Huvudmannens expertråd för skolutveckling*.
<https://skl.se/download/18.70aae65915385321fb070fe0/1459759366111/Expertr%C3%A5det%20slutsatser%20och%20rekommendationer%2020160403.pdf>
- Skott, P. (2014). I mötet mellan nationell utbildningspolitik och lokala styrrum. In E. Nihlfors & O. Johansson (Eds.), *Skolledare i mötet mellan nationella mål och lokal policy* (pp. 175–196). Gleerups.
- SOU 2018:38. (2018). *Med tillit växer handlingsutrymmet: Tillitsbaserad styrning och ledning av välfärdssektorn*.
<https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/0aa3c27a6cee4f78830cd1f56844b087/styra-och-leda-med-tillit-forskning-och-praktik-sou-201838.pdf>
- SOU 2019:43. (2019). *Med tillit följer bättre resultat – Tillitsbaserad styrning och ledning i staten*.
<https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/792a8511629447d8abf5aa2520161631/med-tillit-foljer-battre-resultat--tillitsbaserad-styrning-och-ledning-i-staten-sou-201943.pdf>

- Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed Leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 143–150.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984678>
- Spinuzzi, C. (2011). Losing by expanding: Corraling the runaway object. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 25(4), 449–486.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651911411040>
- Stoll, L., & Seashore Louis, K. (2007). *Professional learning communities: divergence, depth and dilemmas*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Styf, M. (2012). *Pedagogisk ledning för en pedagogisk verksamhet? Om den kommunala förskolans ledningsstruktur* [Doctoral thesis, Umeå University]. <https://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:526505/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Ståhlkrantz, K., & Rapp, S. (2020). Superintendents as boundary spanners – Facilitating improvement of teaching and learning. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 5(2), 376–415. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2020.2.3>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (1998). *Läroplan för förskolan: Lpfö 98*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/handle/2077/53003/gupea_2077_53003_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2010). *Läroplan för förskolan: Lpfö 98/10*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/handle/2077/30905/gupea_2077_30905_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2011). *Läroplan för gymnasieskolan: Gy11*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
<https://www.skolverket.se/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/laroplan-gy11-for-gymnasieskolan>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2012). *Uppföljning, utvärdering och utveckling i förskolan – pedagogisk dokumentation*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6bfaca41169863e6a659d3f/1553964384353/pdf2808.pdf>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2015). *Skolverkets allmänna råd med kommentarer: Systematiskt kvalitetsarbete – för skolväsendet*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
<https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=2901>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2017). *Skolverkets allmänna råd med kommentarer: Måluppfyllelse i förskolan*. Swedish National Agency for Education.
<https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6bfaca41169863e6a65c87e/1553967244148/pdf3749.pdf>

- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2018). *Läroplan för förskolan: Lpfö 18*. Swedish National Agency for Education. <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=4001>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2021). *Systematiskt kvalitetsarbete hos huvudmän för förskola och grundskola: En nationell kartläggning*. Swedish National Agency for Education. <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=8331>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2022). *Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet: Lgr22*. Swedish National Agency for Education. <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.2cb9d0c18340c7dae31dd/1663664935672/pdf9718.pdf>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2024). *Läroplan för anpassade grundskolan. Lgra22*. Swedish National Agency for Education. <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=13075>
- Swedish National Agency for Education. (2024). *Barn och personal i förskola: Hösten 2023*. Swedish National Agency for Education. Dnr 2024:867. <https://www.skolverket.se/getFile?file=12719>
- Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good research practice*. The Swedish Research Council. https://www.vr.se/download/18.5639980c162791bbfe697882/1555334908942/Good-Research-Practice_VR_2017.pdf
- The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. (2017). *ALLEA – All European Academies, Berlin 2017*. https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/h2020-ethics_code-of-conduct_en.pdf
- Timperley, H. (2011). *Realizing the power of professional learning*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Tornberg, A., Berr, D., & Finnman, J. (2022). *Öppna jämförelser 2022: Förskola – förskolans kompensatoriska roll*. Sveriges Kommuner och Regioner. <https://skr.se/download/18.359736e3184997951b11382/1669037955232/%C3%96pna%20%C3%A4m%C3%B6relser%20%E2%80%93%20F%C3%B6rskola%202022.pdf>
- Tracy, S. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10) 837–851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Vallberg Roth, A.-C. (2014). Bedömning i förskolors dokumentation – fenomen, begrepp och reglering. *Pedagogisk Forskning i Sverige*, 19(4–5), 403–437. <https://open.lnu.se/index.php/PFS/article/view/1402/1246>
- Van Der Steen, M., Van Twist, M., Fenger, M., & Le Cointre, S. (2013). Complex causality in improving underperforming schools: A complex adaptive systems approach. *Policy and Politics*, 41(4), 551–567. <https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447319481-010>

- Vecchi, V. (2014). *Blå cikoriablommor: Ateljén i Reggio Emilias pedagogiska verksamhet*. Studentlitteratur.
- Vedung, E. (2010). Four waves of evaluation diffusion. *Evaluation (London, England)*, 16(3), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389010372>
- Vedung, E. (2013). Six models of evaluation. In E. Araral Jr, S. Frtizen, M. Howlett, M. Ramesh & X. Wu, *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*, pp. 387–400. London: Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/10.4324/9780203097571>
- Vetoshkina, L., Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2017). On the power of the object: History-making through skilled performance in wooden boat building. In J. Sandberg, L. Rouleau, A. Langley, & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *Skillful performance: Enacting capabilities, knowledge, competence, and expertise in organizations* (pp. 175–191). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198806639.001.0001>
- Virkkunen, J., & Shelley Newnham, D. (2013). *The change laboratory: A tool for collaborative development of work and education*. Birkhäuser Boston.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *The collected works of L. S. Vygotsky: Volume 3. Problems of the theory and history of psychology*. Plenum Press.
- Wartofsky, M. (1979). *Models: Representation and the scientific understanding*. D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Waters, J. T., & Marzano, R. J. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement*. A working paper. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494270.pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE.
- Åkesson, E. (2024). *Resultatansvar för likvärdighet. En läroplansteoretisk studie av systematiskt kvalitetsarbete och rektorers sensemaking* [Doctoral thesis, Linnaeus University]. Linnaeus University Press. <https://lnu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1844884/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Öqvist, A., & Cervantes, S. (2018). Teaching in preschool: Heads of preschools' governance throughout the systematic quality work. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 4(1), 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2017.1419040>

Appendices

Appendix 1. Letter of Consent

This is a translation from Swedish.

Consent for participation.

This is a letter of consent for participation in research conducted within the frames of a thesis project at the Department of Education, University of Gothenburg. The overarching purpose of this thesis project is to contribute with knowledge on interaction and communication between various actors at local, governing and supportive levels at municipal administrations responsible for quality in preschools and schools. The research project will, within the frames of the overarching purpose, focus on more specific aims and research questions of relevance for the research subject educational work as well as systematic quality work and educational administration.

Observations of meetings and conversations between various professionals on topics concerning quality and quality work will be conducted within the frames of the research project. The observations will include audio recording and field notes. After observations of such meetings, participants will write their individual reflections using a template with questions. In addition, you may be asked to participate in interviews and group seminars which will be audio recorded and documented in field notes and written reflections. Should the study so require, you may be asked to answer surveys. If photographs are made, they only serve the doctoral student's memory and will not be used in communication and reporting of research results.

Participation is voluntary, and all information will be handled confidentially and for research purposes only. Each participant is guaranteed anonymity in communication and reporting of research results. The studied municipality and the identity of the studied administration will, however, be known and participants will know of each other. Participation is based on consent and can be revoked at any time. In case individual data can be discerned, these data will be erased. Data produced within the project will be kept safe according to a data management plan which has been set up at the University of Gothenburg. Storage and sorting out will be conducted according to current procedures. University of Gothenburg, as personal data controller, is responsible for the processing of data. You may be informed about the sampled data by contact with the doctoral student. For further questions, please turn to the data protection officer at the university.

For questions, please contact doctoral student Marina Karlsson, mob. XXXX-XXXXXX, e-mail marina.karlsson@gu.se

Consent to participation in research.

Given the information above and on the next page, please tick one or several of the boxes below:

- ☐ Yes, I want to participate in the research study.
- ☐ No, I do not want to participate in the research study.
- ☐ I wish to receive a scanned copy of the signed consent sent to my e-mail address.

Date
Signature
Name clarification
Title
Workplace
Mobile telephone number
E-mail address

Information on the processing of personal data at University of Gothenburg

Personal data controller	University of Gothenburg
Data protection officer	dataskydd@gu.se
Personal data	You consent to the processing of the following personal data at University of Gothenburg: Name, title, workplace, mobile telephone number, e-mail address, audio recording, photography, your own written reflection, field notes made by the doctoral student and possible survey responses.
Purposes and scope of GDPR	To make possible a thesis project at the Department of Education, University of Gothenburg. The overarching purpose of this thesis project is to contribute with knowledge on interaction and communication between various actors at local, governing and supportive levels at municipal administrations responsible for quality in preschools and schools. The research project will, within the frames of the overarching purpose, focus on more specific aims and research questions of relevance for the research subject educational work as well as systematic quality work and educational administration. It should, however, be noted that data sampled for a specific research project may be used in a later research project. Further processing of data for the sake of scientific or historical research purposes is not incompatible with the original purpose.
Lawful grounds for personal data processing	Your consent that University of Gothenburg processes the mentioned personal data.
Recipient	The personal data will be used for the purpose of research within the frames of a thesis project at University of Gothenburg.
Storage	Data produced within the project will be kept safe according to a data management plan which has been set up at the University of Gothenburg. The University of Gothenburg will save your personal data for as long as needed for the above-mentioned purpose or until you revoke your consent. University of Gothenburg may, however, be responsible for archiving and saving personal data according to the Archives Act, regulations of the Swedish National Archives and rules for sorting out and decisions for application at the university by RA-FS 1999:1.
Your rights	You have the right to contact University of Gothenburg to 1) obtain information on what data University of Gothenburg has about you, 2) ask for rectification of your personal data. Additionally, and under the circumstances mentioned in data protection legislation, you have the right to 3) ask for deletion of your personal data, 4) ask for transmission of your data (data portability) or 5) ask that University of Gothenburg limits the processing of your personal data. When University of Gothenburg processed personal data with the support of your consent, you have the right to revoke your consent by notifying the university in writing. You have the right to complain about the processing of your personal data by contacting the Data inspection, Box 8114, 104 20 Stockholm.

Appendix 2. Characteristics of the Preschools

	Preschool unit 1	Preschool unit 2	Preschool unit 3	Preschool unit 4	Preschool unit 5
Number of children	160-169	70-79	130-139	90-99	30-39
Number of staff members	30-34	15-19	25-29	15-19	1-4
Percentage of preschool teachers	25-29%	35-39%	25-29%	35-39%	30-34%
Percentage of substitute teachers	7%	9%	1.5%	3.5%	1%
Socio-economical index	Average	Very high	Low	Very low	Very low
Building	New and modern. Two floors.	Integrated in an apartment building.	New and modern. Two floors.	Old and worn out. One floor.	Integrated in an apartment building
School yard	Average size	Small	Average size	Very large	Shared with residents. Very small
Management group	No turnover since start in 2016	No turnover since start in 2016	No turnover since start in 2016	No turnover since start in 2016	Management group has changed greatly
Systematic quality work as described by area managers and principals	Routines are well established	Routines are well established	Routines are well established	Routines are well established	Routines for systematic quality work need to be developed
Miscellaneous	One group of children is mostly outdoors			Will soon move into a new building and grow	

Appendix 3. Observation guide

Name of file	
Day and time	
Description of meeting (type)	
Participants	
Location Description of room and seating arrangements	
Tools used during meeting Meeting arrangements	
Participation and engagement Distribution of talking space	
Miscellaneous	

[illegible]

Appendix 4. Individual Written Reflection

The template had seven pages. Each page had a big, blank square in which respondents could write their individual reflections based on the questions above the blank square, see below for Swedish examples of layout, pages 1–2. Translated into English, the questions are as follows:

Individual written reflection.

Please write your thoughts on the meeting which you just participated in.

Type

Date

Name

Title

Workplace.

Page 1.

Summarise your **greatest and most important impressions** from this meeting.

Page 2.

Describe your **expectations** of the meeting.

What expectations did you have?

What did you want to achieve/contribute with during the meeting?

Were your expectations fulfilled or did something else happen?

Page 3.

Describe your thoughts on **the arrangement/design of the meeting**.

What do you think about different parts of the meeting?

What parts were good and why?

What parts should/could have been done differently and why?

Page 4.

How did you talk about **quality**?

What kinds of quality were discussed?

Was there any kind of quality that you could have talked less/more about? Was anything missed? Was anything left unfinished?

Page 5.

Did you notice any **tensions/challenges** during the meeting?

During the meeting, what do you think became obvious that you need to continue working with, or working with differently?

Was there something that you did not agree on?

Did something happen that made you think about relationships?

Page 6.

What are your thoughts on everyone's **participation**?

How did you participate? How did the others participate? Did anyone contribute in particular?

Did someone shape or rule the meeting, and why? Who did not get (or take) enough space and why? Were the roles clear? Why/why not?

Page 7.

Anything else you would like to tell?

Would you like to express something more?

Is there something you would like to remember for your own sake?

Observation guide in Swedish. Example of layout, page 1.

Individuell skriftlig reflektion

Skriv ner dina tankar om det möte du precis har deltagit i, tack.

Typ	
Datum	
Namn	
Titel	
Arbetsplats	

Sammanfatta **dina största och viktigaste intryck** från detta möte.

Observation guide in Swedish. Example of layout, page 2.

Beskriv **dina förväntningar** på mötet

Vilka förväntningar hade du?

Vad ville du åstadkomma/ bidra med under mötet?

Uppfylldes dina förväntningar eller hände något annat?

Appendix 5. Interview Guide

My own notes

- Name of the document
- Date and time
- Description of the purpose of the interview (level, follow-up of which dialogue, etcetera)
- Respondent (name + title)
- Room (description of furnishment, etcetera)
- Miscellaneous.

