

Kasvatustieteellisiä tutkimuksia, 3  
Helsinki Studies in Education, 3

**Maiju Paananen**

**Imaginarities of Early Childhood Education**  
**Societal roles of early childhood education in a transnational  
era of accountability**

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

To be presented, with the permission of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the University of Helsinki, for public examination, in Room 5 of the University Main Building, Fabianinkatu 33, on Saturday 11th February 2017, at 12 noon

Helsinki 2017

Maiju Paananen

**Pre-examiners**

Professor Jennifer Sumsion, Charles Sturt University, Australia

Docent Nelli Piattoeva, University of Tampere, Finland

**Custos**

Professor Lasse Lipponen, University of Helsinki, Finland

**Supervisors**

Professor Lasse Lipponen, University of Helsinki, Finland

Professor Kristiina Kumpulainen, University of Helsinki, Finland

Associate Professor Jaakko Kauko, University of Tampere, Finland

**Opponent**

Professor Susan Grieshaber, Monash University, Australia

Yliopistopaino Unigrafia, Helsinki

ISBN 978-951-51-2881-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-951-51-2882-9 (pdf)

University of Helsinki, Faculty of Educational Sciences  
Helsinki Studies in Education, 3

---

**Maiju Paananen**

## **Imaginarities of Early Childhood Education**

Societal roles of early childhood education in a transnational era of accountability

---

### **Abstract**

The emergent knowledge on early brain development together with the aims related to knowledge economy have turned international focus and hopes towards early childhood education. At the same time, increasing economic pressures have been posed to providers of early childhood education. As a result, managerial trends in both private and public organizations have strengthened and governance has, to some extent, been shifted to statistical and outcome-based. This kind of focus has been called the era of accountability. It is not clear, what kind of early childhood education the era of accountability produces. Moreover, we need new tools for examining the formation of everyday life at preschools in this era which is marked by transnational flow of ideas.

The arguments posed in this dissertation draw upon the analyses of data from four different scales: from international documents, national documents, interviews of local actors and ethnographic data from preschools. This thesis draws upon ontological premises of social materialism for building a conceptual framework for the study of formation of every day practices within institutions. I argue that these practices are formed in the interplay of governing instruments and discourses concerning the societal roles of early childhood education. Furthermore, to understand the formation of the governing instruments and discourses concerning the societal roles of early childhood education there is a need to take into account both transnational and national trajectories of policy and governance.

The findings of this dissertation study show that the discourses of the societal roles of early childhood education which are entangled with governance instruments formulate the every day practices of preschools. The findings suggest that outcome-based governance fits ill with the early childhood education's aims of social justice. The era of accountability – the discourses and the governance tools related to it – transforms the societal roles of early childhood education.

All in all, the findings underline that it is useful to examine early childhood education by integrating micro- and macrolevel analysis; this dissertation study argues for an approach on research which takes into account the transnationality of policy trajectories. Furthermore, a basic premise of the application of these findings is that the tools of governing have always unintended consequences. In

Maiju Paananen

order to meet the demand of accountability, the evaluation of early childhood education cannot be reduced to examination of simple outcome-based quantitative indicators. The study concludes with suggestions for avenues of further research.

---

*Keywords:* early childhood education, imaginary, accountability, governance by numbers

Helsingin yliopisto, Kasvatustieteellinen tiedekunta  
Kasvatustieteellisiä tutkimuksia, numero 3

---

**Maiju Paananen**

### **Varhaiskasvatus tulostavastiisuuden aikakaudella**

Varhaiskasvatuksen yhteiskunnallisten merkitysten muotoutuminen transnationaalien ja paikallisten liittymäpinnoilla

---

#### **Tiivistelmä**

Sekä kansainvälinen poliittinen että tutkimuksellinen kiinnostus varhaiskasvatusta kohtaan on kasvanut. Tämä liittyy toisaalta muun muassa aivotutkimuksen tuottamaan ymmärrykseen aivojen varhaisesta kehittämisestä ja toisaalta kansallisvaltioiden halusta investoida inhimilliseen pääomaan kansallisen kilpailukykyyn korostuessa globaalissa maailmantaloudessa. Toisaalta puhe kilpailukyky-yhteiskunnasta on samanaikaisesti asettanut uusia vaatimuksia julkiselle taloudelle. Managerialistinen hallintatapa on lisääntynyt ja tuottanut uudenlaisia, pääosin kvantitatiivisia tapoja tarkastella organisaatioiden tuottavuutta. Elämme tulostavastiisuuden aikakautta. Tämä on asettanut varhaiskasvatuksen arkitoiminnan uuden eteen. Meillä ei ole tutkimustietoa siitä, millaista varhaiskasvatuksen arkea tulostavastiisuuden aikakausi uudenlaisine hallinnan tapoineen tuottaa. Myös uusille teoreettisille välineille varhaiskasvatuksen arjen muotoutumisen ymmärtämiseksi on tarvetta tässä uudessa globaalissa kontekstissa.

Tässä tutkimuksessa varhaiskasvatusta tarkastellaan neljällä eri tasolla: kansainvälisellä, kansallisella, kunnallisella ja arkipäivän toiminnan tasolla. Aineistona käytetään kansainvälisiä, kansallisia ja paikallisia dokumentteja, paikallisten toimijoiden dokumenttiavusteisia haastatteluja sekä etnografista ja osallistavaa havainnointiaineistoa.

Tämän tutkimuksen ontologiset lähtökohdat nojaavat yhteen sosiomaterialismin variaatioista. Näihin lähtökohtiin nojaten tämä väitöstutkimus esittää, että varhaiskasvatuksen arkipäiväiset käytännöt muotoutuvat ohjausvälineiden ja varhaiskasvatukselle tuotettujen yhteiskunnallisten merkitysten vuoropuhelussa. Monitahoinen tarkastelu auttaa ymmärtämään, kuinka kansalliset kehityskulut ja kansainväliset trendit muodostuvat uudeksi paikalliseksi politiikaksi, jolla on merkitystä varhaiskasvatuksen arkipäiväisten käytäntöjen rakentumisessa.

Tulokset osoittavat, että tulostavastiisuus sopii huonosti yhteen varhaiskasvatukseen liitetyn sosiaalisen oikeudenmukaisuuden tavoitteen kanssa. Tulostavastiisuuden aikakaudella yksilöllisten oikeuksien ja tulevaisuuteen valmistautumisen tavoitteet yhdistettynä tehostamisen tuottamiin uusiin materiaaliin reunaehtoihin tiukentavat instituution lapsille asettamia normeja. Tämä on erityisen epäedullista niille lapsille, jotka eivät jo valmiiksi sovi näihin instituution normeihin. Toisaalta

Maiju Paananen

tulokset osoittavat myös, että osa lastentarhanopettajista pystyi rakentamaan vaihtoehtoisia, ryhmätasoisia ohjausjärjestelmiä, jotka puskuroivat tiukkenevien resurssien vaikutusta.

Tämä tutkimus alleviivaa mikro- ja makrotason analyysien yhdistämisen tarvetta. Lisäksi tutkimus osoittaa, että ohjausvälineiden (materiaalisuuden) ja kulttuuristen merkitysten yhteenliittymien analyysi tuottaa tarpeellista tietoa varhaiskasvatuksen arjen muotoutumisesta. Ohjausvälineitä kehitettäessä ja käytettäessä on syytä muistaa, että ne tuottavat väistämättä ei-toivottuja vaikutuksia. Näin ollen esimerkiksi määrällisiksi indikaattoreiksi tuotetut yksinkertaiset kriteerit eivät sellaisenaan toimi hyvänä varhaiskasvatuksen ohjausvälineenä.

---

*Avainsanat:* varhaiskasvatus, varhaiskasvatuspolitiikka, varhaiskasvatuksen ohjaus, tulosvastuullisuus

## Acknowledgement

I have been extremely fortunate to have been surrounded by so many amazing people whose thinking has become intertwined with mine during this journey. In the end, that intertwinement has led for the materializing of this thesis. The form in which academic papers are written may conceal the fact that their existence is dependent on the interactions with people the researcher encounters both inside and outside the academia. This section is for acknowledging the large network of encounters that have influenced this thesis.

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my three wonderful supervisors, Lasse Lipponen, Kristiina Kumpulainen and Jaakko Kauko who have provided me with much needed guidance and also encouraged me to stand on my own feet as a researcher. Thank you, Lasse, for always having time to think with me. I am grateful for all the trust you have shown throughout the way. Kristiina, your well-reasoned advice concerning research but also life in general has probably guided me much more than you can imagine. Thank you for all the opportunities you have provided me with to grow as an academic. Jaakko, I am so glad you accepted the invitation to join the team! Thank you for your diligent reading and insightful comments and for not giving me a pass with my arguments too easily. Thank you all for your open-mindedness, trust, encouragement and generosity.