Text in italics can be added depending on what has been observed during the meeting, or what has been written in the individual written reflection (stimulated recall), and suggestions for follow-up questions that could be added.

Background

- Describe, **in short, as bullet points**, your professional background and experiences.
- What are your experiences of quality work dialogues in schools/preschools?
When did it become important? What was it like before? Have there been any changes of content or arrangement/design?
- Does this meeting differ from other meetings?

Expectations/what is to be achieved.

- *Something about the expectations (use examples from the written reflection).*
- Those were your expectations, but what do think ought to be achieved in these kinds of meetings? What is the purpose?
- Has this always been the purpose or was it different before?
- Do you think you achieved that which you describe, or did you achieve something else?

Division of labour.

- How did you get/give information about what was expected from participants during the meeting?
Should it be done differently?
- How did you prepare for the meeting? How do you usually prepare and with whom?
- Have you been asked what to discuss?
- Have you agreed with someone on what roles to take before/during/after the meeting? *For instance, that you initiate different topics.*
- How have you processed this meeting afterwards?
- How do you usually process it and with whom? *With a colleague?*
- In the best of worlds, how would you like to prepare before and process afterwards? *What stops you? What have you done with your wishes?*

On the observed meeting/Norms and rules

- What do you think is expected from a good coworker in this kind of meeting? *What could a co-worker do to create an uncomfortable situation, breaking the norms?*
- Have you afterwards thought of something which you or someone else should (not) have said during the meeting? *What influenced?*
- Who ruled or shaped the meeting? *What influenced?*
- Whose meeting is it? *Whom is it for? Who owns the meeting? Who is responsible?*
- Was anyone silenced or ignored? Was anyone encouraged to talk?
- Do you think there were any wordless communication through for example body language, gestures and eye contact?

Design/arrangement.

- *Something about the arrangement/design. The different parts of the meeting (use examples from the written reflection).*
Has it always been arranged this way?
- What importance does the arrangement/design have for what you can achieve through the meeting?
- Would you like to conduct the quality dialogue(s) the same way next time or would you change something?
- How do you cooperate with colleagues who have the same role as you about the quality dialogue(s)?
- *What do you know about quality dialogues in other geographical areas, and what do you think about that?*

What quality was discussed?

- *Something about what quality has been discussed (use examples from the written reflection or that have been observed).*
- Have these things been discussed in other such meetings also before?
- In hindsight, how do you think about what quality was in focus, respectively not in focus? *What was missed? What was left unfinished?*
- Quality dialogue. Dialogue on quality. What do you think preschool quality is?
Have you always thought so?
Goal achievement, analysis, quality.
How can quality be assessed?

Tools, language, etcetera.

- Were any particular words or concepts repeated in the conversation about quality?
- You talked a lot about the quality report. Is it important to you?
What use do you have for it in your work?
Has it always been important?
- You also discussed statistics. What use do you have for it in your work?
Were statistics more/less important before?
- *Something about other tools that were observed.*

Tensions or disturbances in work

- *Something about how tensions regarding content/work has been described in the written reflection or has been observed.*
- Were any topics left unfinished? Which ones and why?
- What can you take with you from this meeting that you need to continue working on or working with differently?

Tensions between people/Participation

- *Something about how tensions (or no tensions) between people have been described in the written reflection. Describe the process that has led to you being so agreed.*
- *Something about how participation has been described in the written reflection.*
- Were your respective roles clear? Did anyone take someone else's role during the conversation? Were anyone's roles challenged?
- Your work relationships to the participants. Are you closer or more distant to anyone regarding quality work? *Have the relationships with your co-workers changed over time? When, how and why?*
- What do you think about the fact that there were different levels of leaders at the meeting?
How were participants affected by being in the same meeting as their manager(s)/coworkers?

Learning, etcetera

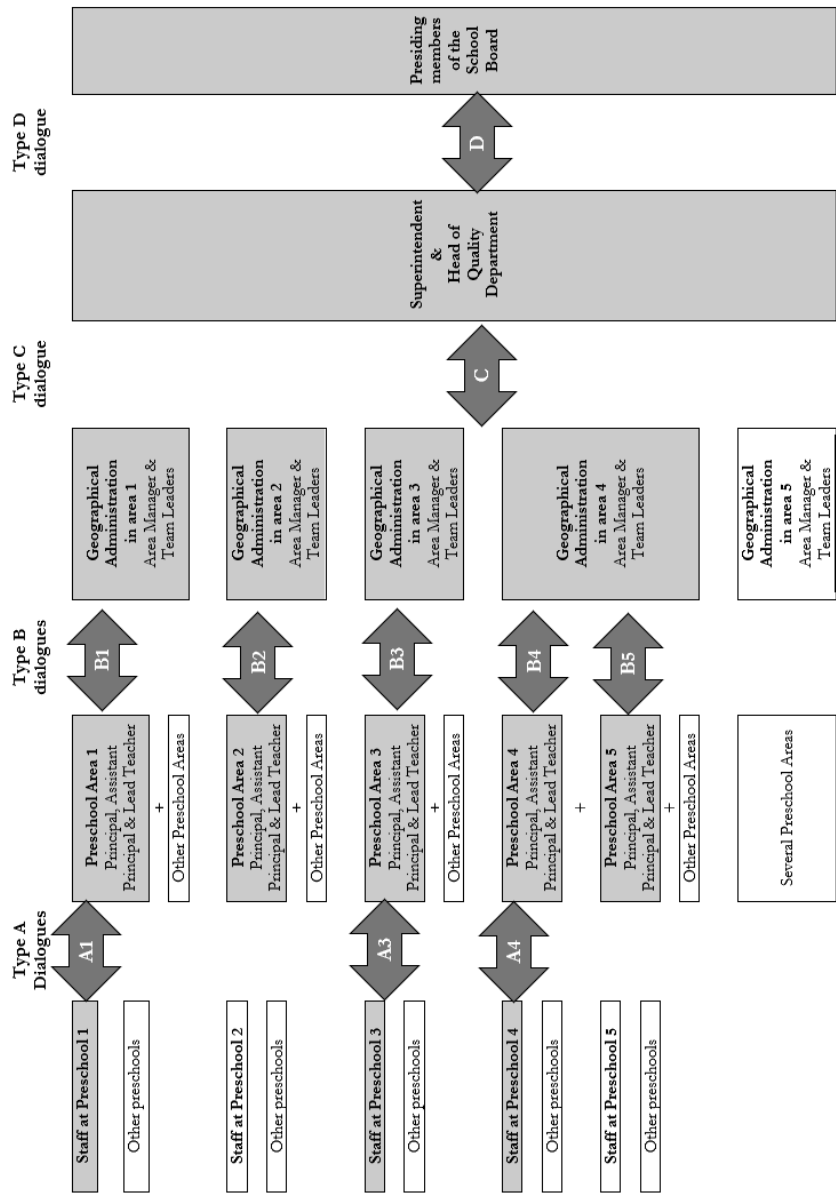
- What importance do you think this meeting has for you and your work?
What can you get out of the meeting that you cannot get in any other way? Has it always been like that?
- What importance do you think this meeting has for the other participants in their work? *What can they get out of the meeting that they cannot get in any other way?*
- What is needed to complement this meeting in your work or for quality work in general?
- Is there anything of greater importance than this for the quality work of preschools?
- If there had been no quality dialogues, what differences would that make?
- In the best of worlds, if you could think freely, how would you like to work with systematic quality work?

Miscellaneous

- Would you like to say anything else?
- Thank you for your time!

Appendix 6. Types A, B, C and D

Figure of the placement of the four types of dialogues. Type B dialogues extend to both the right and left because it also includes preschool staff and a quality analyst from the Quality Department. Type D dialogue extends left because it also includes area managers from the geographical administrations.



Appendix 7. List of data

Municipal Documents

Project Quality Work – children and youth, partial report, 7 September 2012

Final report of Project with assignment of enhancing the municipal systematic quality work according to the Education Act, 7 September 2013

Illustration of the municipal process, 7 June 2019

'New guidelines' describing routines and arrangements of dialogues within the Quality Model, 18 June 2019

Questions for the Educational Areas' reports for the Superintendent Dialogue Meeting 2019

Description of the systematic quality work at preschools and by the Educational Administration, used at a conference for municipals on 18 September 2020.

Final version of Current Situation Assessment 2020

Type A, Preschool Quality Dialogue: Preschool 1 (A1)

Observation, incl. audio recording	
<p><i>Dialogue Meeting after a Quality Development Visit</i> with a work team at preschool 1, on 4 March 2020, at 8:30–10:30. The dialogue was framed by a full day conference for several work teams; see field notes below. Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Principal 1 •Lead Teacher 1a •Lead Teacher 1b •Assistant principal 1b •Preschool Teacher 1a •Child minder 1b •Child minder 1c 	
Follow-up interview	
Group interview with Principal 1, Lead Teacher 1a, Lead Teacher 1b and Assistant principal 1b	6 March 2020
Interview with Preschool Teacher 1a, Child minder 1b and Child minder 1c	4 March 2020
Field notes	
<p>30 January 2020, at 8.00–10.00. Follow-up meeting after the quality visit that the management made at preschool 1, together with preschool teachers and a child minder from the other preschools the principal is responsible for.</p> <p>7 February at 11.00–13.00. Follow-up meeting after a quality visit that the management made at three of the other preschools, which the principal is responsible for, together with two preschool teachers and a child minder from preschool 1.</p> <p>4 March, at 8.00–16.00. The dialogue meeting was part of an educational day for work teams at three preschools. Field notes were made during all sessions that day. I followed the work team.</p> <p>18 March, at 8.00–16.00. Field notes from <i>Dialogue Meeting after a Quality Visit</i>. The same arrangement as the observation on 4 March but other work teams. Instead of following one work team, I followed the principal.</p>	

Additional field notes from Preschool 1

30 September 2019, 12:00–15:00. Field notes from a meeting where the management and one representative from all work teams prepare a *Quality development visit* by colleagues in the area, at which they assess the quality of education.

10 October 2019, 14:00–19:00. Field notes from two meetings where the impressions of the *Quality development visit* are presented and discussed.

9 January 2020, at 13:00–16:00. Field notes from a meeting where the principal and the two lead teachers write the half-year follow-up quality report.

27 January 2020, at 9:00–11:00. Field notes from a meeting where the principal and the lead teacher finalise the half-year follow-up quality report.

14 February 2020, at 13:00–14:30. Field notes from a meeting between the principal and the two lead teachers.

14 February 2020, at 15:00–16:00. Field notes from a conversation on quality dialogues with the team leader of the pedagogical support team who has just had a network meeting for lead teachers and assistant principals.

Type A, Preschool Quality Dialogue: Preschool 2 (A2)

19 September 2019 at 17:30–20:15. Field notes from a conference for all the staff in geographical area 2.

16 December 2019. Field notes from a conference day for all staff members at preschool 2. Before noon all staff, the principal and the lead teacher work together, and in the afternoon, all work teams write their own half-year follow-up reports to the management. I stayed with one work team consisting of a preschool teacher and one child minder.

Type A, Preschool Quality Dialogue: Preschool 3 (A3)

Observation, incl. audio recording	
<p><i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting</i> 12 May 2020 at 10:00–11:00. Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lead Teacher 3a •Assistant Principal 3d •Preschool Teacher 3c •Preschool Teacher 3e •Preschool Teacher 3f 	
Observation, incl. audio recording	
<p><i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting</i> 12 May 2020, at 9:00–9:45. Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lead Teacher 3a •Assistant Principal 3d •Child minder 3d •Preschool Teacher 3d 	
Observation, incl. audio recording	
<p><i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting</i> 12 May 2020, at 13:00–13:45. Participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lead Teacher 3a •Assistant Principal 3d •Preschool Teacher 3a •Pedagogue 3a 	
Follow-up interviews	
Group interview with Assistant Principal 3d and Lead Teacher 3a	12 May 2020, at 15:00
Group interview with Preschool Teacher 3a, Preschool Teacher 3c and Preschool Teacher 3d	12 May 2020, at 14:00

Type A, Preschool Quality Dialogue: Preschool 4 (A4)

Observation, incl. audio recording	
<i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting 4</i> December 2019. Work Team 3. Participants:	
•Lead Teacher 4a	•Preschool Teacher 4a
•Lead Teacher 4b	•Child minder 4c
	•Child minder 4d
	•Child minder, assistant 4
<i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting 4</i> December 2019. Work Team 1. Participants:	
•Lead Teacher 4a	•Child minder 4g
•Lead Teacher 4b	•Child minder 4h
<i>Follow-up Dialogue Meeting 4</i> December 2019. Work Team 2. Participants:	
•Lead Teacher 4a	•Preschool Teacher 4d
•Lead Teacher 4b	•Child minder 4e
	•Child minder 4f

Observation, incl. audio recording	
<i>Dialogue Meeting</i> with preschool teachers on all four preschools that the principal is responsible for, on 16 January 2020, at 8:30–10:30. Participants:	
	•Preschool Teacher 4d
	•Preschool Teacher 4e
	•Preschool Teacher 4b (does not work at preschool 4)
•Principal 4a	•Preschool Teacher 4g (does not work at preschool 4)
•Lead Teacher 4a	•Preschool Teacher 4h (does not work at preschool 4)
•Lead Teacher 4b	•Preschool Teacher 4i (does not work at preschool 4)
	•Preschool Teacher 4j (does not work at preschool 4)
	•Preschool Teacher 4k (does not work at preschool 4)
	•Preschool Teacher 4l (does not work at preschool 4)
	•Preschool Teacher 4m (does not work at preschool 4)

Observation, incl. audio recording

Evaluation Dialogue Meeting with a work team at preschool 4 on 25 May 2020 at 7:30–9:00. Participants:

- Lead Teacher 4a
- Lead Teacher 4b
- Assistant Principal 4a
- Preschool Teacher 4e
- Child minder 4a
- Child minder 4b

Observation, incl. audio recording

Evaluation Dialogue Meeting with a work team at preschool 4 on 25 May 2020 at 9.20-. Participants:

- Lead Teacher 4a
- Lead Teacher 4b
- Assistant Principal 4a
- Preschool Teacher 4f
- Child minder 4g
- Child minder 4h

Follow-up interviews

Assistant Principal 4a and Lead Teacher 4a	28 May 2020
Preschool teachers 4a and 4d at preschool 4	2 July 2020

Field notes

18 October 2019, at 11.00–12.00. Field notes from a meeting with the local management about the systematic quality work.

7 May 2020, at 8.00–12.00. Field notes from a meeting with the local management about the systematic quality work.

19 May 2020, at 17.30–19.30. Field notes. One work team consisting of one preschool teacher and two child minders evaluate the school year in writing.