I have also had the opportunity to have many critical thinking partners, many of whom have become extraordinary friends that I would like to thank (not in any particular order): Tuure Tammi, Markus Hilander, Riikka Hohti, Anna Kouhia, Elina Ketonen, Laura Tuohilampi, Antti Rajala, Jaakko Hilppö, Mari Nislin, Laura Repo, Noora Pyyry, Kristiina Janhonen, Antti Paakkari, Lauri Heikonen and Anna Rainio. Your insights, care and help has not only influenced my work but also who I am as a person. In addition, you have made the ride much more fun.

In addition to these names, there are many others who have been very important for me and for this study. I would like to thank all the children (and their parents), teachers and other staff members and experts who have participated in this research. Without you this study would not have been possible.

I want to thank people at Balsillie School of International Affairs, Waterloo, Canada and especially professor Rianne Mahon who kindly hosted my visit in Canada. I could not be more grateful for your generosity and hospitality. You have always made me feel like a welcome friend. Thank you for Jutikkala Foundation for financially supporting my visit.

My thanks go also to the people in KUPOLI and KYK research seminars whom I have shared so many enlightening discussions. All the staff members of Early Childhood Education Teacher training have always made me feel as welcome part

Maiju Paananen

of the group. My heartfelt thanks for that for all of you. In addition, my sincere thanks goes to the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki and all the wonderful people there I have not yet mentioned, for providing such an inspiring working environment.

I am grateful for the two external pre-examiners of this work, Docent Nelli Piattoeva from the University of Tampere and Professor Jennifer Sumsion from the Charles Sturt University, Australia. Your comments helped me to push my work one step further.

A lot related to this dissertation has happened before I became a doctoral student in 2012. I have had the wonderful opportunity to study at the Department of Teacher Education first to become a kindergarten teacher and then a master of education. During my studies especially Eeva-Leena Onnismaa, Leena Tahkokallio and Annu Brotherus sparked up the desire in me to do research. They deserve my warmest thanks for being great inspirations both before and after I have started my journey as a becoming scholar.

Working as a consultant secretary of the Finnish coordination group of the OECD's Early Childhood Education network in the National institute for Health and Welfare served as a sparkle that eventually led to the main questions of this thesis. Thank you for Päivi Lindberg and Anna-Leena Välimäki for the opportunity to work as a part of the group and for Tarja Kahiluoto and Kirsi Alila for the discussions along the way.

The children in the child groups I used to work with and colleagues (and friends!) in the preschool have also played an important role in this journey. For where would one be more forcefully encouraged to keep on wondering and being amazed of the world than in preschool.

I am grateful to ECEPP-research group led by Professor Kirsti Karila and the whole CHILDCARE research consortium led by professor Maarit Alasuutari for insightful, supporting and welcoming working environments they have offered me and also for providing the financial means to finalize this thesis. Thank you, Kirsti, for inviting me to join in. I am looking forward for continuing the research with you all.

Thank you for all my friends and family for providing me with havens to not think about things directly related to this dissertation. Special thanks to my 'Ihanat': Kati, Sanja, Satu and Milka for the laughter and joy and Annika and Henkka for always welcoming us to retreat from our mundane everyday life. I could not feel to be more loved having both of my families – birth and in-law – in my life and reminding me from time to time of the things that really matter.

Timo, your example and courage to be persistent, diligent, critical and curious in life has inspired me throughout this journey. Since I have had the privilege to grow up to adulthood with you as my thinking companion and best friend, it is sometimes impossible to differentiate my thinking from yours. Thus, this thesis is yours as much as it is mine. Special thanks for peeling the oranges when needed

## Imaginations of Early Childhood Education

and making coffee and porridge every single day. It is the small things that make the everyday life special. I am blessed to have you beside me.

In Tampere, New Year's Eve 31st December, 2016

Maiju Paananen

# Contents

1 INTRODUCTION.....	10
1.1 Democratization of ECEC.....	10
1.2 Earlier research on societal roles of ECEC.....	13
1.2.1 Disconnection between macro-level policy analyses and micro-level analyses of the everyday life of ECEC.....	13
1.2.2 Beyond ‘international’ in studies on ECEC.....	15
1.3 Aim and objectives.....	18
2 PREMISES FOR EXPLORING THE FORMATION OF INSTITUTIONAL REALITY.....	19
2.1 Ontology of social reality.....	19
2.2 Formation of institutional ECEC.....	23
2.2.1 Imaginaries of ECEC.....	23
2.2.2 Formation of ECEC as transnational intertwinement between imaginaries.....	25
2.3 Trans-paradigmatic research.....	28
2.4 Inquiry.....	31
2.4.1 Mapping the national and transnational context of ECEC.....	32
2.4.2 Selecting a local context for the study.....	32
2.4.3 Data sources.....	34
2.4.4 Analysis.....	43
2.4.5 Research ethics.....	45
3 FORMATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ECEC.....	47
3.1 The formation of ECEC in the transnational era.....	47
3.1.1 International inscriptions of ECEC.....	48
3.1.2 Finnish inscriptions of ECEC.....	53
3.1.3 Imaginaries of ECEC in everyday life at preschool.....	57
3.2 Transformation of imaginaries through intertwinement.....	66
3.2.1 Intertwinement of imaginaries: Hybridisation and ousterisation.....	66
3.2.2 Threefold process of intertwinement of imaginaries.....	69

4 REFLECTIONS .....	74
4.1 Theoretical reflections.....	74
4.1.1 From international to transnational .....	74
4.1.2 The concept of imaginary as a tool for bridging governance and policy studies.....	75
4.2 Practical reflections.....	77
4.3 Methodological reflections.....	81
4.4 The relevance and applicability of the research findings .....	82



## List of original articles

This thesis is based on the following articles

- I. Paananen, M., Kumpulainen, K., & Lipponen, L. (2015). Quality drift within a narrative of investment in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 23(5), 690-705.
- II. Paananen, M., Lipponen, L., & Kumpulainen, K. (2015). Hybridisation or ousterisation? The case of local accountability policy in Finnish early childhood education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 14(5), 395-417.
- III. Paananen, M. (submitted). The imaginaries that survived: Societal roles of early childhood education in an era of intensification. (Submitted to *Global Studies of Childhood*).
- IV. Paananen, M. & Lipponen, L. (2016). Pedagogical documentation as a lens for equality. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-11.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Democratization of ECEC

Following the ideas of Hannah Arendt, one of the roles of research is to help develop democratic oases in the desert (Isaac, 1994). When I started my work with this thesis in 2012, the Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy discussion somewhat resembled a place where there has not been much life and the growing conditions are not ideal. The legislation initiated at the beginning of the 1970s and the ECEC policy situation were stagnant for years. Despite many moves towards a renewal of child care and education legislation, there had not been much progress. Also, public discourse was minimal and focused on few topics, such as whether children should be attending ECEC or cared for at home, and whether child groups were too large in preschools.

Subsequently over the years, the situation has changed. Governance of ECEC was transferred from the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Culture in the beginning of 2013. A working group set by the Ministry with the aim of renewing the statutes of children's day-care finalized its work in 2014 (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). New legislation came into force in August 2015 establishing regulations for the maximum size of a child group and changing the discourse from day-care to early education. Soon after that, when Juha Sipilä's government came into power in 2015, decisions were made regarding the austerity measures to be conducted in ECEC: the maximum number of children over three years old attending full-time day-care was increased from 7 to 8 per adult and municipalities got the opportunity to limit the right to ECEC to 20 hours per week (either 4 hours per day with the staff-child ratio of 1:13 set for half day-care or attending full-time day-care a couple days per week) unless the child's parents worked or studied full-time (EV 112/2015).

Following these developments there has been an exponential increase of public debates concerning ECEC. Discussions have certainly become more diverse. *Helsingin Sanomat*, the largest newspaper in Finland, has published readers' letters concerning, for example, cramped facilities in ECEC (Alén, 23.9.2015), whether ECEC fees for families with higher income are too low (Haluaisin maksaa päivähoidosta enemmän, 8.10.2015), and increases in stress experienced by children if the child-staff ratio in ECEC is too high (Polamo, 9.9.2015). Most importantly, there has been growing discussion concerning the societal role of ECEC (Naukkari, 24.11.2015; Heiskanen, 26.11.2015; Rauhala & Berg, 9.10.2015).

In sum, the question of what ECEC is for has been increasingly raised in public discussion. This topical question is at the core of this dissertation.

In this thesis I will focus on institutional ECEC in contrast to more informal care arrangements (for example, domestic workers or relatives taking care of young children). In particular, I will examine ECEC arranged in public preschools. By preschool I mean ECEC before primary education, which begins in Finland during the year when a child turns seven years old. In Finland, it encompasses integrated ECEC services for 0–6-years-old children. This is the most common institutional ECEC arrangement in Finland: 79% of children that attend ECEC in Finland use public preschool services. In total, approximately 230 000 children attend ECEC in Finland. This is 62.9% of all Finnish 1–6-year-olds (THL, 2015).

In attempting to paint a picture of what institutional ECEC outside the home context is about and how the practices within it are constituted, we first need to realize that ECEC plays multiple simultaneous roles in society. Historically, ECEC all over the Global North<sup>1</sup> has evolved out of remarkably similar needs: child protection, education, services for children with special needs, and services to facilitate mothers' labour force participation have been the core aims of developing institutional ECEC services (Penn, 2011b; Neuman, 2005). Understanding the societal roles of ECEC and especially their enactments becomes more and more important as on average internationally, children enter institutional child care at earlier ages and spend more time in them. Dominant ideals of the primary role of ECEC in society influence the everyday decisions and practices in preschools. It is not unimportant what kind of ECEC children receive, for the effects of ECEC are felt for years (Vandell et al. 2010; Cunha & Heckman, 2007; Heckman, 2006).

The topic of the enactments of the societal roles of ECEC is also interesting from an international perspective since many countries have made a considerable effort to invest in ECEC, even making it a policy priority in recent years. In these discussions, it is widely emphasized that the quality of ECEC is especially important (OECD, 2012). Yet, it is not always clear what different stakeholder groups mean when they refer to investing in the quality of ECEC due to the multiple societal roles of ECEC. "Quality" is a relative concept dependent on the meanings and objectives we give to the object whose quality we are evaluating. Policy decisions and recommendations may seem different if we focus on ECEC's role in preparing children for school, compared to underlining its role in securing a safe place for children while their parents enter the labour force. This is one of the reasons why the concept of quality ECEC is used in various ways (see Fenech,

---

<sup>1</sup> I am aware of the ambiguities of the classification of Global North and Global South (see Therien, 1999). Here these terms are not used to distinguish between political systems or degrees of poverty, but rather between the casualties and the beneficiaries of global capitalism, which influences the possibilities to build up national social, welfare and education services.

2011; 2013). When the presuppositions concerning the societal role of ECEC are not opened up, it is not clear what is being talked about when quality ECEC is promoted.

International interest in quality ECEC is important from the point of view of this dissertation for another reason as well. It is important to know not only what the presuppositions are concerning the societal roles of ECEC in Finland at the moment, but also how we constitute and determine these societal roles. Therefore, it is worth noting that in the contemporary world, where information flows quickly and the economy is more global than ever, ideas concerning educational institutions also tend to drift across contexts (Ozga & Jones, 2006). It has been argued that quality assurance has been integrated into organizational and managerial thinking in both private and public organizations and it has become measurable, statistical and standards-based. This kind of focus has been called ‘the audit society’ (Power, 1997), ‘the performative society’ (Ball, 2000) and ‘the era of accountability’ (Ranson, 2003). This dissertation asks, what kind of ECEC the era of accountability produces.

It can be concluded that internationally, the search for best practices and the discourse on evidence-based decision-making concerning education policy have blurred the inherently political aspect of education. For example Biesta (2010) has argued that we need to re-engage with the question of what constitutes good education. This also strongly applies into the area of ECEC. We need to constantly re-evaluate what we want to achieve before tackling the question of the ways in which these outcomes can be reached, not to mention measured.

All in all, unanalytical statements concerning quality ECEC become problematic if we want to foster the idea of democracy that both Biesta and Arendt have highlighted. If we are not clear about what kind of ECEC we promote or oppose – what the societal meaning is of the ECEC we are talking about – it is not possible to make an informed political choice.

Therefore, to advance democratic deliberation and decision-making this doctoral dissertation examines the ideals which have been connected with ECEC, how these ideals are enacted in ECEC, and how we are able to understand the process in which these societal meanings and roles are formed and re-formed. This thesis argues that in the field of ECEC studies there is a need for broadening the academic discussion concerning these issues. We lack both theoretical and methodological tools for addressing that need. This thesis argues that the concept of *imaginary* and the perspective of *transnational* have potential for serving as tools for broadening the discussion.

For grounding this argument I pose in this dissertation, firstly there is a need to engage with the earlier literature on the societal roles of ECEC and its constitution and enactments. Secondly, I will introduce the more specific aims of this dissertation. Thirdly, in Chapter 2, I will introduce the definition of the concept of

imaginary, ontological presuppositions of it, and its formation in the contemporary transnational world. Also, I will explain the steps of the inquiry including the data and the analysis of the study. Fourthly, in Chapter 3, I will introduce the findings of the substudies in relation to existing literature. Finally, in Chapter 4, I will reflect to what extent the aims of this study were addressed and what other possible contributions were accomplished along the way.

## **1.2 Earlier research on societal roles of ECEC**

### **1.2.1 Disconnection between macro-level policy analyses and micro-level analyses of the everyday life of ECEC**

There are different overlapping strands of research concerning the societal roles of ECEC in policy and practice. Studies concerning ECEC policy and governance can be divided into two categories: the first type of studies focuses more on the historical developments and institutional structures of ECEC (Rigby, 2007; Karila, 2012; Mahon et. al, 2012), while the second strand of studies is more interested in deconstructing presuppositions about the societal roles and meanings of ECEC and tensions and discontinuities among them (Fenech & Sumsion, 2007; Osgood, 2006).

The first line of studies most typically illuminates what kinds of different policy and governance solutions different countries (e.g. Neuman, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2005; Onnismaa & Kalliala, 2010; Roberts-Holmes et al., 2016) and international organizations (Penn, 2011a; Mahon, 2010) have adopted. This body of literature reveals, for example, similarities in the policy directions of different countries, e.g., a tendency to (re)organize the governance structure of ECEC under one agency, more and more often under the Ministry of Education (Neuman, 2005), and growing national focus on the idea of ECEC as an economic investment (Wong, 2007; Campbell-Barr, 2012; Cheeseman, Sumsion & Press, 2014). Also, it highlights that the governance structures of ECEC do not only include public-sector agencies. Rather, there is an increase of various non-governmental players entering the field, which are taking part, for example, in the quality assurance of ECEC services (see, e.g., Penn, 2011a).

This line of research also reveals that Nordic countries have typically used information governance, such as information for developing local curricula, together with national-level regulations of the structural standards of quality, such as child-staff ratios and the qualification requirements of staff. It is argued that the so-called liberalist tradition of ECEC has more often counted on markets and used

outcome-based governance tools. Within this tradition, public support has come in the form of subsidies to low-income families and private producers to stimulate a broader market for child care (Ranson, 2003; Karila, 2012; Mahon et al., 2012)

The other line of research, which is situated on the post-structural side of the methodological continuum has two sub-categories. One aims to understand issues around depoliticization in ECEC (Cannella, 1997; Dahlberg & Moss, 2004). This type of literature has also documented the intentionalities of different types of governance tools (Salamon, 2002). Studies of ECEC governance has been concerned with this governmentality and datafication of the ECEC, and particularly the increase in the discourses of accountability and quality (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Osgood, 2006; Jones et al., 2014; Moss, 2014; Urban, 2015).

More generally speaking, it has been pointed out that data-based accountability and outcome-based governance tools operate as technologies that make some parts of educational institutions visible and knowable. Databases have become dominant techniques of governing (Ozga et al., 2011; see also Piattoeva, 2015). ‘Comparative’ data have been observed to be key in the identified ‘governance turn’ (Fenwick et al., 2014, p. 6). ‘Governance turn’ refers to the rising interest in the ‘datafication’ of ECEC, which arises from the expansion of data in the society; the shift in the availability, increased volume, and production and spreading speed of data. It has been noted that data are not neutral constructions, but influenced by practical issues of what can be easily measured and analysed (Selwyn, 2015). Among others, Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury have (2016) argued that outcome-based governance has the tendency to draw the societal role of ECEC into economic policy. As a result, there is an ever stronger tendency to govern ECEC in a way such that there is “one calculable rate of return on any investment” (Moss, 2014, p. 66).

The other sub-category focuses on the consequences of these changes – especially for professionalism (Duncan, 2004; Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002; Novinger & O’Brien, 2003; Osgood, 2006). Osgood (2010) has noted that ECEC workers become self-governing professionals under the scrutiny of this simplified governing data. Hatch and Grieshaber (2002) argue that the era of accountability narrows down curricula and prioritizes performance over learning. In Australia, centralised licencing requirements overruled teachers’ and parents’ more pressing concerns for their children and kindergartens (Duncan, 2004). Yet, the studies in this sub-category have often been based on interviews rather than ethnographic data.

All of these overlapping lines of research provide a rich starting point for the study at hand. However, there is still a need to unravel the question of the extent to which different kinds of policies and governance tools organize and construct the everyday life of preschool. The focus of earlier examinations of ECEC policy has mainly been on mapping the different types of governance of ECEC systems or the discourses that can be identified from policy texts (for example Gibson,

McArdle & Hatcher, 2015). Connecting this knowledge to the knowledge of everyday life of children and ECEC workers is also important. There has been a call for empirical research on the effects of policies and governance on young children and their everyday life (Neuman, 2005).