Type A, Preschool Dialogue: Preschool 5 (A5)

2 December 2019 at 17:00–20:00. Field notes and audio recording at observation of one work team consisting of one preschool teacher and two child minders as they write an evaluation of the autumn semester.

Follow-up interviews

Audio recording and field notes from a group interview with one work team consisting of one preschool teacher and two child minders about the meeting on 2 December.	13 January 2020 at 9.00–10.00
Audio recording and field notes from a group interview with the principal, two assistant principals and two lead teachers about the meeting on 2 December.	15 January 2020 at 9.00–10.00

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Preschool 1, geographical area 1 (B1)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
<i>Quality Dialogue Meeting</i> 5 September 2019 at 13:00–16:30		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Area Manager 1	Yes	17 October 2019
Team Leader Special Education and Psychology 1	Yes	22 October 2019
Quality analyst 1	Yes	4 December 2019
Principal 1	Yes	2 October 2019
Assistant Principal 1a	Yes	16 October 2019
Assistant Principal 1b (not from preschool 1)	Yes	22 October 2019
Lead Teacher 1a	Yes	1 October 2019
Lead Teacher 1b (not from preschool 1)	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 1a	Yes	3 October 2019
Preschool Teacher 1b	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 1c (not from preschool 1)	Yes	
Child minder 1a (not from preschool 1)	Yes	
Documents used before or during the meeting		
<i>Quality report 2019</i> for preschool 1		
<i>Statistical report 2019</i> for the preschools which Principal 1 is responsible for.		
<i>Parental survey 2019</i> for preschool 1		

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Preschool 2, geographical area 2 (B2)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
Quality Dialogue Meeting 9 September 2019 at 8:30–12:00		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Area Manager 2	Yes	18 October 2019
Team Leader Pedagogical support team 2	Yes	17 October 2019
Quality analyst 2	Yes	2 December 2019
Principal 2	Yes	24 October 2019
Assistant Principal 2a	Yes	2 October 2019
Assistant Principal 2b (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Lead Teacher 2a	Yes	22 October 2019
Lead Teacher 2b (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 2a	Yes	3 October 2019
Preschool Teacher 2b (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 2c (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 2d (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Pedagogue 2a (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Child minder 2a	Yes	6 November 2019
Child minder 2b (not from preschool 2)	Yes	
Documents used before or during the meeting		
Quality report 2019 for preschool 2		
Statistical report 2019 for the preschools which Principal 2 is responsible for		
Parental survey 2019 for preschool 2		

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Preschool 3, geographical area 3 (B3)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
<i>Quality Dialogue Meeting</i> 16 September 2019 at 8:00–12:00		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Area Manager 3	Yes	14 October 2019
Team Leader Pedagogical support team 3	Yes	18 October 2019
Team Leader Special Education and Psychology 3	Yes	1 November 2019
Quality analyst 3	Yes	3 December 2019
Principal 3a	Yes	4 October 2019
Assistant Principal 3a	Yes	4 October 2019
Assistant Principal 3b (not from preschool 3)	Yes	
Assistant Principal 3c (not from preschool 3)	Yes	
Lead Teacher 3a	Yes	4 October 2019
Lead Teacher 3b	Yes	
Lead Teacher 3c	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 3a	Yes	27 September 2019
Preschool Teacher 3b	Yes	
Pedagogue 3a	Yes	27 September 2019
Child minder 3a	Yes	27 September 2019
Child minder 3b	Yes	
Child minder 3c	Yes	
Preschool chef3	Yes	27 September 2019
Principal 3b (a visiting colleague)	Yes	21 October 2019
Documents used before or during the meeting		
<i>Quality report 2019</i> for preschool 3		
<i>Statistical report 2019</i> for the preschools which Principal 3a is responsible for		
<i>Parental survey 2019</i> for preschool 3		

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Preschool 4, geographical area 4 (B4)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
<i>Quality Dialogue Meeting</i> 12 September 2019 at 8:00–12:00		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Area Manager 4	No, but reflections were included in the document from 23 Sept.	7 October 2019 (Same as B5)
Team Leader Pedagogical support team 4	Yes	24 October 2019 (Same as B5)
Quality analyst 4	Yes	3 December 2019 (Same as B5)
Principal 4a	Yes	31 October 2019
Assistant Principal 4a	Yes	10 October 2019
Assistant Principal 4b (not from preschool 4)	Yes	
Lead Teacher 4a	Yes	10 October 2019
Preschool Teacher 4a	Yes	31 October 2019
Preschool Teacher 4b (not from preschool 4)	Yes	
Preschool Teacher 4c (not from preschool 4)	Yes	
Principal 4b (a visiting colleague)	Yes	1 November 2019
Documents used before or during the meeting		
<i>Quality report 2019</i> for preschool 4a		
<i>Statistical report 2019</i> for the preschools which Principal 4a is responsible for		
<i>Parental survey 2019</i> for preschool 4		
<i>Pictures</i> which teaching staff and local management used to illustrate during the meeting		

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Preschool 5, geographical area 4 (B5)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
<i>Quality Dialogue Meeting</i> 23 September 2019 at 8:30–12:00		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Area Manager 4	Yes	7 October 2019 (Same as B4)
Team Leader Pedagogical support team 4	Yes	24 October 2019 (Same as B4)
Quality analyst 4	Yes	3 December 2019 (Same as B4)
Principal 5a (new principal)	Yes	26 September 2019
Assistant Principal 5a	Yes	15 October 2019
Assistant Principal 5b (not from preschool 5)	Yes	
Lead Teacher 5a	Yes	15 October 2019
Lead Teacher 5b	Yes	
Child minder 5a	Yes	15 October 2019
Preschool Teacher 5a (not from preschool 5)		
Preschool Teacher 5b (not from preschool 5)		
Child minder 5b (not from preschool 5)	Yes	
Principal 5b (a visiting colleague)	Yes	4 November 2019
Principal 5c (former principal)	Yes	18 November 2019
Assistant Principal 5d (former assistant principal)	Yes	
Lead Teacher 5c (Former lead teacher)	Yes	
Documents used before or during the meeting		
<i>Quality report</i> 2019 for preschool 5		
<i>Statistical report</i> 2019 for the preschools which Principal 5a is responsible for		
<i>Parental survey</i> 2019 for preschool 5		

Type B, Quality Dialogue: Additional interviews and field notes

Respondent	Interview	Commentary
Team Leader of the Pedagogical support team 1	17 October 2019	This interview is additional since the respondent was absent during quality dialogue 1.
Area Manager 5	6 September 2019	These three interviews were conducted within the prestudy. As agreed, all general descriptions could be used as data in the thesis, but everything said about the specific meeting must be excluded.
Team Leader of the Pedagogical support team 5	5 September 2019	
Quality analyst 5	5 December 2019	

Field notes
28 May 2019, at 14.00–15.00. Field notes from geographical area 3. A meeting where the area manager, two principals and two team leaders meet to plan who is going to take part in the Quality Dialogue Meeting on 16 September 2019.

Type C, Quality Dialogue at the authoritative level: Superintendent Dialogue (C)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
<i>Superintendent Dialogue Meeting</i> 21 October 2019 at 13:30–16:30		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Superintendent	Yes	4 November 2019
Area Manager 1	Yes	28 October 2019
Area Manager 2	Yes	28 October 2019
Area Manager 3	Yes	31 October 2019
Area Manager 4	Yes	28 October 2019
Area Manager 5	Yes	28 October 2019
Head of the Quality Department	Yes	29 October 2019
Documents used before or during the meeting		
Document with conclusions from quality dialogues type B from Area Manager 1		
Document with conclusions from quality dialogues type B from Area Manager 2		
Document with conclusions from quality dialogues type B from Area Manager 3		
Document with conclusions from quality dialogues type B from Area Manager 4		
Document with conclusions from quality dialogues type B from Area Manager 5		
PowerPoint presentation by the Superintendent		

Type D, Quality Dialogue at the authoritative level: Presiding Members Dialogue (D)

Observation, incl. audio recording		
Presiding Members Dialogue 6 November 2019 at 13:00–15:30		
Participants	Follow-up individual written reflection	Follow-up individual interview
Superintendent	Yes	12 December 2019
Presiding member of the School Board 1	Yes	14 November 2019
Presiding member of the School Board 2	Yes	14 November 2019
Presiding member of the School Board 3	Yes	12 December 2019
Area Manager 1	Yes	18 December 2019
Area Manager 2	Yes	22 November 2019
Area Manager 3	Yes	25 November 2019
Area Manager 4	Yes	5 December 2019
Area Manager 5	Yes	22 November 2019
Head of the Quality Department	Yes	12 December 2019
Documents used before or during the meeting		
Draft for a document called <i>Current Situation Assessment</i>		
PowerPoint presentation by the Superintendent		

Types A, B, C and D, Additional interviews, and field notes on all types of quality dialogues

Participants	Interview
Group interview with Evaluation Secretary 1 and Evaluation Secretary 2	31 January 2020 14 February 2020
Head of Evaluation Unit at the Quality Department	22 January 2021
Legal officer	25 February 2021

Field notes
<p>19 September 2019, at 13:00–16:00. Field notes from a presentation of the Systematic Quality Work at all levels of the administration by the Head of the Quality and Authority Department, principals and lead teacher for last semester preschool teacher training students.</p> <p>10 December 2019, at 8:30–11:30. Field notes from a conference for staff members at the Quality and Authority Department. Notes were only made of what the Superintendent and the Head of Quality Department said.</p> <p>11 December 2019, at. 9:00–12:00. Field notes from the School Board's Budget conference.</p> <p>13 February 2020. Field notes from an annual conference for all principals, area managers and members of the school board where quality work was discussed. Led by the superintendent and the Head of the Quality Department.</p>

Previous publications:

Editors: Kjell Härnqvist and Karl-Gustaf Stukát

1. KARL-GUSTAF STUKÁT *Lekskolans inverkan på barns utveckling*. Stockholm 1966
2. URBAN DAHLÖF *Skoldifferentiering och undervisningsförlopp*. Stockholm 1967
3. ERIK WALLIN *Spelling, Factorial and experimental studies*. Stockholm 1967
4. BENGT-ERIK ANDERSSON *Studies in adolescent behaviour. Project Yg, Youth in Göteborg*. Stockholm 1969
5. FERENCE MARTON *Structural dynamics of learning*. Stockholm 1970
6. ALLAN SVENSSON *Relative achievement. School performance in relation to intelligence, sex and home environment*. Stockholm 1971
7. GUNNI KÄRRBY *Child rearing and the development of moral structure*. Stockholm 1971

Editors: Urban Dahllöf, Kjell Härnqvist and Karl-Gustaf Stukát

8. ULF P. LUNDGREN *Frame factors and the teaching process. A contribution to curriculum theory and theory on teaching*. Stockholm 1972
9. LENNART LEVIN *Comparative studies in foreign-language teaching*. Stockholm 1972
10. RODNEY ÅSBERG *Primary education and national development*. Stockholm 1973
11. BJÖRN SANDGREN *Kreativ utveckling*. Stockholm 1974
12. CHRISTER BRUSLING *Microteaching - A concept in development*. Stockholm 1974
13. KJELL RUBENSON *Rekrytering till vuxenutbildning. En studie av kortutbildade yngre män*. Göteborg 1975
14. ROGER SÄLJÖ *Qualitative differences in learning as a function of the learner's conception of the task*. Göteborg 1975
15. LARS OWE DAHLGREN *Qualitative differences in learning as a function of content-oriented guidance*. Göteborg 1975
16. MARIE MÅNSSON *Samarbete och samarbetsförmåga. En kritisk granskning*. Lund 1975
17. JAN-ERIC GUSTAFSSON *Verbal and figural aptitudes in relation to instructional methods. Studies in aptitude - treatment interactions*. Göteborg 1976
18. MATS EKHOLM *Social utveckling i skolan. Studier och diskussion*. Göteborg 1976

19. LENNART SVENSSON *Study skill and learning*. Göteborg 1976

20. BJÖRN ANDERSSON *Science teaching and the development of thinking*. Göteborg 1976

21. JAN-ERIK PERNEMAN *Medvetenhet genom utbildning*. Göteborg 1977

Editors: Kjell Härnqvist, Ference Marton and Karl-Gustaf Stukát

22. INGA WERNERSSON *Könsdifferentiering i grundskolan*. Göteborg 1977
23. BERT AGGESTEDT & ULLA TEBELIUS *Barns upplevelser av idrott*. Göteborg 1977
24. ANDERS FRANSSON *Att rädas prov och att vilja veta*. Göteborg 1978
25. ROLAND BJÖRKBERG *Föreställningar om arbete, utveckling och livsrytm*. Göteborg 1978
26. GUNILLA SVINGBY *Läroplaner som styrmedel för svensk obligatorisk skola. Teoretisk analys och ett empiriskt bidrag*. Göteborg 1978
27. INGA ANDERSSON *Tankestilar och hemmiljö*. Göteborg 1979
28. GUNNAR STANGVIK *Self-concept and school segregation*. Göteborg 1979
29. MARGARETA KRISTIANSSON *Matematikkunskaper Lgr 62, Lgr 69*. Göteborg 1979
30. BRITT JOHANSSON *Kunskapsbehov i omvårdnadsarbete och kunskapskrav i vårdutbildning*. Göteborg 1979
31. GÖRAN PATRIKSSON *Socialisation och involvering i idrott*. Göteborg 1979
32. PETER GILL *Moral judgments of violence among Irish and Swedish adolescents*. Göteborg 1979
33. TAGE LJUNGBLAD *Förskola - grundskola i samverkan. Förutsättningar och hinder*. Göteborg 1980
34. BERNER LINDSTRÖM *Forms of representation, content and learning*. Göteborg 1980
35. CLAES-GÖRAN WENESTAM *Qualitative differences in retention*. Göteborg 1980
36. BRITT JOHANSSON *Pedagogiska samtal i vårdutbildning. Innehåll och språkbruk*. Göteborg 1981
37. LEIF LYBECK *Arkimedes i klassen. En ämnespedagogisk berättelse*. Göteborg 1981
38. BJÖRN HASSELGREN *Ways of apprehending children at play. A study of pre-school student teachers' development*. Göteborg 1981