We know very little about how and to what extent these different roles of ECEC are enacted in the everyday life of preschool. Also, it is not clear how different policy aims become mediated into actual practices<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the aim of this doctoral dissertation is to gain understanding of the enactment of different societal meanings and the roles of ECEC in the everyday life of preschool.

The lack of research combining these aspects of the world – the actual material reality of preschool life and the societal meanings of ECEC constructed in social relations – might be due to the perceived mismatch of the ontological standpoints of these lines of research, with the former being seemingly more committed to realist ontologies and the latter highlighting the constructivist nature of the world. In Chapter 2.1, I will try to explicate the ontological account of this study, inspired by one of the strands of new materialism, namely Documentality (Ferraris, 2013), which aims to overcome this challenge.

### **1.2.2 Beyond ‘international’ in studies on ECEC**

A review of the current literature on ECEC reveals another point: although it has been acknowledged that contemporary ECEC cannot be understood outside of a global context, rigorous analyses taking this into account are sparse. In spite of there being a good amount of research dealing with the discourses and policies of international organizations or focus points of international research literature, for example, there is much less discussion on how these developments are reflected in the actual practices of preschools.

Increasing interconnectedness across nation states in terms of the flow of capital has led to an increase in discourse on the limited role of the state leading to the race to the bottom – minimizing regulation and social security and moving the responsibility of organizing public services to private companies. That is why international organisations have taken the role of promoting ‘social investments’ – including investments in ECEC (see Mahon, 2010; Morel, Palier & Palme, 2012). It was not until the 1990s that ECEC really achieved international attention, both politically and in terms of research. The attention of the public was caught especially by the rise of neuro-scientific research highlighting the importance of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Note, however, that we have examples of that in the studies of ECEC (Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2012) and from other fields of study (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

early years for brain formation and the work of economists like James Heckman, whose cost-benefit analysis of investment in human capital strongly suggested the highest return of investments around very young children (Heckman, 2006; Penn, 2009; Mahon, 2002; Cheeseman, Sumsion & Press, 2014). In sum, in recent decades policy discourse has turned to what Jenson (2010) calls the ‘social investment paradigm’, which focuses on investing in human capital development, instead of welfare cuts.

This ‘social investment’ paradigm, which is not unanimous what so ever, can be detected in the domain of child care and education (Mahon, 2010). In general, these widely spread ‘social investment’ paradigms draw on the theory of human capital, stress the importance of ECEC as enabling parents and especially mothers’ workforce participation (see, e.g., OECD, 2007), the importance of ECEC as advancing children’s learning and development (see, e.g., Sayre et al., 2015), and breaking the cycle of transgenerational poverty (see, e.g., UNICEF, 2000; World Bank, 1995).

Both the flow of information and finding solutions to increase national competitiveness have led, to some extent, to the drift of discourses, paradigms and practices across national boundaries (see, e.g., Ozga & Jones, 2006). It has been argued that soft forms of governance transacted by international organisations influence national governments and local policies (Rinne & Ozga, 2011). Yet, it is not agreed in what ways the new interconnectedness impacts the local formation process. Rather, national responses to international policy paradigms are dynamic and unpredictable. Comparative analyses have revealed interruptions and faults that prevent change which would be parallel to international policies. Simultaneously, the entanglement of international ideas and national practices may, under favourable political conditions, produce ‘seismic shifts’ in national policies (Mahon et al., 2012).

In this thesis, the interconnectedness is conceptualized as being *transnational*. By transnational, I mean a process which extends beyond relations between two or more nations or organizations made up of nations, distinct to ‘international’. Transnational, thus, highlights the complexity of relations and interactions across fields, not only interaction between nation states and hierarchical interaction between international organizations, nation states and local practices (see, e.g., Carney, 2009). When trying to examine these issues from transnational point of view it is important to be familiar with international trends as well as national traditions *in order to understand* the formation of ECEC in a local context.

Although there are micro-level studies, some of which look beyond one level and have focused on the ways in which different roles of ECEC become enacted and interpreted in different countries (Tobin, 2005), they generally do not aim to examine the influence of the transnational flow of ideas or take international or national policy and governance into account. Therefore, there is a need to examine those studies which inspect policy flows and transformations from the perspective

of those people who are affected by the policies and governance of ECEC. When doing that, the ways in which policy trends have been conceptualized when studying policy text or historical development, labeling them with general terms such as ‘neoliberalism’ or ‘Nordic social-democratic ideal’, are not necessarily useful. The everyday life of ECEC is too complex to fit into these categories.

Even if studies aiming to understand the work of ordinary people from the perspective of national and international policy development are scarce, they are not non-existent. For example, the work of Rachel Christina (2006) exposes how NGOs negotiated a complex field of meanings around best practices for early childhood development and education. This coalition-building happened in an intricate institutional environment where national traditions and ideals, local practical knowledge, international organizations’ priorities and certain types of scientific knowledge came together (Christina, 2006). This study continues this kind of research, illuminating policy processes in a broad manner, as transnational processes. Like Christina’s study, this thesis aims to include the perspective transnational in local enactments of ECEC policies.

To sum up, there is a need to examine the formation of institutional ECEC as a result of both international and transnational developments and historical local traditions merged and materialized in policy discourses and governance tools. The intertwining of governance tools and discourses through which governance tools are first created and developed and then interpreted when taken into use is termed in this thesis as an *imaginary*. An imaginary is a socio-material intertwining between 1) discourses and 2) artefacts which together have performative power – they are followed by 3) acts. It is a system that frames an individual’s experience of a complex world and guides collective calculation concerning the future and future actions (Jessop, 2010). The content and the use of the concept of ‘imaginary’ will be further explained in Chapter 2.2.1. Chapter 2.2.2 will explain how the viewpoint of ‘transnational’ is embedded in this study. But first, as a conclusion of this literature review, I will summarize the aims of this study.

### 1.3 Aim and objectives

The present thesis is based on four original articles, which are referred to in the text by Roman numerals (Articles I–IV). The general aim of the thesis is to deepen the understanding of the formation of the institutional reality of ECEC.

The primary aim of this study is therefore a theoretical one:

---

*The aim of this thesis is to create a frame which helps understand the logic of formation of institutional ECEC.*

---

In order to achieve the aim, three objectives are posed. The objectives of this study are:

- 1) to map what kinds of combinations of governing tools and views of the societal roles of ECEC can be identified from different levels of governance (Articles I–III).
- 2) to examine how these combinations become actualized in the everyday life of preschool (Articles III–IV).
- 3) to examine the processes and mechanisms through which some societal roles of ECEC become institutionalized over other societal roles of ECEC (Articles I–IV).

These objectives seek to bring the theoretical insights into dialogue with empirical notions.

## 2 PREMISES FOR EXPLORING THE FORMATION OF INSTITUTIONAL REALITY

In this chapter, I will introduce the premises of the argument I am about to make. First, I will elaborate the theoretical framework of this study which guided the research process reported in this doctoral dissertation. In this section, I will also explain which parts of the formation of institutional reality of ECEC this thesis will tackle and which it will leave out. Also, the logic of data generation and analysis will be explained.

ECEC falls under a rubric of social – and more particularly – institutional life. Its meaning is more or less collectively constructed and finally institutionalized for guiding the everyday life of preschool. This thesis focuses on the institutional reality of ECEC. Therefore, addressing this question means beginning with the fundamental premises of the ‘social’ and ‘institutional’. This may seem a bit far from the very tangible every day life of preschool which comprises the focus of this study. Yet, in order to be able to evaluate the arguments I will present in this thesis, it is essential to be aware of these premises. Therefore, I invite the reader to bear with the explanation that begins quite far afield. That being said, if the reader is interested only in the empirical results of this study, it is not absolutely necessary to complete this section. Instead, the reader may want to jump ahead to the Chapter 2.4 to get a picture of the inquiry or to the Chapter 3 to learn about the results. In that case, the reader can find a short explanation of relationship between the key concepts used in this thesis in the Appendix 1.

### 2.1 Ontology of social reality

Social reality and its construction have been a central focus of the postmodern era of educational and social policy research. More and more attention has been paid to examining how discourses work as mechanisms for persuading people to behave in particular ways, as well as their role in shaping our understandings (see Popkewitz, 1997). However, postmodern approaches have been criticized for ignoring the material world, since the role of language has been the primary focus following the linguistic turn in philosophy, which has been traced to be as the beginning of postmodern era of research. The ontological relation of language to other things in the world has not always been very clearly defined. This is not surprising, since the linguistic turn and postmodern philosophy have sometimes been conceptualized as the end of metaphysics. Yet, it is easy to see that even though language has transformative and performative power, spoken or written

language use is not always a sufficient condition for influencing the world (Ferraris, 2013). However, it is quite widely discussed how focus on language and text is not exclusive of the material world, as well as, how the study of discourse, for example, entails wider meaning-making processes than meaning-making through spoken or written language (e.g., Burr, 1998). Yet, it is clear that due to the linguistic turn, research on language, text and documents in all their variations has strengthened but it has not as often led to a comprehensive examination of the actual practices that these texts or discourses produce, as shown by the literature reviewed in Chapter 1.2.1 of this dissertation.

In recent decades, however, there have been interesting attempts at reassembling the 'social' with the help of material realism. This line of studies has tried to address the lack of examination of complex (also, including material) formations of the 'social'. Materiality of the 'social' has even been said to have become a fundamental focus, and also a challenge, of research in recent decades. This emerging trend in social sciences has already left its mark in different domains of the academy. For example Bruno Latour (2005), Manuel De Landa (2006), Karen Barad (2007) and Maurizio Ferraris (2013), just to mention a few, are some of the most prominent contemporary scholars who have challenged the conceptualisations of 'social' and, at least to some extent, aimed to bridge realism and constructivism. These inquiries have been labelled as new materialism and described as being part of ontological turn in the social sciences (see, for example, Coole & Frost, 2010).

This thesis follows the premises built upon the work of one of these scholars, namely Maurizio Ferraris (2013). Consequently, this thesis presupposes that the 'social', including ideals concerning societal roles of ECEC, are material in nature. Institutional ECEC is very tangible, yet its meaning is not fixed but constructed in different material relations. In what follows, I will explain how the ontological premises of this thesis are related to other theories that highlight the materiality of the 'social'.

The approach of this thesis differs from some of the other approaches of social-materialism in how it conceptualizes 'ontology' and what aspects of 'institutional' and 'social' it highlights. The meaning of the term 'ontology' is not fixed. Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of being, becoming, existence, reality, basic categories of being, and the relations of these different categories. Whereas Ferraris' (2013) theory of ontology answers the question of how different entities can be categorized by their fundamental rules of being in the world, others focus on processes of 'becoming' as a relational happening (Deleuze & Quattari, 1987; Barad, 2007). This is not a disagreement per se but a matter of different focus.

Furthermore, many socio-material inquiries have aimed to decenter humans from the very definition of the 'social'. Some of the most prominent scholars within this field, in addition to Barad, have been Donna Haraway (1991), Jane Bennett (2010) and Rosi Braidotti (2013). This body of literature has been labelled

as post-humanism. Post-humanism critiques what these scholars call as an over-emphasis of the subjective or intersubjective, which they claim to be embedded in humanism, and it emphasizes the role of nonhuman agents such as animals, plants or computers, and especially the heterogeneousness of the processes of becoming actors (for a recent overview, see Ferrando, 2013). This dissertation does not disagree with their notion concerning the need to shake up the central assumptions about subjectivity. However, since this paper draws on Ferraris (2013) ontology of the social, it maintains, that an act rather than an actor is the most fruitful entry point for examining the formation of institutional reality. Therefore, this study focuses on the variety of acts which is best to be observed by following human activities. This does not mean that humans have an independent role in the construction of institutional reality and that they exist prior to relations to other entities in the world. However, since the focus of this study is in the field of ECEC where human interaction has a crucial role, it cannot be overlooked.

I also argue that Ferraris' (2013) theory of ontology is a good surface for interdisciplinary discussion since it categorizes the entities in the world in a way that allows us to discuss both things that are socially constructed, being dependent of place and time, and things that are not dependent on place and time. According to Ferraris (2013), there are three different types of objects, that is, units of ontological entities in the world: natural (or physical), ideal, and social. Natural objects such as trees, rocks and animals exist in space and time. Trees are first nothing but tiny seedlings, but grow over the time. In the end, they fall and finally decompose. Their existence is separate from the subjects who know them in a sense that they would exist regardless of the human existence and being known (this is not to say that humans do not influence them or their existence through their actions). Yet, natural (physical) objects may be built by subjects; examples include furniture, computers or houses. Natural (physical) objects may also have a function created by subjects, for example, a rock that serves as a paper weight. These kinds of objects are called artifacts. They have a social element intertwined with them (Ferraris, 2013).

In contrast to this, ideal objects exist independent of space and time and are also independent from the subjects who know them. For example, numbers, theorems or relations such as 'smaller than' are ideal objects (Ferraris, 2013). If a rock rolling down a mountain is bigger than a crack in the mountain side it will not fall into the crack no matter who is observing it. As noted before, natural objects themselves are dependent on time, i.e., rocks do erode over the course of time. Yet, the logic of a bigger object not fitting in a smaller crack does not change.

Conversely, the existence of social objects depends on the subjects who know them. If there were no subjects, ECEC would not exist, and neither would money nor friendships. In this thesis, social objects are acts that are inscribed in natural objects such as on paper or in the brain, and are recognized and sufficiently shared with at least two people. By definition, at least two subjects are needed to form a

social object; for example, mere thinking cannot be considered as a social object even though thinking is socially constructed (Ferraris, 2013).

The world of natural objects exists independently, but not separately, of conceptual schemes and perceptions. In the world of social objects, however, belief determines being, given that these objects depend on subjects. This does not mean that things like laws or money have a purely subjective dimension. Rather, it means that unless there are subjects which are capable of recognizing these social objects, such social objects do not exist. Only the natural objects on which these social objects are inscribed would exist (Ferraris, 2013). Similarly, when we are talking about learning in ECEC, for example, we recognize that we have neural processes which exist independently of our cultural categories of learning, childhood or the preferred future society, but they do not function separately from them. Rather these cultural categories, which this thesis calls social objects (such as conceptions of childhood inscribed in UNICEF's convention on the rights of the child (1989)), influence the way in which we define desirable childhood and learning.

Nothing social exists outside of the text, since the constitutive rule of social objects contains the idea that acts are inscribed in one way or the other. Inscription means a physical trace, either in our neural connections, ink marks on pieces of paper or binary code in computer programs that report something, leading to an act. This is to say, inscriptions have performative power. A social object may, for example, contain the default standards for the actors, setting, and sequence of events expected to occur in a particular situation (Ferraris, 2013). In ECEC these could be, for example, the curriculum, daily routines in preschool, and culturally constructed gender roles. Social objects are not stable and fixed but dynamic, as they come into being through acts situated in a certain time and space. Although they need to be recognized by at least two persons to be counted as social objects, there is always some leeway for contextual interpretations – social objects are connected to each other as well as to natural and ideal objects. Their interconnect-edness influences the world. Thus, this approach resembles and resonates with the Actor Network Theory of Bruno Latour (2005), as well as the concept of entanglement by Karen Barad (2007). However, in contrast to Latour's and Barad's thinking, focus is first directed at acts which take place in an everyday context, rather than the heterogeneousness of the actors that produce them. Also, in the conceptualization used by this thesis, humans have an indispensable, even though not sufficient, role in the definition of the social.

In what follows, I will explicate how these premises will be applied in the framework of this thesis.

## 2.2 Formation of institutional ECEC

### 2.2.1 Imaginarities of ECEC

This thesis focuses on the institutional reality of ECEC. Institutional reality refers here to the social object, which is embedded within an organization or a somewhat reified social system – an inscription followed by acts in the context of institutional ECEC. Whereas social reality is not necessarily always linguistic or historical, institutional reality is to some extent always defined with language, it is deliberate and it has a history (Ferraris, 2013). Therefore any examination of it requires tools and concepts that take these aspects into account. Furthermore, since the concept of ECEC would be meaningless without a view of the desirable society embedded in it, this thesis maintains that every act performed by a preschool teacher in the context of ECEC is inscribed in institutional objects forming an imaginary.

The concept of ‘imaginary’ requires more nuanced explanation. It has multiple definitions (Taylor, 2004; Nespor, 2016; Castoriadis, 1997) but here, it is used as a theoretical term inspired by the work of Jessop (2010; 2008) and elaborated with the ontological assumptions of Ferraris (2013). It presumes that all social phenomena are semiotic-material in nature, and thus it aligns with the ontological premises of this thesis explained in Chapter 2.1.

Education is always, one way or another, future-oriented. This is one thing that the concept of imaginary tries to capture. For Jessop (2008; 2010), the concept of ‘imaginary’ means a system that frames an individual’s experience of a complex world and guides collective calculation concerning the future and future actions. The imaginary of ECEC therefore answers questions about what kind of society is desirable, and particularly what the role of ECEC is in the construction of that society. The imaginary of ECEC is a model that selects one of the possible societal roles of ECEC and defines a means to achieve it. Models never reach the complexities of the world – governing tools sometimes have unintended consequences (for example, see Settlage & Meadows, 2002). Thus, the connection between the intended society and the means for achieving it is somewhat imagined.