39. LENNART NILSSON *Yrkesutbildning i nutidshistoriskt perspektiv. Yrkesutbildningens utveckling från skräväsändets upphörande 1846 till 1980-talet samt tankar om framtida inriktning*. Göteborg 1981

40. GUDRUN BALKE-AURELL *Changes in ability as related to educational and occupational experience*. Göteborg 1982

41. ROGER SÄLJÖ *Learning and understanding. A study of differences in constructing meaning from a text*. Göteborg 1982

42. ULLA MARKLUND *Droger och påverkan. Elevanalys som utgångspunkt för drogundervisning*. Göteborg 1983

43. SVEN SETTERLIND *Avslappningsträning i skolan. Forskningsöversikt och empiriska studier*. Göteborg 1983

44. EGIL ANDERSSON & MARIA LAWENIUS *Lärares uppfattning av undervisning*. Göteborg 1983

45. JAN THEMAN *Uppfattningar av politisk makt*. Göteborg 1983

46. INGRID PRAMLING *The child's conception of learning*. Göteborg 1983

47. PER OLOF THÅNG *Vuxenlärares förhållningssätt till deltagarfarebeter. En studie inom AMU*. Göteborg 1984

48. INGE JOHANSSON *Fritidspedagog på fritidshem. En yrkesgrupps syn på sitt arbete*. Göteborg 1984

49. GUNILLA SVANBERG *Medansvar i undervisning. Metoder för observation och kvalitativ analys*. Göteborg 1984

50. SVEN-ERIC REUTERBERG *Studiemedel och rekrytering till högskolan*. Göteborg 1984

51. GÖSTA DAHLGREN & LARS-ERIK OLSSON *Läsning i barnperspektiv*. Göteborg 1985

52. CHRISTINA KÄRRQVIST *Kunskapsutveckling genom experimentcenterade dialoger i ellära*. Göteborg 1985

53. CLAES ALEXANDERSSON *Stabilitet och förändring. En empirisk studie av förhållandet mellan skolkunskap och vardagsvetande*. Göteborg 1985

54. LILLEMOR JERNQVIST *Speech regulation of motor acts as used by cerebral palsied children. Observational and experimental studies of a key feature of conductive education*. Göteborg 1985

55. SOLVEIG HÄGGLUND *Sex-typing and development in an ecological perspective*. Göteborg 1986

56. INGRID CARLGREN *Lokalt utvecklingsarbete*. Göteborg 1986

57. LARSSON, ALEXANDERSSON, HELMSTAD & THÅNG *Arbetsupplevelse och utbildningssyn hos icke facklärd*. Göteborg 1986

58. ELVI WALLDAL *Studerande vid gymnasieskolans vårdlinje. Förväntad yrkesposition, rollpåverkan, självuppfattning*. Göteborg 1986

Editors: Jan-Eric Gustafsson, Ference Marton and Karl-Gustaf Stukát

59. EIE ERICSSON *Foreign language teaching from the point of view of certain student activities*. Göteborg 1986

60. JAN HOLMER *Högre utbildning för lågutbildade i industrin*. Göteborg 1987

61. ANDERS HILL & TULLIE RABE *Psykiskt utvecklingsstörda i kommunal förskola*. Göteborg 1987

62. DAGMAR NEUMAN *The origin of arithmetic skills. A phenomenographic approach*. Göteborg 1987

63. TOMAS KROKSMARK *Fenomenografisk didaktik*. Göteborg 1987

64. ROLF LANDER *Utvärderingsforskning - till vilken nytta?* Göteborg 1987

65. TORGNY OTTOSSON *Map-reading and wayfinding*. Göteborg 1987

66. MAC MURRAY *Utbildningsexpansion, jämlikhet och avlänkning*. Göteborg 1988

67. ALBERTO NAGLE CAJES *Studievalet ur den väljandes perspektiv*. Göteborg 1988

68. GÖRAN LASSBO *Mamma - (Pappa) - barn. En utvecklingsekologisk studie av socialisation i olika familjetyper*. Göteborg 1988

69. LENA RENSTRÖM *Conceptions of matter. A phenomenographic approach*. Göteborg 1988

70. INGRID PRAMLING *Att lära barn lära*. Göteborg 1988

71. LARS FREDHOLM *Praktik som bärare av undervisnings innehåll och form. En förklaringsmodell för uppkomst av undervisningshandlingar inom en totalförsvarsorganisation*. Göteborg 1988

72. OLOF F. LUNDQUIST *Studiestöd för vuxna. Utveckling, utnyttjande, utfall*. Göteborg 1989

73. BO DAHLIN *Religionen, själen och livets mening. En fenomenografisk och existensfilosofisk studie av religionsundervisningens villkor*. Göteborg 1989

74. SUSANNE BJÖRKDAHL ORDELL *Socialarbetare. Bakgrund, utbildning och yrkesliv*. Göteborg 1990

75. EVA BJÖRCK-ÅKESSON *Measuring Sensation Seeking*. Göteborg 1990

76. ULLA-BRITT BLADINI *Från hjälpskololärare till förändringsagent. Svensk speciallärautbildning 1921-1981 relaterad till specialundervisningens utveckling och förändringar i speciallärares yrkesuppgifter*. Göteborg 1990

77. ELISABET ÖHRN *Könsmönster i klassrumsinteraktion. En observations- och intervjustudie av högstadieelevers lärarkontakter*. Göteborg 1991

78. TOMAS KROKSMARK *Pedagogikens vägar till dess första svenska professur*. Göteborg 1991

Editors: Ingemar Emanuelsson, Jan-Eric Gustafsson
and Ference Marton

79. ELVI WALLDAL *Problembaserad inlärnin*. Utvärdering av påbyggnadslinjen Utbildning i öppen hälso- och sjukvård. Göteborg 1991
80. ULLA AXNER *Visuella perceptionssvårigheter i skolperspektiv. En longitudinell studie*. Göteborg 1991
81. BIRGITTA KULLBERG *Learning to learn to read*. Göteborg 1991
82. CLAES ANNERSTEDT *Idrottslärarna och idrottsämnet. Utveckling, mål, kompetens - ett didaktiskt perspektiv*. Göteborg 1991
83. EWA PILHAMMAR ANDERSSON *Det är vi som är dom. Sjuksköterskestuderandes föreställningar och perspektiv under utbildningstiden*. Göteborg 1991
84. ELSA NORDIN *Kunskaper och uppfattningar om maten och dess funktioner i kroppen. Kombinerad enkät- och intervjustudie i grundskolans årskurser 3, 6 och 9*. Göteborg 1992
85. VALENTIN GONZÁLEZ *On human attitudes. Root metaphors in theoretical conceptions*. Göteborg 1992
86. JAN-ERIK JOHANSSON *Metodikämnet i förskollärarutbildningen. Bidrag till en traditionsbestämning*. Göteborg 1992
87. ANN AHLBERG *Att möta matematiska problem. En belysning av barns lärande*. Göteborg 1992
88. ELLA DANIELSON *Omvårdnad och dess psykosociala inslag. Sjuksköterskestuderandes uppfattningar av centrala termer och reaktioner inför en omvårdnadssituation*. Göteborg 1992
89. SHIRLEY BOOTH *Learning to program. A phenomenographic perspective*. Göteborg 1992
90. EVA BJÖRCK-ÅKESON *Samspel mellan små barn med rörelsebehinder och talhandikapp och deras föräldrar - en longitudinell studie*. Göteborg 1992
91. KARIN DAHLBERG *Helbetsyn i vården. En uppgift för sjuksköterskeutbildningen*. 1992
92. RIGMOR ERIKSSON *Teaching Language Learning. In-service training for communicative teaching and self directed learning in English as a foreign language*. 1993
93. KJELL HÄRENSTAM *Skolboks-islam. Analys av bilden av islam i läroböcker i religionskunskap*. Göteborg 1993.
94. INGRID PRAMLING *Kunnandets grunder. Prövning av en fenomenografisk ansats till att utveckla barns sätt att uppfatta sin omvärld*. Göteborg 1994.
95. MARIANNE HANSSON SCHERMAN *Att några vara sjuka. En longitudinell studie av förhållningssätt till astma/allergi*. Göteborg 1994
96. MIKAEL ALEXANDERSSON *Metod och medvetande*. Göteborg 1994
97. GUN UNENGE *Pappor i föräldrakooperativa daghem. En deskriptiv studie av pappors medverkan*. Göteborg 1994
98. BJÖRN SJÖSTRÖM *Assessing acute postoperative pain. Assessment strategies and quality in relation to clinical experience and professional role*. Göteborg 1995
99. MAJ ARVIDSSON *Lärares orsaks- och åtgärds tankar om elever med svårigheter*. Göteborg 1995
100. DENNIS BEACH *Making sense of the problems of change: An ethnographic study of a teacher education reform*. Göteborg 1995.
101. WOLMAR CHRISTENSSON *Subjektiv bedömning - som besluts och handlingsunderlag*. Göteborg 1995
102. SONJA KIHLLSTRÖM *Att vara forskollärare. Om yrkets pedagogiska innebörder*. Göteborg 1995
103. MARITA LINDAHL *Inlärnin och erfärande. Ettäringars möte med förskolans värld*. Göteborg. 1996
104. GÖRAN FOLKESTAD *Computer Based Creative Music Making - Young Peoples' Music in the Digital Age*. Göteborg 1996
105. EVA EKEBLAD *Children • Learning • Numbers. A phenomenographic excursion into first-grade children's arithmetic*. Göteborg 1996
106. HELGE STRÖMDAHL *On mole and amount of substance. A study of the dynamics of concept formation and concept attainment*. Göteborg 1996
107. MARGARETA HAMMARSTRÖM *Värför inte högskola? En longitudinell studie av olika faktorer s betydelse för studiebegärade ungdomars utbildningskarriär*. Göteborg 1996
108. BJÖRN MÄRDÉN *Rektorers tänkande. En kritisk betraktelse av skolläderskap*. Göteborg 1996
109. GLORIA DALL'ALBA & BJÖRN HASSELGREN (EDS) *Reflections on Phenomenography - Toward a Methodology?* Göteborg 1996
110. ELISABETH HESSLEFORS ARKTOFT *I ord och handling. Innebörder av "att anknyta till elevers erfarenheter", uttryckta av lärare*. Göteborg 1996
111. BARBRO STRÖMBERG *Professionellt förhållningssätt hos läkare och sjuksköterskor. En studie av uppfattningar*. Göteborg 1997
112. HARRIET AXELSSON *Väga lära. Om lärare som förändrar sin miljöundervisning*. Göteborg 1997
113. ANN AHLBERG *Children's ways of handling and experiencing numbers*. Göteborg 1997
114. HUGO WIKSTRÖM *Att förstå förändring. Modellbyggande, simulering och gymnasieelevers lärande*. Göteborg 1997
115. DORIS AXELSEN *Listening to recorded music. Habits and motivation among high-school students*. Göteborg 1997.