More simply, preschool teachers and policy-makers have to make decisions that carry long-term consequences, but they cannot fully know what all of these consequences will be. As noted by Nespor (2016, 6), ‘the future is emergent, the unpredictable accomplishment of multiple actors operating with different assumptions and strategies, often unaware of one other, who build, destroy, and reassemble relations in evolving cultural worlds and changing material environments’. This uncertainty cannot be harnessed by better technologies or models. Social processes cannot be forecasted with full accuracy since these forecasts themselves

influence future processes. Through guiding acts, an imaginary therefore not only represents something, but also fabricates reality (Jessop, 2010).

Aligning with and expanding on this definition, in this study, the concept of imaginary is constructed with the help of Ferraris' (2013) ontology of the social explained in Chapter 2.1. It thus means intertwinings between 1) discourses and 2) artefacts – which together have performative power – and are followed by 3) acts. Acts conducted by teachers in the context of ECEC construct a view of desirable society and the ways in which ECEC contributes to building it. Following the aforementioned definition of imaginaries, I will explain what it means in the field of ECEC. I will first explain what is meant by discourses and artefacts of governing ECEC.

Discourse of ECEC here entails a culturally constructed understanding of the societal role of ECEC. Following the definition of Foucault (1972) it is a system of thoughts that is composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action and beliefs that systematically constructs the societal role and meaning of ECEC. According to research following the work of Foucault (1972), governing tools would probably be considered as part of the category of discursive practices. However, in this thesis I want to make a conceptual separation between them in order to better understand and to produce a more nuanced view of the formation of institutional ECEC. Institutionalized material artefacts in which discourse is somewhat reified, govern the environment and actions. Even though a discourse is to some extent reified in those artefacts, they become reinterpreted through other discursive constructions when applied in practice. Thus, even if different countries have chosen to enact similar forms of governance, the functions given to the tools of governance may vary. This is why tools and discourses are at the focus of this thesis. This also means that there is many other interesting material aspects of the formation of every day life of ECEC that are out of the scope of this thesis and thus, are left for future inquiries.

By governance, it is here meant the processes and structures that are created to support and organize the activities of organizations and groups. There are many ways to approach governance in the field of ECEC. In this thesis governance is understood to consist of governance structure and governance mechanisms/tools. A structure of governance often manifests as a public agency or entity – it is about the distribution of work between different institutions in terms of who is responsible for certain governing duties (Kagan & Gomez, 2015). From these perspectives, this study focuses on governance tools.

In this thesis, governance tools are divided into two categories: 1) outcome based tools and 2) norms and resource-based governance. Outcome-based tools pay attention to quantitative or qualitative outcomes of ECEC, such as the number of produced day-care days, learning outcomes or parents' satisfaction with ECEC services. For instance, performance-related pay or ECEC accreditation can be seen as outcome-based tools. Governing by norms and resources focuses on one hand

on providing structural standards for ECEC and on the other hand on providing recourses for helping those standards to be reached. These tools include legal tools (laws and binding regulations), subsidies and information tools.

These tools, together with discourse of the societal role of ECEC (by means of which teachers interpret the particular tool), have an influence on what kinds of acts are conducted. Since the concept of an inscription means a physical trace, in the context of this study inscription could be, for instance, teachers' conceptions of the societal role of ECEC in their neural schemes or ink marks on pieces of paper, (for example, different kinds of written, institutional guidelines provided for teachers that both need to lead to an act) (Ferraris 2013). In order to understand the formation process of institutional ECEC, the transnational aspect of the imaginary of ECEC is unpacked in the next section.

### **2.2.2 Formation of ECEC as transnational intertwinement between imaginaries**

This thesis conceptualizes the constitution of the societal role of ECEC as a transnational intertwinement of imaginaries of ECEC. By transnational, this dissertation study means a complex process extending the definition of something happening 'in between' nation states. Thus, one possible way of understanding the formation of institutional ECEC in local context in transnational era would be the intertwinement of policies across space. This thesis conceptualises policies as social, in particular institutional objects as they become actualised in actions in institutional ECEC. Yet, literature concerning imaginaries does not yet provide all the conceptual tools needed for examining transnational developments in local context. Therefore, there is a need to complement the framework with the literature concerning the transnational relations and interaction.

Earlier research has tackled these policy entanglement processes, yet the information concerning them is scattered across different disciplines, from anthropology to educational policy research. However, this means that there are plenty of illuminating studies which we can build on. The phenomenon and its close 'relatives' have been conceptualized, depending on the focus, field and presuppositions of inquiry, as hybridization (Maroy, 2009), global/local nexus (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012), reception and translation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014), embeddedness (Ozga & Jones, 2006), contingent convergence (Hay, 2004), policy assemblages (McCann & Ward, 2012; Prince, 2012) and domestication (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2013; Rautalin, 2013).

One line of the research on diffusion and policy intertwinement processes has concentrated on the question of how a particular new policy is deliberated – which problem the policy is claimed to resolve or what are the 'selling points' of the policy which seem to appeal to local policy actors (Steiner-Khamsi 2014, p. 155). It is common to use externalisation (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), such as references

to other countries, international organizations, and research, to legitimise policy solutions such as educational reforms. This kind of use of information is described as being ‘evidence-based’ in the sense that reform measures are believed to be established by scientific methods (Waldow, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

The research that has not focused on examining the local adaptation of travelling policies but rather the mechanisms that facilitate the transfer of ideas can inform us when we examine intertwinement of local and international trends. For instance, policy borrowing has itself been noted to serve as a coalition builder between opposing advocacy groups: borrowed policy options may supposedly seem more neutral than the original conflicting local ones (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Thus, policy borrowing may serve as means of reform regardless of the content of original or aimed policy.

According to Steiner-Khamsi (2014), there can be at least three different types of processes in localized policy cases:

- 1) the process in which the original policy is replaced by a borrowed one
- 2) hybridisation between different trends, and
- 3) reinforcement of the original one via deliberation originating from international discourse.

In a process of replacement, original policy is completely replaced by a borrowed one. There are not many examples of this in the research literature, so it is questionable whether these kinds of policy reforms exist in the real world.

In a process of hybridisation, two or more policy trends – often local and international – intertwine. Alasuutari and Alasuutari (2012) give an example of this kind of merging of local and international policies, namely, introducing individual ECEC plans in Finland (2012). They identify this as a process of domestication. They show that although individual ECEC plans were an international trend (supported, for example, by the OECD documents), Finnish policymakers did not simply copy international policies, but rather they were actively engaged in OECD projects to invite international evaluations of Finnish ECEC and to produce both national and comparative data. These data were then used as grounds for ECEC plan reform.

In a process of reinforcement, international discourses and examples are used for strengthening existing national practices. Steiner-Khamsi (2012) and Silova (2006) have illuminated this phenomenon with examples from Mongolia (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012) and Latvia (Silova, 2006). In Mongolia, international outcome-based education discourses merely reinforced existing teacher surveillance systems when developing the teacher salary system (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). In Latvia, the international rhetoric of human rights and multicultural education was used to justify the segregated schooling of Latvian, Russian, and ethnic minority

students. The discourse of human rights and multicultural education were used for defending a Soviet legacy which was still in force (Silova, 2006).

Yet, there have also been critical voices surrounding the increased focus on these kinds of ‘vertical’ movements of policy trends – views of policy approaches travelling or being imported from international to national and local levels, especially among those approaches which could be described as being part of the ontological turn in social theory (discussed in the earlier section of this thesis). Furthermore, among policy intertwinement literature, it is rarely defined whether intertwinement means merging of policy discourses, merging of material means, or both. How is the ontology of policy and the ontology of social defined in these studies? Therefore, it is important to note that there has also been an aim to invite alternative conceptions of space and scale, and scrutinize them closer in order to examine whether they would provide a more nuanced understanding of the intertwinement of imaginaries.

For example, scholarship on ‘policy assemblages’ has provided a nuanced account of such aims with specific emphasis on their complex spatializing dynamics (McCann & Ward, 2012; Prince, 2012). This kind of work on policy mobility draws extensively on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Some scholars argue for flat ontologies of scale (for example, Marston et al., 2005). These scholars highlight the fact that most social entities exist in a wide range of scales and some earlier conceptions of scale remain trapped in a hierarchy and verticality embedded with the problems of micro-macro distinctions and global-local binaries. In other words, the argument is made that policy analysis in education has a history of viewing policy as a top-down process which involves a series of lock-step procedures of development, adoption, implementation and evaluation (Sutton & Levinson 2001). Indeed, also among those socio-material studies which have been called material-semiotics (where Jessop’s (2010) concept of imaginary used in this dissertation study is situated), there are fewer inquiries examining what kinds of everyday actions are produced by imaginaries. Rather, such studies have often concentrated on analyzing institutional texts.

Yet, Mahon (2009) shows how hierarchies still provide important insights. As Mahon (2009, p. 209) states, “there is a multiplicity of diversely structured, overlapping interscalar rule regimes operative in and across diverse policy fields. While these arrangements clearly influence what happens at the local scale, sufficient room often exists for local actors to modify the effects.” Even when examining policies from a scale perspective, we can acknowledge that policy-making not only takes place at certain levels of governance which are taken for granted, but it is multi-layered. Different inscriptions are enacted in the spaces between levels and organizations. Therefore, this thesis conceptualizes the constitution of the societal role of ECEC as a transnational intertwinement of imaginaries of ECEC.

This kind of definition that highlights the complexity of relations and interactions across fields, not only interaction between nation states and interaction between international organizations and nation states is needed since according to Peck (2011, p. 774) policy mobilities and policy assemblages literature has been characterized as a series of “rolling conversations rather than a coherent paradigm”. He calls these approaches as ‘post-transfer’ approaches, insisting that mobility must be understood “as a complex and power-laden process, rather than a straightforward A-to-B movement” (ibid). This means that the mutation and transformation are interconnected with the continuously mobile policies, rather than being something that only happens once policies move beyond their ‘context of origin’.

This so-called post-transfer literature is promising for the following reasons. First, it conceptualizes the development and diffusion of ECEC policy exemplars as a material-discursive process. This aligns with the onto-epistemological premises I have explained in Chapter 2.1. In addition, it provides a framework for addressing how certain policies or practices come to be understood as ‘models’, rather than taking their status for granted. This aligns with the conceptualization of imaginaries that I have explicated in Chapter 2.2.

This thesis thus builds upon the notion of DeLanda (2006): the importance of not to fall into a pit of micro- or macro-reductionism. Even if examining policies from the scale perspective, we can acknowledge that policy-making not only takes place at different levels of governance which are taken for granted. The policy-making process is both multi-layered and multi-actored. Different inscriptions become acted in the spaces between levels and organizations. Building upon these earlier notions, this thesis aims to show that if we add the re-conceptualisation of ‘social’ aligning with new realisms in the way explained earlier in this thesis, it helps us map the process of formation of institutional ECEC in the transnational era in a novel and fruitful way.

Therefore, in this study, I aim to illuminate how the framework developed here can contribute to democratizing policy discussion by providing an understanding of the processes related to the development of institutional ECEC so that it can be opened up and reflected upon.

## **2.3 Trans-paradigmatic research**

Taking into account the variety of societal roles of ECEC and the range of research touching upon the formation of institutional reality it is sensible to utilize and integrate information from different fields of studies. Thus, since the aims and questions posed in this thesis are transdisciplinary in nature, so is this study. Method-

ologically speaking, the division between social, ideal and natural objects explained in an earlier section of this thesis is important when speaking of transdisciplinarity. However, it is just as important to understand that these are analytical – not empirical – categories. That is to say, natural reality is not separate from the social one; there are not, for example, many things in our environment which are not affected by our actions: even the trees surrounding our workplaces and homes may be grown by a gardener, taken care of by the parks department or at least their planting location is affected by socially constructed understandings (see Berger and Luckmann, 1991) about good environment, economy and aesthetics. As noted already in the earlier section of this dissertation, this kind of intertwinement and entanglement has been discussed at length by such philosophers as Deleuze and Quattari (1987) and DeLanda (2006). Therefore, research needs to take account and rigorously discuss the social reality around the phenomena at hand when making the conclusions even though the topic itself would appear to be related to natural or ideal reality. For the same reason, the research related to the ideal and natural world is also relevant for studies concerning social reality.

It is said that transdisciplinary approaches are characterized by a variety of contradictory fundamentals and hypotheses, i.e., underlying presuppositions. From the perspective of neighbouring disciplines, these fundamentals sometimes seem unfounded. According to Howe (1988), it is sometimes stated that for these reasons, different theories with different disciplinary backgrounds are incompatible. This kind of view posits that different research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should not be mixed. This may lead to marginalization and rejection of the hypotheses, the presuppositions and the disciplines themselves. This is problematic particularly with studies situated somewhere between different fields, as is the case with ECEC research.

When we closely examine the aforementioned discussion of incompatibility discussion, we can conclude that it is hard to find original written texts which argue that different paradigms would not be compatible. These arguments often lead to the writings of Guba (1990; see Howe, 1988), even though on many occasions he has explained that he does think that it is possible to combine different paradigms (for example, see Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011). Since I have encountered the incompatible thesis many times during my doctoral study process in informal discussions, I feel that regardless of whether there actually are any proponents of it, it is useful to address it here.

This thesis maintains that different disciplines, methodologies or paradigms are not incompatible. That does not mean that they should or could be combined arbitrarily. Different paradigms utilizing different methodologies differ in terms of their object of the study – is the object of the study part of the ideal, natural or social realm of objects or does it entail all of them? Moreover, paradigms differ in terms of the aim (especially in relation to theory) – is the aim to find the patterns, falsify a theory, try to understand complexities that cannot be reached by

models or question the way we are perceiving the world? Rather than arbitrarily combining information here and there, there is a need to take the different ontological entities of reality seriously by using proper methodologies to examine these different aspects and by using a sufficient framework which includes these different ontological entities, to discuss the results rigorously. Even though the object of a study may represent only one category of ontological entities, the conclusions always require more holistic approach (i.e., discussing the results of – or the lack of – studies dealing with other categories of ontological entities related to the subject) since it is not possible to separate these different ontological entities in a real world. They are always interconnected. This kind of transparadigm concerns the dynamics catalysed by the action of several ontological entities at once: it aims to determine the dynamics between natural, ideal and social objects. The discovery of these dynamics necessarily passes through disciplinary knowledge.

Transparadigmatic research is informed by paradigmatic research; in turn, paradigmatic research is clarified by transparadigmatic knowledge in a new, (sometimes) fruitful way. In this sense, paradigmatic and transparadigmatic research as well as disciplinary and transdisciplinary research, are complementary rather than exclusive (see also Miller et al., 2008). It is all about feeling responsible about aiming to understand the research done in other fields of studies with other methodologies and interpreting and re-interpreting the results in relation to a larger framework in order to have a holistic picture.

In summary, this dissertation maintains that even if policy and governance are practices of defining reality and guiding behaviour and should be examined with the help of methodologies that succeed in their role in the formation of reality it does not mean that other types of research could be ignored. In addition, although it is acknowledged that models never reach the complexities of social phenomena, in this thesis they are not considered to be without use but rather as a good entry point for discussion. Therefore, the study aims not only to describe the complex relations within the social, as many socio-material studies do in order to highlight the complexity of social reality (see, for example Law, 2009), but also to better understand its formation. More simply, in this study, I do not avoid presenting models as a result of the study but at the same time I remind that they can't be used for predicting future processes and the partiality of them needs to be taken into account when making conclusions based on them: they are not natural nor ideal objects, but instead, they belong to the category of social objects.

In what follows, I will consider how ethnography of institutions can be a practice of questioning dominant definitions and re-guiding or de-inscribing behaviour (see also Levinson, Sutton & Winstead, 2009) in order to address the research task of this study.

## 2.4 Inquiry

All of the methods used in this thesis are first and foremost aimed at serving the process of thinking. That is to say, contrary to the hypothetico-deductive research model where the researcher generates data to test the hypothesis, this study uses data and methods in order to understand the formation of institutional ECEC in a nuanced way. It is also important to note that the data generation and analysis phases of the research are therefore not entirely separate stages, but rather that reflection happens throughout the data generation process, together with the participants and literature (see also Pyyry, 2014).

This study comprises four phases or sub-studies, which are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Substudies of the thesis

<b>Study</b>	<b>Policy level on the focus of analysis</b>	<b>Questions</b> (the objective the question is related to)
Article 1 Paananen, M., Kumpulainen, K., & Lipponen, L. (2015). Quality drift within a narrative of investment in early childhood education. <i>European Early Childhood Education Research Journal</i> , 23(5), 690-705.	International	What kinds of combinations of governing tools and ideas of societal roles can be found in international policy concerning ECEC? (Objective 1)
Article 2 Paananen, M., Lipponen, L., & Kumpulainen, K. (2015). Hybridisation or ousterisation? The case of local accountability policy in Finnish early childhood education. <i>European Educational Research Journal</i> , 14(5), 395-417.	National & Municipal	What kinds of combinations of governing tools and ideas of societal roles can be found in Finnish policy concerning ECEC? (Objective 1)  How can we theoretically portray the mechanisms through which imaginaries become institutionalized over other imaginaries in local policies? (Objective 3)
Article 3 Paananen, M. (submitted). The imaginaries that survived: Societal roles of early childhood education in an era of intensification. (Submitted to <i>Global Studies of Childhood</i> ).	Everyday life	What kinds of combinations of governing tools and ideas of societal roles govern preschool life in Finland? (Objective 1)  What kinds of practices these different possible combinations produce in every day life of preschool in Finland? (Objective 2)  How can we theoretically portray the mechanisms through which imaginaries become institutionalized over other imaginaries? (Objective 3)
Article 4 Paananen, M. & Lipponen, L. (in press). Pedagogical documentation as a lens for equality. <i>Early Child Development and Care</i> .	Everyday life	To what extent governance tools formulated by the teachers themselves can foster the imaginary of building shared social space and the imaginary of equity and equality? (Objective 3)

### **2.4.1 Mapping the national and transnational context of ECEC**

In order to better understand the formation of ECEC in a local context and to follow the perspective of scale, the national and transnational contexts of ECEC needed to be mapped. Doing this helps to show, how the data concerning international, national and local-level policies used in this study complements the existing knowledge.