116. EWA PILHAMMAR ANDERSSON *Handledning av sjuksköterskestuderande i klinisk praktik.* Göteborg 1997
117. OWE STRÅHLMAN *Elitidrott, karriär och avslutning.* Göteborg 1997
118. AINA TULLBERG *Teaching the 'mole'. A phenomenographic inquiry into the didactics of chemistry.* Göteborg 1997.
119. DENNIS BEACH *Symbolic Control and Power Relay Learning in Higher Professional Education.* Göteborg 1997
120. HANS-ÅKE SCHERP *Utmanande eller utmanat ledarskap. Rektor, organisationen och förändrat undervisningsmönster i gymnasieskolan.* Göteborg 1998
121. STAFFAN STUKÅT *Lärares planering under och efter utbildningen.* Göteborg 1998
122. BIRGIT LENDAHL ROSENDAHL *Examensarbetets innebörder. En studie av blivande lärares utsagor.* Göteborg 1998
123. ANN AHLBERG *Meeting Mathematics. Educational studies with young children.* Göteborg 1998
124. MONICA ROSÉN *Gender Differences in Patterns of Knowledge.* Göteborg 1998.
125. HANS BIRNIK *Lärare- elevrelationen. Ett relationistiskt perspektiv.* Göteborg 1998
126. MARGRETH HILL *Kompetent för "det nya arbetslivet"? Tre gymnasieklasser reflekterar över och diskuterar yrkesförberedande studier.* Göteborg 1998
127. LISBETH ÅBERG-BENGTTSSON *Entering a Graphicate Society. Young Children Learning Graphs and Charts.* Göteborg 1998
128. MELVIN FEFER *The Conflict of Equals: A Constructionist View of Personality Development.* Göteborg 1999
129. ULLA RUNESSON *Variationens pedagogik. Skilda sätt att behandla ett matematiskt innehåll.* Göteborg 1999
130. SILWA CLAEISSON *"Hur tänker du då?" Empiriska studier om relationen mellan forskning om elevuppfattningar och lärares undervisning.* Göteborg 1999
131. MONICA HANSEN *Yrkeskulturer i möte. Läraren, fritidspedagogen och samverkan.* Göteborg 1999
132. JAN THELIANDER *Att studera arbetets förändring under kapitalismen. Ure och Taylor i pedagogiskt perspektiv.* Göteborg 1999
133. TOMAS SAAR *Musikens dimensioner - en studie av unga musikers lärande.* Göteborg 1999
134. GLEN HELMSTAD *Understandings of understanding. An inquiry concerning experiential conditions for developmental learning.* Göteborg 1999
135. MARGARETA HOLMEGAARD *Språkmedvetenhet och ordinläring. Lärare och inlärare reflekterar kring en betydelsefälsövning i svenska som andraspråk.* Göteborg 1999
136. ALYSON MCGEE *Investigating Language Anxiety through Action Inquiry: Developing Good Research Practices.* Göteborg 1999
137. EVA GANNERUD *Genusperspektiv på lärargärning. Om kvinnliga klasslärares liv och arbete.* Göteborg 1999
138. TELLERVO KOPARE *Att rida stormen ut. Förlösningssamtal i Finnmark och Sápmi.* Göteborg 1999
139. MAJA SÖDERBÄCK *Encountering Parents. Professional Action Styles among Nurses in Pediatric Care.* Göteborg 1999
140. AIRI ROVIO - JOHANSSON *Being Good at Teaching. Exploring different ways of handling the same subject in Higher Education.* Göteborg 1999
141. EVA JOHANSSON *Etik i små barns värld. Om värden och normer bland de yngsta barnen i förskolan.* Göteborg 1999
142. KENNERT ORLENIUS *Förståelsens paradox. Yrkeserfarenhetens betydelse när förskollärare blir grundskollärare.* Göteborg 1999.
143. BJÖRN MÅRDÉN *De nya hälsomissionärerna – rörelser i korsvägen mellan pedagogik och hälsopromotion.* Göteborg 1999
144. MARGARETA CARLÉN *Kunskapslyft eller avbytbänk? Möten med industriarbetare om utbildning för arbete.* Göteborg 1999
145. MARIA NYSTRÖM *Allvarligt psykiskt störda människors vardagliga tillvaro.* Göteborg 1999
146. ANN-KATRIN JAKOBSSON *Motivation och inläring ur genusperspektiv. En studie av gymnasieelever på teoretiska linjer/program.* Göteborg 2000
147. JOANNA GIOTA *Adolescents' perceptions of school and reasons for learning.* Göteborg 2000
148. BERIT CARLSTEDT *Cognitive abilities – aspects of structure, process and measurement.* Göteborg 2000
149. MONICA REICHENBERG *Röst och kausalitet i lärobokstexter. En studie av elevers förståelse av olika textversioner.* Göteborg 2000
150. HELENA ÅBERG *Sustainable waste management in households – from international policy to everyday practice. Experiences from two Swedish field studies.* Göteborg 2000
151. BJÖRN SJÖSTRÖM & BRITT JOHANSSON *Ambulanssjukvård. Ambulanssjukvårdens och läkares perspektiv.* Göteborg 2000
152. AGNETA NILSSON *Omvårdnadskompetens inom bemsjukvård – en deskriptiv studie.* Göteborg 2001

153. ULLA LÖFSTEDT *Förskolan som lärandekontext för barns bildskapande*. Göteborg 2001
 154. JÖRGEN DIMENÄS *Innehåll och interaktion. Om elevers lärande i naturvetenskaplig undervisning*. Göteborg 2001
 155. BRITT MARIE APELGREN *Foreign Language Teachers' Voices. Personal Theories and Experiences of Change in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Sweden*. Göteborg 2001
 156. CHRISTINA CLIFFORDSON *Assessing empathy: Measurement characteristics and interviewer effects*. Göteborg 2001
 157. INGER BERGGREN *Identitet, kön och klass. Hur arbetarfläckor formar sin identitet*. Göteborg 2001
 158. CARINA FURÅKER *Styrning och visioner – sjuksköterskeutbildning i förändring*. Göteborg 2001
 159. INGER BERNDTSSON *Förskjutna horisonter. Livsförändring och lärande i samband med synnedsättning eller blindhet*. Göteborg 2001
 160. SONJA SHERIDAN *Pedagogical Quality in Preschool. An issue of perspectives*. Göteborg 2001
 161. JAN BAHLENBERG *Den otroliga verkligheten sätter spår. Om Carlo Derkerts liv och konstpedagogiska gärning*. Göteborg 2001
 162. FRANK BACH *Om ljuset i tillvaron. Ett undervisningsexperiment inom optik*. Göteborg 2001
 163. PIA WILLIAMS *Barn lär av varandra. Samlärande i förskola och skola*. Göteborg 2001
 164. VIGDIS GRANUM *Studentenes forestillinger om sykepleie som fag og funksjon*. Göteborg 2001
 165. MARIT ALVESTAD *Den komplekse planlegginga. Førskolelærarar om pedagogisk planlegging og praksis*. Göteborg 2001
 166. GIRMA BERHANU *Learning-In-Context. An Ethnographic Investigation of Mediated Learning Experiences among Ethiopian Jews in Israel*. Göteborg 2001.
 167. OLLE ESKILSSON *En longitudinell studie av 10 – 12-åringars förståelse av materiens förändringar*. Göteborg 2001
 168. JONAS EMANUELSSON *En fråga om frågor. Hur lärares frågor i klassrummet gör det möjligt att få reda på elevernas sätt att förstå det som undervisningen behandlar i matematik och naturvetenskap*. Göteborg 2001
 169. BIRGITTA GEDDA *Den offentliga bemyndigheten. En studie om sjuksköterskans pedagogiska funktion och kompetens i folkhälsoarbetet*. Göteborg 2001
 170. FEBE FRIBERG *Pedagogiska möten mellan patienter och sjuksköterskor på en medicinsk vårdavdelning. Mot en vårddidaktik på livsvärldgrund*. Göteborg 2001
 171. MADELEINE BERGH *Medvetenhet om bemötande. En studie om sjuksköterskans pedagogiska funktion och kompetens i närståendeundervisning*. Göteborg 2002
 172. HENRIK ERIKSSON *Den diplomatiska punkten – maskulinitet som kroppsligt identitetsskapande projekt i svensk sjuksköterskeutbildning*. Göteborg 2002
 173. SOLVEIG LUNDGREN *I spåren av en bemanningsförändring. En studie av sjuksköterskors arbete på en kirurgisk vårdavdelning*. Göteborg 2002
 174. BIRGITTA DAVIDSSON *Mellan soffan och katedern. En studie av hur förskollärare och grundskollärare utvecklar pedagogisk integration mellan förskola och skola*. Göteborg 2002
 175. KARI SØNDENÅ *Tradisjon og Transcendens – ein fenomenologisk studie av refleksjon i norske førskulelærarutdanning*. Göteborg 2002
 176. CHRISTINE BENTLEY *The Roots of Variation of English-Teaching. A Phenomenographic Study Founded on an Alternative Basic Assumption*. Göteborg 2002
 177. ÅSA MÄKITÄLÖ *Categorizing Work: Knowing, Arguing, and Social Dilemmas in Vocational Guidance*. Göteborg 2002
 178. MARITA LINDAHL *VÄRDA – VÄGLEDA – LÄRA. Effekstudie av ett interventionsprogram för pedagogers lärande i förskolemiljön*. Göteborg 2002
 179. CHRISTINA BERG *Influences on schoolchildren's dietary selection. Focus on fat and fibre at breakfast*. Göteborg 2002
 180. MARGARETA ASP *Vila och lärande om vila. En studie på livsvärldsfenomenologisk grund*. Göteborg 2002
 181. FERENC MARTON & PAUL MORRIS (EDS) *What matters? Discovering critical conditions of classroom learning*. Göteborg 2002
 182. ROLAND SEVERIN *Dom vet vad dom talar om. En intervjustudie om elevers uppfattningar av begreppen makt och samhällsförändring*. Göteborg 2002
- Editors: Björn Andersson, Jan Holmer and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson
183. MARLÉNE JOHANSSON *Slöjdpraktik i skolan – hand, tanke, kommunikation och andra medierande redskap*. Göteborg 2002
 184. INGRID SANDERÖTH *Om lust att lära i skolan: En analys av dokument och klass 8y*. Göteborg 2002
 185. INGA-LILL JAKOBSSON *Diagnos i skolan. En studie av skolsituationer för elever med syndromdiagnos*. Göteborg 2002

186. EVA-CARIN LINDGREN *Empowering Young Female Athletes – A Possible Challenge to the Male Hegemony in Sport. A Descriptive and Interventional Study.* Göteborg 2002
187. HANS RYSTEDT *Bridging practices. Simulations in education for the health-care professions.* Göteborg 2002
188. MARGARETA EKBORG *Naturvetenskaplig utbildning för hållbar utveckling? En longitudinell studie av hur studenter på grundskolläroprogrammet utvecklar för miljöundervisning relevanta kunskaper i naturkunskap.* Göteborg 2002
189. ANETTE SANDBERG *Vuxnas lekvärld. En studie om vuxnas erfarenheter av lek.* Göteborg 2002
190. GUNLÖG BREDÄNGE *Gränslös pedagog. Fyra studier om utländska lärare i svensk skola.* Göteborg 2003
191. PER-OLOF BENTLEY *Mathematics Teachers and Their Teaching. A Survey Study.* Göteborg 2003
192. KERSTIN NILSSON MANDAT – MAKT – MANAGEMENT. *En studie av hur värdenhetschefers ledarskap konstrueras.* Göteborg 2003
193. YANG YANG *Measuring Socioeconomic Status and its Effects at Individual and Collective Levels: A Cross-Country Comparison.* Göteborg 2003
194. KNUT VOLDEN *Mediekunskap som mediekritik.* Göteborg 2003.
195. LOTTA LAGER-NYQVIST *Att göra det man kan – en longitudinell studie av hur sju lärarstudenter utvecklar sin undervisning och formar sin lärarroll i naturvetenskap.* Göteborg 2003
196. BRITT LINDAHL *Lust att lära naturvetenskap och teknik? En longitudinell studie om vägen till gymnasiet.* Göteborg 2003
197. ANN ZETTERQVIST *Ämnesdidaktisk kompetens i evolutionsbiologi. En intervjuundersökning med nio biologilärare.* Göteborg 2003
198. ELSIE ANDERBERG *Språkanvändningens funktion vid utveckling av kunskap om objekt.* Göteborg 2003.
199. JAN GUSTAFSSON *Integration som text, diskursiv och social praktik. En policyetnografisk fallstudie av mötet mellan skolan och förskoleklassen.* Göteborg 2003.
200. EVELYN HERMANSSON *Akademisering och professionalisering – barnmorskans utbildning i förändring.* Göteborg 2003
201. KERSTIN VON BRÖMSEN *Tolkningar, förhandlingar och tystnader. Elevers tal om religion i det mångkulturella och postkoloniala rummet.* Göteborg 2003
202. MARIANNE LINDBLAD FRIDH *Från allmänsjukvård till specialistsjukvård inom intensivvård. En studie av erfarenheter från specialistutbildningen och från den första yrkesverksamma tiden inom intensivvården.* Göteborg 2003
203. BARBRO CARLI *The Making and Breaking of a Female Culture: The History of Swedish Physical Education 'in a Different Voice'.* Göteborg 2003
204. ELISABETH DAHLBORG-LYCKHAGE *"Systers" konstruktion och mumifiering – i TV-serier och i studenters föreställningar.* Göteborg 2003
205. ULLA HELLSTRÖM MUHLI *Att överbrygga perspektiv. En studie av bebovbedömningsamtal inom äldreinriktat socialt arbete.* Göteborg 2003
206. KRISTINA AHLBERG *Synvänder. Universitetsstudenters berättelser om kvalitativa förändringar av sätt att erfara situationers mening under utbildningspraktik.* Göteborg 2004
207. JONAS IVARSSON *Renderings & Reasoning: Studying artifacts in human knowing.* Göteborg 2004
208. MADELEINE LÖWING *Matematikundervisningens konkreta gestaltning. En studie av kommunikationen lärare – elev och matematiklektionens didaktiska ramar.* Göteborg 2004
209. PIJA EKSTRÖM *Makten att definiera. En studie av hur beslutsfattare formulerar villkor för specialpedagogisk verksamhet.* Göteborg 2004
210. CARIN ROOS *Skriftspråkande döva barn. En studie om skriftspråkligt lärande i förskola och skola.* Göteborg 2004
211. JONAS LINDEROTH *Datorspelandets mening. Bortom idén om den interaktiva illusionen.* Göteborg 2004
212. ANITA WALLIN *Evolutionsteorin i klassrummet. På väg mot en ämnesdidaktisk teori för undervisning i biologisk evolution.* Göteborg 2004
213. EVA HJÖRNE *Excluding for inclusion? Negotiating school careers and identities in pupil welfare settings in the Swedish school.* Göteborg 2004
214. MARIE BLIDING *Inneslutandets och uteslutandets praktik. En studie av barns relationsarbete i skolan.* Göteborg 2004
215. LARS-ERIK JONSSON *Appropriating Technologies in Educational Practices. Studies in the Contexts of Compulsory Education, Higher Education, and Fighter Pilot Training.* Göteborg 2004
216. MIA KARLSSON *An IT's Teacher Team as a Community of Practice.* Göteborg 2004
217. SILWA CLAESON *Lärares levda kunskap.* Göteborg 2004
218. GUN-BRITT WÄRVIK *Ambitioner att förändra och artefaktens verkan. Gränsskapande och stabiliserande praktiker på produktionsgolvet.* Göteborg 2004
219. KARIN LUMSDEN WASS *Vuxenutbildning i omvandling. Kunskapslyftet som ett sätt att organisera förnyelse.* Göteborg 2004
220. LENA DAHL *Ämningspraktikens villkor. En intervjustudie av en grupp kvinnors föreställningar på och erfarenheter av amning.* Göteborg 2004

221. ULRIC BJÖRCK *Distributed Problem-Based Learning. Studies of a Pedagogical Model in Practice.* Göteborg 2004
222. ANNEKA KNUTSSON "To the best of your knowledge and for the good of your neighbour". *A study of traditional birth attendants in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.* Göteborg 2004
223. MARIANNE DOVEMARK *Ansvar – flexibilitet – valfrihet. En etnografisk studie om en skola i förändring.* Göteborg 2004
224. BJÖRN HAGLUND *Traditioner i möte. En kvalitativ studie av fritidspedagogers arbete med samlingar i skolan.* Göteborg 2004
225. ANN-CHARLOTTE MÅRDSJÖ *Lärandets skiftande innebörder – uttryckta av förskollärare i vidareutbildning.* Göteborg 2005
226. INGRID GRUNDÉN *Att återerövra kroppen. En studie av livet efter en ryggmärgsskada.* Göteborg 2005
227. KARIN GUSTAFSSON & ELISABETH MELLGREN *Barns skriftspråkande – att bli en skrivande och läsande person.* Göteborg 2005
228. GUNNAR NILSSON *Att äga π. Praxisnära studier av lärarstudenters arbete med geometrilaborationer.* Göteborg 2005.
229. BENGT LINDGREN *Bild, visualitet och vetande. Diskussion om bild som ett kunskapsfält inom utbildning.* Göteborg 2005
230. PETRA ANGERVALL *Jämställdhetsarbetets pedagogik. Dilemman och paradoxer i arbetet med jämställdhet på ett företag och ett universitet.* Göteborg 2005
231. LENNART MAGNUSSON *Designing a responsive support service for family carers of frail older people using ICT.* Göteborg 2005
232. MONICA REICHENBERG *Gymnasieelevers samtal kring facktexter. En studie av textsamtal med goda och svaga läsare.* Göteborg 2005
233. ULRICA WOLFF *Characteristics and varieties of poor readers.* Göteborg 2005
234. CECILIA NIELSEN *Mellan fakticitet och projekt. Läs- och skrivsvårigheter och strävan att övervinna dem.* Göteborg 2005.
235. BERITH HEDBERG *Decision Making and Communication in Nursing Practice. Aspects of Nursing Competence.* Göteborg 2005
236. MONICA ROSÉN, EVA MYRBERG & JAN-ERIC GUSTAFSSON *Läskompetens i skolår 3 och 4. Nationell rapport från PIRLS 2001 i Sverige. The IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.* Göteborg 2005
237. INGRID HENNING LOEB *Utveckling och förändring i kommunal vuxenutbildning. En yrkeshistorisk ingång med berättelser om lärarbanor.* Göteborg 2006.
238. NIKLAS PRAMLING *Minding metaphors: Using figurative language in learning to represent.* Göteborg 2006
239. KONSTANTIN KOUGIOUMTZIS *Lärarkulturer och professionskoder. En komparativ studie av idrottslärare i Sverige och Grekland.* Göteborg 2006
240. STEN BÅTH *Kvalifikation och medborgarfostran. En analys av reformtexter avseende gymnasieskolans samhällsuppdrag.* Göteborg 2006.
241. EVA MYRBERG *Fristående skolor i Sverige – Effekter på 9-10-åriga elevers läsförmåga.* Göteborg 2006
242. MARY-ANNE HOLFVE-SABEL *Attitudes towards Swedish comprehensive school. Comparisons over time and between classrooms in grade 6.* Göteborg 2006
243. CAROLINE BERGGREN *Entering Higher Education – Gender and Class Perspectives.* Göteborg 2006
244. CRISTINA THORNELL & CARL OLIVESTAM *Kulturmöte i centralafrikansk kontext med kyrkan som arena.* Göteborg 2006
245. ARVID TREEKREM *Att leda som man lär. En arbetsmiljöp pedagogisk studie av toppledares ideologier om ledarskapets taktiska potentialer.* Göteborg 2006
246. EVA GANNERUD & KARIN RÖNNERMAN *Innehåll och innebörd i lärares arbete i förskola och skola – en fallstudie ur ett genusperspektiv.* Göteborg 2006
247. JOHANNES LUNNEBLAD *Förskolan och mångfalden – en etnografisk studie på en förskola i ett multietniskt område.* Göteborg 2006
248. LISA ASP-ONSSJÖ *Åtgärdsprogram – dokument eller verktyg? En fallstudie i en kommun.* Göteborg 2006
249. EVA JOHANSSON & INGRID PRAMLING SAMUELSSON *Lek och läroplan. Möten mellan barn och lärare i förskola och skola.* Göteborg 2006
250. INGER BJÖRNELOO *Innebörder av hållbar utveckling. En studie av lärares utsagor om undervisning.* Göteborg 2006
251. EVA JOHANSSON *Etiska överenskomelser i förskolebarns världar.* Göteborg 2006
252. MONICA PETERSSON *Att genusgappa på säker eller osäker mark. Hem- och konsumentkunskap ur ett könsperspektiv.* Göteborg 2007
253. INGELA OLSSON *Handlingskompetens eller inlärning hjälplös? Lärandeprocesser hos verkstadsindustriarbetare.* Göteborg 2007
254. HELENA PEDERSEN *The School and the Animal Other. An Ethnography of human-animal relations in education.* Göteborg 2007
255. ELIN ERIKSEN ØDEGAARD *Meningsskapning i barnehagen. Innhold og bruk av barns og voksnes samtalefortellinger.* Göteborg 2007

256. ANNA KLERFELT *Barns multimediala berättande. En länk mellan mediakultur och pedagogisk praktik.* Göteborg 2007

257. PETER ERLANDSON *Docile bodies and imaginary minds: on Schön's reflection-in-action.* Göteborg 2007

258. SONJA SHERIDAN OCH PIA WILLIAMS *Dimensioner av konstruktiv konkurrens. Konstruktiva konkurrensformer i förskola, skola och gymnasium.* Göteborg 2007

259. INGELA ANDREASSON *Elevplanen som text - om identitet, genus, makt och styrning i skolans elevdokumentation.* Göteborg 2007

Editors: Jan-Eric Gustafsson, Annika Härenstam and Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

260. ANN-SOFIE HOLM *Relationer i skolan. En studie av feminiteter och maskuliniteter i år 9.* Göteborg 2008

261. LARS-ERIK NILSSON *But can't you see they are lying: Student moral positions and ethical practices in the wake of technological change.* Göteborg 2008

262. JOHAN HÄGGSTRÖM *Teaching systems of linear equations in Sweden and China: What is made possible to learn?* Göteborg 2008

263. GUNILLA GRANATH *Milda makter! Utvecklingsamtal och loggböcker som disciplinerings tekniker.* Göteborg 2008

264. KARIN GRAHN *Flickor och pojkar i idrottens läromedel. Konstruktioner av genus i ungdomsträna-utbildningen.* Göteborg 2008.

265. PER-OLOF BENTLEY *Mathematics Teachers and Their Conceptual Models. A New Field of Research.* Göteborg 2008

266. SUSANNE GUSTAVSSON *Motstånd och mening. Inneboend i blivande lärares seminarieramtal.* Göteborg 2008

267. ANITA MATTESSON *Flexibel utbildning i praktiken. En fallstudie av pedagogiska processer i en distansutbildning med en öppen design för samarbetslärande.* Göteborg 2008

268. ANETTE EMILSON *Det önskvärda barnet. Fostran uttryckt i vardagliga kommunikationshandlingar mellan lärare och barn i förskolan.* Göteborg 2008

269. ALLI KLAPP LEKHOLM *Grades and grade assignment: effects of student and school characteristics.* Göteborg 2008

270. ELISABETH BJÖRKLUND *Att erövra litteracitet. Små barns kommunikativa möten med berättande, bilder, text och tecken i förskolan.* Göteborg 2008

271. EVA NYBERG *Om livets kontinuitet. Undervisning och lärande om växters och djurs livscyklar - en fallstudie i årskurs 5.* Göteborg 2008

272. CANCELLED

273. ANITA NORLUND *Kritisk sakprosläsning i gymnasieskolan. Didaktiska perspektiv på läroböcker, lärare och nationella prov.* Göteborg 2009

274. AGNETA SIMEONSDOTTER SVENSSON *Den pedagogiska samlingen i förskoleklassen. Barns olika sätt att erfara och hantera svårigheter.* Göteborg 2009

275. ANITA ERIKSSON *Om teori och praktik i lärarutbildningen. En etnografisk och diskursanalytisk studie.* Göteborg 2009

276. MARIA HJALMARSSON *Lärarprofessionens genusordning. En studie av lärares uppfattningar om arbetsuppgifter, kompetens och förväntningar.* Göteborg 2009.

277. ANNE DRAGEMARK OSCARSON *Self-Assessment of Writing in Learning English as a Foreign Language. A Study at the Upper Secondary School Level.* Göteborg 2009

278. ANNIKA LANTZ-ANDERSSON *Framing in Educational Practices. Learning Activity, Digital Technology and the Logic of Situated Action.* Göteborg 2009

279. RAUNI KARLSSON *Demokratiska värden i förskolebarns vardag.* Göteborg 2009

280. ELISABETH FRANK *Läsförmågan bland 9-10-åringar. Betydelsen av skolklimat, hem- och skolsamverkan, lärarkompetens och elevers hembakgrund.* Göteborg 2009

281. MONICA JOHANSSON *Anpassning och motstånd. En etnografisk studie av gymnasieelevers institutionella identitetsskapande.* Göteborg 2009

282. MONA NILSEN *Food for Thought. Communication and the transformation of work experience in web-based in-service training.* Göteborg 2009

283. INGA WERNERSSON (RED) *Genus i förskola och skola. Förändringar i policy, perspektiv och praktik.* Göteborg 2009

284. SONJA SHERIDAN, INGRID PRAMLING SAMUELSSON & EVA JOHANSSON (RED) *Barns tidiga lärande. En tvärsnittstudie om förskolan som miljö för barns lärande.* Göteborg 2009

285. MARIE HJALMARSSON *Loyalitet och motstånd - anställdas agerande i ett föränderligt hemtjänstarbete.* Göteborg 2009.

286. ANETTE OLIN *Skolans mötespraktik - en studie om skolutveckling genom yrkesverksammas förstelse.* Göteborg 2009

287. MIRELLA FORSBERG AHLCRONA *Handdockans kommunikativa potential som medierande redskap i förskolan.* Göteborg 2009

288. CLAS OLANDER *Towards an interlanguage of biological evolution: Exploring students' talk and writing as an arena for sense-making*. Göteborg 2010

Editors: Jan-Eric Gustafsson, Åke Ingerman and
Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

289. PETER HASSELSKOG *Slöjdlärares förhållningssätt i undervisningen*. Göteborg 2010

290. HILLEVI PRELL *Promoting dietary change. Intervening in school and recognizing health messages in commercials*. Göteborg 2010

291. DAVOUD MASOUMI *Quality Within E-learning in a Cultural Context. The case of Iran*. Göteborg 2010

292. YLVA ODENBRING *Kramar, kategoriseringar och hjälpfröknar. Könskonstruktioner i interaktion i förskola, förskoleklass och skolor*. Göteborg 2010

293. ANGELIKA KULLBERG *What is taught and what is learned. Professional insights gained and shared by teachers of mathematics*. Göteborg 2010

294. TORGEIR ALVESTAD *Barnehagens relasjonelle verden - små barn som kompetente aktører i produktive forhandlinger*. Göteborg 2010

295. SYLVI VIGMO *New spaces for Language Learning. A study of student interaction in media production in English*. Göteborg 2010

296. CAROLINE RUNESDOTTER *I otakt med tiden? Folkbibliotekerna i ett föränderligt fält*. Göteborg 2010

297. BIRGITTA KULLBERG *En etnografisk studie i en thailändsk grundskola på en ö i södra Thailand. I sökandet efter en framtid då nuet har nog av sitt*. Göteborg 2010

298. GUSTAV LYMER *The work of critique in architectural education*. Göteborg 2010

299. ANETTE HELLMAN *Kan Batman vara rosa? Förhandlingar om pojkighet och normalitet på en förskola*. Göteborg 2010

300. ANNIKA BERGVIKEN-RENSFELDT *Opening higher education. Discursive transformations of distance and higher education government*. Göteborg 2010

301. GETAHUN YACOB ABRAHAM *Education for Democracy? Life Orientation: Lessons on Leadership Qualities and Voting in South African Comprehensive Schools*. Göteborg 2010

302. LENA SJÖBERG *Bäst i klassen? Lärare och elever i svenska och europeiska policytexter*. Göteborg 2011

303. ANNA POST *Nordic stakeholders and sustainable catering*. Göteborg 2011

304. CECILIA KILHAMN *Making Sense of Negative Numbers*. Göteborg 2011

305. ALLAN SVENSSON (RED) *Utvärdering Genom Uppföljning. Longitudinell individforskning under ett halvsekel*. Göteborg 2011

306. NADJA CARLSSON *I kamp med skriftspråket. Vuxenstuderande med läs- och skrivsvårigheter i ett livsvärldsperspektiv*. Göteborg 2011

307. AUD TORILL MELAND *Ansvar for egen læring. Intensjoner og realiteter ved en norsk videregående skole*. Göteborg 2011

308. EVA NYBERG *Folkbildning för demokrati. Colombianska kvinnors perspektiv på kunskap som förändringskraft*. Göteborg 2011

309. SUSANNE THULIN *Lärares tal och barns nyfikenhet. Kommunikation om naturvetenskapliga innehåll i förskolan*. Göteborg 2011

310. LENA FRIDLUND *Interkulturell undervisning – ett pedagogiskt dilemma. Talet om undervisning i svenska som andraspråk och i förberedelseklass*. Göteborg 2011

311. TARJA ALATALO *Skicklig läs- och skrivundervisning i åke 1-3. Om lärares möjligheter och hinder*. Göteborg 2011

312. LISE-LOTTE BJERVÅS *Samtal om barn och pedagogisk dokumentation som bedömningspraktik i förskolan. En diskursanalys*. Göteborg 2011

313. ÅSE HANSSON *Ansvar för matematiklärande. Effekter av undervisningsansvar i det flerspråkiga klassrummet*. Göteborg 2011

314. MARIA REIS *Att ordna, från ordning till ordning. Yngre förskolebarns matematiserande*. Göteborg 2011

315. BENIAMIN KNUTSSON *Curriculum in the Era of Global Development – Historical Legacies and Contemporary Approaches*. Göteborg 2011

316. EVA WEST *Undervisning och lärande i naturvetenskap. Elevers lärande i relation till en forskningsbaserad undervisning om ljud, hörsel och hälsa*. Göteborg 2011

317. SIGNILD RISENFORS *Gymnasieungdomars linstolkande*. Göteborg 2011

318. EVA JOHANSSON & DONNA BERTHELSSEN (Ed.) *Spaces for Solidarity and Individualism in Educational Contexts*. Göteborg 2012

319. ALASTAIR HENRY *L3 Motivation*. Göteborg 2012

320. ANN PARINDER *Ungdomars matval – erfarenheter, visioner och miljöargument i eget hushåll*. Göteborg 2012

321. ANNE KULTTI *Flerspråkiga barn i förskolan: Villkor för deltagande och lärande*. Göteborg 2012

322. BO-LENNART EKSTRÖM *Kontroversen om DAMP. En kontroversstudie av vetenskapligt gränsarbete och översättning mellan olika kunskapsparadigm*. Göteborg 2012

323. MUN LING LO *Variation Theory and the Improvement of Teaching and Learning*. Göteborg 2012
324. ULLA ANDRÉN *Self-awareness and self-knowledge in professions. Something we are or a skill we learn*. Göteborg 2012
325. KERSTIN SIGNERT *Variation och invariants i Maria Montessoris sinnestränande materiel*. Göteborg 2012
326. INGEMAR GERRBO *Idén om en skola för alla och specialpedagogisk organisering i praktiken*. Göteborg 2012
327. PATRIK LILJA *Contextualizing inquiry. Negotiations of tasks, tools and actions in an upper secondary classroom*. Göteborg 2012
328. STEFAN JOHANSSON *On the Validity of Reading Assessments: Relationships Between Teacher Judgements, External Tests and Pupil Self-assessments*. Göteborg 2013
329. STEFAN PETTERSSON *Nutrition in Olympic Combat Sports. Elite athletes' dietary intake, hydration status and experiences of weight regulation*. Göteborg 2013
330. LINDA BRADLEY *Language learning and technology – student activities in web-based environments*. Göteborg 2013
331. KALLE JONASSON *Sport Has Never Been Modern*. Göteborg 2013
332. MONICA HARALDSSON STRÄNG *Yngre elevers lärande om natur. En studie av kommunikation om modeller i institutionella kontexter*. Göteborg 2013
333. ANN VALENTIN KVIST *Immigrant Groups and Cognitive Tests – Validity Issues in Relation to Vocational Training*. Göteborg 2013
334. ULRICA BENNERSTEDT *Knowledge at play. Studies of games as members' matters*. Göteborg 2013
335. EVA ÄRLEMALM-HAGSÉR *Engagerade i världens bästa? Lärande för hållbarhet i förskolan*. Göteborg 2013
336. ANNA-KARIN WYNDHAMN *Tänka fritt, tänka rätt. En studie om värdeöverföring och kritiskt tänkande i gymnasieskolans undervisning*. Göteborg 2013
337. LENA TYRÉN *"Vi får ju inte riktigt förutsättningarna för att genomföra det som vi vill." En studie om lärares möjligheter och hinder till förändring och förbättring i praktiken*. Göteborg 2013

Editors: Jan-Eric Gustafsson, Åke Ingerman and Pia Williams

338. ANNIKA LILJA *Förtroendefulla relationer mellan lärare och elev*. Göteborg 2013

339. MAGNUS LEVINSSON *Evidens och existens. Evidensbaserad undervisning i ljuset av lärares erfarenheter*. Göteborg 2013
340. ANNELI SCHWARTZ *Pedagogik, plats och prestationer. En etnografisk studie om en skola i förorten*. Göteborg 2013
341. ELISABET ÖHRN och LISBETH LUNDAHL (red) *Kön och karriär i akademien. En studie inom det utbildningsvetenskapliga fältet*. Göteborg 2013
342. RICHARD BALDWIN *Changing practice by reform. The recontextualisation of the Bologna process in teacher education*. Göteborg 2013
343. AGNETA JONSSON *Att skapa läroplan för de yngsta barnen i förskolan. Barns perspektiv och nuets didaktik*. Göteborg 2013
344. MARIA MAGNUSSON *Skylta med kunskap. En studie av hur barn urskiljer grafiska symboler i hem och förskola*. Göteborg 2013
345. ANNA-LENA LILLIESTAM *Aktör och struktur i historieundervisning. Om utveckling av elevers historiska resonering*. Göteborg 2013
346. KRISTOFFER LARSSON *Kritiskt tänkande i grundskolans samhällskunskap. En fenomenografisk studie om manifesterat kritiskt tänkande i samhällskunskap hos elever i årskurs 9*. Göteborg 2013
347. INGA WERNERSSON och INGEMAR GERRBO (red) *Differentieringens janusansikte. En antologi från Institutionen för pedagogik och specialpedagogik vid Göteborgs universitet*. Göteborg 2013
348. LILL LANGELOTZ *Vad gör en skicklig lärare? En studie om kollegial handledning som utvecklingspraktik*. Göteborg 2014
349. STEINGERDUR OLAFSDOTTIR *Television and food in the lives of young children*. Göteborg 2014
350. ANNA-CARIN RAMSTEN *Kunskaper som byggde folkhemmet. En fallstudie av förutsättningar för lärande vid tekniskskiften inom processindustrin*. Göteborg 2014
351. ANNA-CARIN BREDMAR *Lärares arbetsglädje. Betydelsen av emotionell närvaro i det pedagogiska arbetet*. Göteborg 2014
352. ZAHRA BAYATI *"den Andre" i lärarutbildningen. En studie om den rasifierade svenska studentens villkor i globaliseringsens tid*. Göteborg 2014
353. ANDERS EKLÖF *Project work, independence and critical thinking*. Göteborg 2014
354. EVA WENNÅS BRANTE *Möte med multimodalt material. Vilken roll spelar dyslexi för uppfattandet av text och bild?* Göteborg 2014
355. MAGNUS FERRY *Idrottsprofilerad utbildning – i spåren av en avreglerad skola*. Göteborg 2014
356. CECILIA THORSEN *Dimensionality and Predictive validity of school grades: The relative influence of cognitive and social behavioral aspects*. Göteborg 2014

357 ANN-MARIE ERIKSSON *Formulating knowledge. Engaging with issues of sustainable development through academic writing in engineering education.* Göteborg 2014

358 PÅR RYLANDER *Tränarens makt över spelare i lagidrotter: Sett ur French och Ravens maktbasteori.* Göteborg 2014

359 PERNILLA ANDERSSON VARGA *Skrivundervisning i gymnasieskolan. Svenskämnets roll i den sociala reproduktionen.* Göteborg 2014

360 GUNNAR HYLTEGREN *Vaghet och vanmakt - 20 år med kunskapskrav i den svenska skolan.* Göteborg 2014

361 MARIE HEDBERG *Idrotten sätter agendan. En studie av Riksidrottsgymnasietränares handlande utifrån sitt dubbla uppdrag.* Göteborg 2014

362 KARI-ANNE JØRGENSEN *What is going on out there? - What does it mean for children's experiences when the kindergarten is moving their everyday activities into the nature - landscapes and its places?* Göteborg 2014

363 ELISABET ÖHRN och ANN-SOFIE HOLM (red) *Att lyckas i skolan. Om skolprestationer och kön i olika undervisningspraktiker.* Göteborg 2014

364 ILONA RINNE *Pedagogisk takt i betygssamtal. En fenomenologisk hermeneutisk studie av gymnasielärares och elevers förståelse av betyg.* Göteborg 2014

365 MIRANDA ROCKSÉN *Reasoning in a Science Classroom.* Göteborg 2015

366 ANN-CHARLOTTE BIVALL *Helpdesking: Knowing and learning in IT support practices.* Göteborg 2015

367 BIRGITTA BERNE *Naturvetenskap möter etik. En klassrumsstudie av elevers diskussioner om samhällsfrågor relaterade till bioteknik.* Göteborg 2015

368 AIRI BIGSTEN *Fostran i förskolan.* Göteborg 2015

369 MARITA CRONQVIST *Yrkesetik i lärarutbildning - en balanskonst.* Göteborg 2015

370 MARITA LUNDSTRÖM *Förskolebarns strävanden att kommunicera matematik.* Göteborg 2015

371 KRISTINA LANÅ *Makt, kön och diskurser. En etnografisk studie om elevers aktörskap och positioneringar i undervisningen.* Göteborg 2015

372 MONICA NYVALLER *Pedagogisk utveckling genom kollegial granskning: Fallet Lärande Besök utifrån aktör-nätverksteori.* Göteborg 2015

373 GLENN ØVREVIK KJERLAND *Å lære å undervise i kroppsøving. Design for utriktling av teorigenerert undervisning og kritisk refleksjon i kroppsøvingslærerutdanningen.* Göteborg 2015

374 CATARINA ECONOMOU *"I svenska två vågar jag prata mer och så". En didaktisk studie om skolämnet svenska som andraspråk.* Göteborg 2015

375 ANDREAS OTTEMO *Kön, kropp, begär och teknik: Passion och instrumentalitet på två tekniska högskoleprogram.* Göteborg 2015

376 SHRUTI TANEJA JOHANSSON *Autism-in-context. An investigation of schooling of children with a diagnosis of autism in urban India.* Göteborg 2015

377 JAANA NEHEZ *Rektors praktiker i möte med utvecklingsarbete. Möjligheter och hinder för planerad förändring.* Göteborg 2015

378 OSA LUNDBERG *Mind the Gap – Ethnography about cultural reproduction of difference and disadvantage in urban education.* Göteborg 2015

379 KARIN LAGER *I spänningsfältet mellan kontroll och utveckling. En policystudie av systematiskt kvalitetsarbete i kommunen, förskolan och fritidsbarnhemmet.* Göteborg 2015

380 MIKAELA ÅBERG *Doing Project Work. The Interactional Organization of Tasks, Resources, and Instructions.* Göteborg 2015

381 ANN-LOUISE LJUNGBLAD *Takt och hållning - en relationell studie om det oberäknliga i matematikundervisningen.* Göteborg 2016

382 LINN HÅMAN *Extrem jakt på hälsa. En explorativ studie om ortorexia nervosa.* Göteborg 2016

383 EVA OLSSON *On the impact of extramural English and CLIL on productive vocabulary.* Göteborg 2016

384 JENNIE SIVENBRING *I den betraktades ögon. Ungdomar om bedömning i skolan.* Göteborg 2016

385 PERNILLA LAGERLÖF *Musical play. Children interacting with and around music technology.* Göteborg 2016

386 SUSANNE MECKBACH *Mästarcoacherna. Att bli, vara och utvecklas som tränare inom svensk elitfotboll.* Göteborg 2016

387 LISBETH GYLLANDER TORKILDSSEN *Bedömning som gemensam angelägenhet – enkelt i retoriken, svårare i praktiken. Elevers och lärares förståelse och erfarenheter.* Göteborg 2016

388 cancelled

389 PERNILLA HEDSTRÖM *Hälsocoach i skolan. En utvärderande fallstudie av en hälsöfrämjande intervention.* Göteborg 2016

Editors: Åke Ingerman, Pia Williams and
Elisabet Öhrn

390 JONNA LARSSON *När fysik blir lärområde i förskolan.* Göteborg 2016

- 391 EVA M JOHANSSON *Det motsägelsefulla bedömningsuppdraget. En etnografisk studie om bedömning i förskolekontext*. Göteborg 2016
- 392 MADELEINE LÖWING *Diamant – diagnoser i matematik. Ett kartläggningsmaterial baserat på didaktisk ämnesanalys*. Göteborg 2016
- 393 JAN BLOMGREN *Den svärfångade motivationen: elever i en digitaliserad lärmiljö*. Göteborg 2016
- 394 DAVID CARLSSON *Vad är religionslärares kunskap? En diskursanalys av trepartssamtal i lärarutbildningen*. Göteborg 2017
- 395 EMMA EDSTRAND *Learning to reason in environmental education: Digital tools, access points to knowledge and science literacy*. Göteborg 2017
- 396 KATHARINA DAHLBÄCK *Svenskämnets estetiska dimensioner - i klassrum, kursplaner och lärares uppfattningar*. Göteborg 2017
- 397 K GABRIELLA THORELL *Framåt marsch! – Ridläraryrollen från dåtid till samtid med perspektiv på framtid*. Göteborg 2017
- 398 RIMMA NYMAN *Interest and Engagement: Perspectives on Mathematics in the Classroom*. Göteborg 2017
- 399 ANNIKA HELLMAN *Visuella möjlighetsrum. Gymnasieelevers subjektsskapande i bild och medieundervisning*. Göteborg 2017
- 400 OLA STRANDLER *Performativa läraryrkespraktiker*. Göteborg 2017
- 401 AIMEE HALEY *Geographical Mobility of the Tertiary Educated – Perspectives from Education and Social Space*. Göteborg 2017
- 402 MALIN SVENSSON *Hoppet om en framtidsplats. Asylsökande barn i den svenska skolan*. Göteborg 2017
- 403 CATARINA ANDISHMAND *Fritidshem eller servicehem? En etnografisk studie av fritidshem i tre socioekonomiskt skilda områden*. Göteborg 2017
- 404 MONICA VIKNER STAFBERG *Om lärarblivande. En livsvärldsfenomenologisk studie av bildningsgångar in i läraryrket*. Göteborg 2017
- 405 ANGELICA SIMONSSON *Sexualitet i klassrummet. Språkundervisning, elensubjektivitet och heteronormativitet*. Göteborg 2017
- 406 ELIAS JOHANNESSON *The Dynamic Development of Cognitive and Socioemotional Traits and Their Effects on School Grades and Risk of Unemployment*. Göteborg 2017
- 407 EVA BORGFELDT *"Det kan vara svårt att förklara på rader". Perspektiv på analys och bedömning av multimodal textproduktion i årskurs 3*. Göteborg 2017
- 408 GÉRALDINE FAUVILLE *Digital technologies as support for learning about the marine environment. Steps toward ocean literacy*. Göteborg 2018
- 409 CHARLOTT SELLBERG *Training to become a master mariner in a simulator-based environment: The instructors' contributions to professional learning*. Göteborg 2018
- 410 TUULA MAUNULA *Students' and Teachers' Jointly Constituted Learning Opportunities. The Case of Linear Equations*. Göteborg 2018
- 411 EMMALEE GISSLEVIK *Education for Sustainable Food Consumption in Home and Consumer Studies*. Göteborg 2018
- 412 FREDRIK ZIMMERMAN *Det tillåtande och det begränsande. En studie om pojkars syn på studier och ungdomars normer kring maskulinitet*. Göteborg 2018
- 413 CHRISTER MATTSSON *Extremisten i klassrummet. Perspektiv på skolans förväntade ansvar att förhindra framtida terrorism*. Göteborg 2018
- 414 HELENA WALLSTRÖM *Gymnasielärares mentorshandlingar. En verksamhetsteoretisk studie om lärararbete i förändring*. Göteborg 2018
- 415 LENA ECKERHOLM *Lärarperspektiv på läsförståelse. En intervjustudie om undervisning i årskurs 4-6*. Göteborg 2018
- 416 CHRISTOPHER HOLMBERG *Food, body weight, and health among adolescents in the digital age: An explorative study from a health promotion perspective*. Göteborg 2018
- 417 MAGNUS KARLSSON *Moraliskt arbete i förskolan. Regler och moralisk ordning i barn-barn och vuxen-barn interaktion*. Göteborg 2018
- 418 ANDREAS FRÖBERG *Physical Activity among Adolescents in a Swedish Multicultural Area. An Empowerment-Based Health Promotion School Intervention*. Göteborg 2018
- 419 EWA SKANTZ ÅBERG *Children's collaborative technology-mediated story making. Instructional challenges in early childhood education*. Göteborg 2018
- 420 PER NORDÉN *Regnbågsringar: Familj, utbildning, fritid*. Göteborg 2018
- 421 JENNY RENDAHL *Vem och vad kan man lita på? Ungdomars förhållningsätt till budskap om mat och ätande utifrån ett forskarinitierat rollspel*. Göteborg 2018
- 422 MARTINA WYSZYNSKA JOHANSSON *Student experience of vocational becoming in upper secondary vocational education and training. Navigating by feedback*. Göteborg 2018
- 423 MALIN NILSEN *Barns och lärares aktiviteter med datorplattor och appar i förskolan*. Göteborg 2018
- 424 LINDA BORGER *Investigating and Validating Spoken Interactional Competence – Rater Perspectives on a Swedish National Test of English*. Göteborg 2018

425 ANNA-MARIA FJELLMAN *School choice, space and the geography of marketization – Analyses of educational restructuring in upper secondary education in Sweden.* Göteborg 2019

426 ANNELI BERGNELL *Med kroppen som illustration: Hur förskolebarn prat-skapar naturvetenskap med hjälp av multimodala och kroppsförankrade förklaringar.* Göteborg 2019

427 ANNE SOLLI *Handling socio-scientific controversy: Students' reasoning through digital inquiry.* Göteborg 2019

428 MARTIN GÖTHBERG *Interacting - coordinating text understanding in a student theatre production.* Göteborg 2019

429 SUSANNE STRÖMBERG JÄMSVI *Unpacking dominant discourses in higher education language policy.* Göteborg 2019

430 KURT WICKE *Läroböcker, demokrati och medborgarskap. Konstruktioner i läroböcker i samhällskunskap för gymnasiet.* Göteborg 2019

431 KATARINA SAMUELSSON *Teachers' Work in Times of Restructuring. On Contextual Influences for Collegiality and Professionality.* Göteborg 2019

432 HELÉNE BERGENTOFT *Lärande av rörelseförmåga i idrott och hälsa ur ett praktikutvecklande perspektiv.* Göteborg 2019

433 JANNA MEYER-BEINING *Assessing writers, assessing writing: a dialogical study of grade delivery in Swedish higher education.* Göteborg 2019

434 DAN FRANSSON *Game demands and fatigue profiles in elite football – an individual approach -Implications of training and recovery strategies.* Göteborg 2019

435 ELIN ARVIDSON *Physiological responses to acute physical and psychosocial stress – relation to aerobic capacity and exercise training.* Göteborg 2019

436 SUSANNE STAF *Skriva historia – literacyförväntningar och elevtexter i historieämnet på mellan- och högstadiet.* Göteborg 2019

437 VERONICA SÜLAU *Vad händer i lärares kollegiala samtalspraktik? En studie av mötet mellan en nationell kompetensutvecklingsinsats och en lokal fortbildningspraktik.* Göteborg 2019

438 MARIA OHLIN *How to Make Bicycling Safer – Identification and Prevention of Serious Injuries among Bicyclists.* Göteborg 2019

439 LINUS JONSSON *An empowerment-based school physical activity intervention with adolescents in a disadvantaged community: A transformative mixed methods investigation.* Göteborg 2019

440 ELIN NORDENSTRÖM *Feedback and instructional guidance in healthcare simulation debriefings.* Göteborg 2019

441 KATEŘINA ČERNÁ *Nurses' work practice in chronic care: knowing and learning in the context of patients' self-monitoring data.* Göteborg 2019

442 MARGARETHA HÄGGSTRÖM *Estetiska erfarenheter i naturmöten. En fenomenologisk studie av upplevelser av skog, växtlighet och undervisning.* Göteborg 2020

443 PANAGIOTA NASIOPOULOU *The professional preschool teacher under conditions of change – competence and intentions in pedagogical practises.* Göteborg 2020

444 ANNA TOROPOVA *Teachers meeting the challenges of the Swedish school system. Agents within boundaries.* Göteborg 2020

446 ULF RYBERG *Att urskilja grafiska aspekter av derivata – hur elevernas möjligheter påverkas av innehållets behandling i undervisningen.* Göteborg 2020

447 KASSAHUN WELDEMARIAM *Reconfiguring Environmental Sustainability in Early Childhood Education: a Postanthropocentric Approach.* Göteborg 2020

448 ANNE KJELLSDOTTER *Didactical Considerations in the Digitalized Classroom.* Göteborg 2020

449 CARINA PETERSON *Val, omröstning, styrning. En etnografisk studie om intentioner med, villkor för och utfall av barns inflytande i förskolan.* Göteborg 2020

450 LOTTA WEDMAN *The concept concept in mathematics education: A concept analysis.* Göteborg 2020

451 MARLENE SJÖBERG *Samtal om undervisning i naturvetenskap. Ämnesdidaktisk kollegial utveckling i lärarutbildning och lärarprofession.* Göteborg 2020

452 LENNART SVENSSON *Kontextuell analys – En forskningsmetodologi och forskningsansats.* Göteborg 2020

453 JOHN DOHLSTEN *Vad möjliggör och begränsar en hållbar elitfriidrott? Aktionsforskning i elitidrottspraktiker inom Göteborgs friidrottsförbund.* Göteborg 2020

454 LENA SÖTEVIK *Barbiebröllop och homohundar. Barn och barndomar i relation till queerhet och (hetero)normativa livslinjer.* Göteborg 2020.

455 FRIDA SIEKKINEN *Att vara och inte vara. Eleverpositioner(ingar) i spänningsfältet mellan svenska och svenska som andraspråk.* Göteborg 2021.

456 ANN-CHARLOTT WANK *Meningsskapande samtal. En studie om barns meningsskapande med fokus på processer och innehåll relaterat till förskolans praktik.* Göteborg 2021.

457 ANDREAS LUNDBERG ZACHRISSON *Overse injuries in Swedish elite athletics. Incidence, occurrence, athlete availability, and risk factors.* Göteborg 2021.

458 ANNA NORRSTRÖM *Samtal under lärarlagsmöten. Diskursorienteringar i den professionella praktiken.* Göteborg 2021.

459 JOHANNA MELLÉN *Stability and Change. Policy, options, and choice in Swedish upper secondary education.* Göteborg 2021.

460 JONATAN JUNGMAHM *Running-related injuries among recreational runners. How many, who, and why?* Göteborg 2021.

461 ELISABETH OHLSSON *Den synliggjorda vokabulären och praktiken. Gymnasieelevers akademiska skrivande på svenska.* Göteborg 2021.

462 VICTORIA ROLFE *Exploring socioeconomic inequality in educational opportunity and outcomes in Sweden and beyond.* Göteborg 2021.

463 JONAS LINDBÄCK *Värsta bästa skolan. Om unga i förorten och segregationen i skolan.* Göteborg 2021.

Editors: Christel Larsson, Elisabeth Öhrn, Pia Williams

464 ANNE-MARIE CEDERQVIST *Seeing the parts, understanding the whole. A technology education perspective on teaching and learning in processes of analysing and designing programmed technological solutions.* Göteborg 2021.

465 MARIE GRICE *Epistemic beliefs and conceptions of competence in education for sustainable development.* Göteborg 2021.

466 KRISTINA HUNEHÄLL BERNDTSSON *Digitala sexuella trakasserier i skolan: Elevperspektiv på sexting, utsatthet och jämställdhet.* Göteborg 2022.

Editors: Christel Larsson, Elisabeth Öhrn, Pia Williams och Olof Franck

467 STINA JERDBORG *Learning Principalship: Becoming a Principal in a Swedish Context. A study of Principals in Education and Practice.* Göteborg 2022.

468 ALEXANDRA SÖDERMAN *Digital studentkultur – om slutna grupper på Facebook som icke-formell arena i högre utbildning.* Göteborg 2022.

469. OLA HENRICSSON *"Som att hålla tiden i sin hand" – Didaktiskt perspektiv på muntligt berättande.* Göteborg 2022.

470 ERIKA MAJOROS *Linking recent and older IEA studies on mathematics and science.* Göteborg 2022.

471 JENNY SVANTESON WESTER *Teaching and learning mathematics with integrated small-group discussions. A learning study about scaling geometric figures.* Göteborg 2022.

472 JASMINE BYLUND *Everyday Language Practices and the Interplay of Ideologies, Investment and Identities. Language Use and Dispositions among Young Adolescents in Multilingual Urban Settings in Sweden.* Göteborg 2022.

473 AGNETA PIHL *Children retelling stories. Responding, reshaping, and remembering in early childhood education and care.* Göteborg 2022.

474 KATARINA NILFYR *Interaktionsmönster, social anpassning och emotioner i förskolan – En mikrosociologisk studie av interaktion mellan förskollärare och barn i målorienterade aktiviteter.* Göteborg 2022

475 LEAH NATASHA GLASSOW *Teacher sorting and the opportunity gap. A cross-national investigation of institutional differentiation and educational equity.* Göteborg 2022

476 ÅSA ANDERSSON *Sustainable inclusion without sustainability. Working with equal participation and unforeseen movement in physical education, sports, and research.* Göteborg 2023

477 INGELA FINNDAHL *Young students' Language Choice in Swedish compulsory school – expectations, learning and assessment.* Göteborg 2023

478 MIKAEL R KARLSSON *Skolförändring, reformer och professionella villkor – en etnografisk studie.* Göteborg 2023

479 LINUS BYLUND *Differentiation, didactics and inequality. How rich and poor populations are educated for sustainability.* Göteborg 2023

480 JONATAN FRIDOLFSSON *Statistical advancements in analyzing accelerometer-measured physical activity intensity* Göteborg 2023

481 OLA FLENNEGÅRD *Uppdrag: Historia och demokrati Perspektiv på studieresor till Förntelsens minnesplatser.* Göteborg 2023

482 MALIN BRÄNNSTRÖM *Mellan osynlighet och avvikelser – nyanlända elever med kort skolbakgrund i grundskolans senare årskurser.* Göteborg 2023

483 EMELIE STAVHOLM *Teacher professional learning in response to contemporary challenges in early childhood education and care.* Göteborg 2024

484 TANYA K OSBORNE: *Unicorns in Moderation Gender and Epistemology on Stack Overflow.* Göteborg 2024

485 DIMITRIOS PAPADOPOULOS: *Individualising processes in adult education: The case of Swedish for immigrants (SFI).* Göteborg 2024

486 ANNA-LENA BORG: *Trygga och otrygga platser En etnografisk studie om våld och utsatthet bland barn i fritidsbem.* Göteborg 2024

487 PETER JOHANNESSON: *Lärares lärande i gränslandet mellan skolans och vetenskapens praktiker. Aktionsforskning som socialt lärande.* Göteborg 2024

Editors: Christel Larsson, Pia Williams, and Olof Franck

488 LEA ELDSTÅHL-AHRENS: *Learning to argue in primary school: A sociocultural study of group discussions, with argumentative tasks.* Göteborg 2024

489 YI DING: *The Self in the School Context: Mathematics Self-concept and Self-efficacy in PISA.* Göteborg 2024

490 CLARA PALM: *Skrivundervisning i svenska som andraspråk inom vuxenutbildning.* Göteborg 2024

491 PAN'TEA RINNEMAA: *Reading and learning from civics textbooks: exploring challenges and opportunities from students' and teachers' perspective.* Göteborg 2024

492 ALENA SEREDKO: *Doing knowledge@scale: Sociomaterial Practices and Professional Learning of Software Developers on Stack Overflow.* Göteborg 2024

493 SOLVEIG E.S. HAUSKEN-SUTTER: *Interdisciplinary research and youth sport injury. Developing methodological insights.* Göteborg 2024

494 MARINA KARLSSON: *The Quality Dialogue. An activity theoretical study on systematic quality work in a municipal preschool administration.* Göteborg 2024

The present thesis deals with interprofessional ‘quality dialogues’ in local education administrations’ systematic quality work, focusing on the tension between support and control. The thesis examines quality dialogues occurring at the unit level, the authoritative level, and at the intersection between these two levels in a Swedish municipal preschool administration. The empirical data consists of municipal documents and interviews which were elicited with examples from observed dialogues and participants’ written reflections. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, CHAT, constitutes the theoretical framework.

The findings show that quality dialogues have multiple purposes and that several culturally and historically shaped systemic contradictions influence the development and function of the quality dialogues. Most contradictions were found in the quality dialogue conducted at the intersection between the unit level and the authoritative level. This is also the quality dialogue most focused on control. Quality dialogues at the unit level and the authoritative level, respectively, focus more on support even though control is also at play. Based on the key findings, the importance of preparations when designing quality dialogues and careful follow-up is emphasised.



Marina Karlsson, Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg. Her research interests focus on quality work, school improvement, and educational administration.