According to Mahon (2016), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) like the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Aga Khan Foundation, Save the Children, the Christian Children's Fund, the Soros Foundation, and I would add, the World Organisation of Early Childhood Education have helped to draw global attention to the importance of ECEC. In this thesis, to provide transnational context for local enacted policies, I focused on international governmental organisations for a couple of reasons. First, it has been argued that these organisations have influenced national-level policymaking in other fields of education policies (Rinne & Ozga, 2011). Secondly, these organizations form a quite special epistemic community. They have engaged experts from the field of ECEC from different parts of the world and state officials from different countries. As Finland is a member of the European Union (EU), the Organization of Economy, Culture and Development (OECD) and the United Nations, these are the most likely to give us a picture of the international trends which are influencing Finland's ECEC policy development. However this issue has been discussed in terms of the World Bank as well.

National ECEC policy context has previously been outlined by Välimäki (1998), Onnismaa (2010), Onnismaa & Kalliala (2010), Strandell (2012) and Karila (2012). Their studies provide a basis for further examinations. Yet, the current literature is lacking in a wide examination of the discursive features of ECEC policy in Finland. This was the gap which this dissertation needed to address in order to contextualize local enacted policies. This was done in Article II.

### **2.4.2 Selecting a local context for the study**

The selection of cases for this study was supported by Patton's (1990) principles of purposeful sampling. In the municipality selected for this study, a specific tool was developed to be used for governing ECEC, namely, a productivity matrix. This case appeared to be interesting, since in preliminary examinations it seemed to include an example of an intertwinement of national and international trends. The case documents included multiple discourses, which were also present in national traditions and international documents. The case documents used the con-

cepts of ‘quality ECEC’ as a child-centred rationale, which is widely used in international ECEC discourse (Moss and Dahlberg, 2008) but nearly non-existent in Finnish ECEC policy discourse (Alila, 2013); ‘national economy’ and ‘efficiency’, representing economic rationales present in both international and national ECEC policy discourses; and ‘well-being’ highlighted in Nordic ECEC tradition (see for example Mahon et al., 2012). Since earlier literature supported the idea that national responses to policy paradigms which are not characteristic of the national tradition are dynamic and unpredictable, I believed that the case was worth examining.

The development and implementation of the matrix have been well documented, since it was part of a doctoral study conducted at Tampere University of Technology (Jääskeläinen, 2010). Although this type of governing tool has not been typical in Finnish ECEC policies, the use of such arrangements is increasing in Finnish municipalities. At the time of writing this thesis, at least two seminars attended by dozens of municipalities have been held, introducing similar kinds of measurement systems and arrangements.

The municipality whose ECEC policy is under examination in this thesis is a large municipality in Finland. In the municipality, there are few hundreds of public preschools. Each of them has its own curriculum patterned after the ECEC curriculum of the municipality. The municipality’s curriculum sets five general learning aims: 1) learning to solve problems, 2) learning to use different materials and tools, 3) learning about the environment and learning skills for life, 4) becoming embedded in Finnish culture and the local community and 5) adopting the basics of civilised and compassionate behaviour and agency. Overall, it aligns with the Nordic curriculum tradition, being holistic and open and not setting specific and detailed rationales (see Dahlberg & Moss, 2004). Preschool teachers are said to be responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating the curriculum. There is no external evaluation system or quality-rating scale for the content of ECEC.

In addition to curricula, the municipality uses information governance in a form of in-service training. The Department of ECEC of the municipality reported that in 2014 it provided 130 in-service training events, which a total 4 840 members of staff participated in. These events concerned, for example, peer mentoring, pedagogy in different kinds of environments, play, and physical activities in ECEC.

In addition, the municipality governs ECEC by numbers. In 2007, representatives of the municipality’s central administration asked researchers from Tampere University of Technology to provide external expertise for further development of their productivity measurement methods. As a result of this collaboration, which extended until 2010, a productivity matrix was developed.

The matrix measures the price of day-care per child per day, child-staff ratio, utilisation rate, the proportion of children in need of teaching of Finnish as a second language, the proportion of staff sick leaves, and parental satisfaction. In 2014, the municipality introduced collective performance-related pay related to the matrix. Regarding its criteria, 80% was based on the matrix for productivity and 20% was based on so-called ‘qualitative criteria’. Quality criteria for the year 2014 were related to service guidance, for example. Non-recurring additional pay was granted for every individual staff member in the ECEC district if the district collectively reached the performance criteria. Thus, the matrix was used as a tool for gathering information on the structure of the costs of ECEC, but also a tool for new managerial types of governing – as outcome based governance.

### **2.4.3 Data sources**

The data of this thesis consist of multiple parts. The researcher’s observations and observation diaries written by participants, the purpose of which were to ‘generate descriptions of what people do in their everyday lives’ (DeVault & McCoy, 2002: 755), formed the entry level-data (Campbell & Gregor, 2002) of this study (Article III). Table 2 summarises the data used in this thesis.

**Table 2.** Summary of the data used in this thesis

Level	Data	Main focus	Size or other specification	Article
International	<i>OECD documents: Starting Strong I, Starting Strong II, Starting Strong III</i>	Discourses of ECEC	1024 pages	I
National	<i>Government bills and parliament responses concerning ECEC legislation</i>	Discourses of ECEC	n = 94	II
Municipal	<i>Transcribed interviews of officials involved in designing governing device</i>	Discourses of ECEC and technical aspects of governing instrument	n = 4, n = 64 pages	II
	Local policy documents	The role of governing instruments	446 pages	II
Preschools	Observational field notes	Acts conducted, the use of governing instruments (discourses of ECEC)	3 notebooks	III & IV
	Individual ECE plans of children	Discourses of ECEC, technical aspects of governing instrument	n = 118	III & IV
	Reports of preschool teachers' work day	Acts conducted	13 diaries, 60 pages in total	III & IV
	<i>Transcribed interviews of preschool teachers</i>	Discourses of ECEC, the use and the role of governing instruments	n = 13, 17 h 20 min audio-recorded data	III & IV

Primary data are italicized

Since I defined imaginaries as intertwining between discourses and governance tools which lead to an act, an act is the entry point for examining the formation of institutional ECEC. It was therefore indispensable to have a picture of actual acts performed in preschool settings. In what follows, I will explain what kinds of data were generated by observations conducted by participants and by participant observation regarding the every day life of preschools. Then I will explain what kinds of data were used for examining governing tools and discourses and how these data were selected and generated.

### ***Teachers' observation diaries***

Diaries – both traditional written ones and ones utilizing new technology – have been used earlier, for example, for the purpose of reflection on teaching, learning and attitudes (Ibarreta & McLeod, 2004; Scanlan, Care, & Udod, 2002). The participant is considered both the observer and informant. In this corpus of methodological literature, these types of data are called solicited diaries (see also Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Solicited diaries have a different focus than that of unsolicited, personal diaries. Solicited diaries are written with the researcher in mind (Elliott, 1997). Therefore, they offer good material for examining social objects.

The 13 teachers who volunteered to participate in the study conducted self-documentation in May 2014. They were asked to note in detail what they did during the day and who else was present (adults and children) in different situations. They were advised to write short notes during the day and complete the diary right after the work day was over. They were informed that they could also take pictures during the day, if they wished, but no one chose to do so.

The weekday for doing the self-observation was selected for each teacher beforehand, but they were asked to set the exact date. The weekday was selected beforehand because of the tendency for less children to be present in child groups, on average, on Fridays and Mondays. I wanted to make sure that these days were not overrepresented or under-represented. The teachers were advised to pick the date they would expect to be the most ordinary. They were asked not to change that date unless they unexpectedly, for example due to a sick leave, did not work then. In this regard, the sampling method represented mixed purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990).

Observation is a very typical activity in Finnish preschools and all of the preschool teachers had conducted observation activities before. Yet, teachers were more experienced at observing the activities of children than the activities of teachers. Some of the teachers mentioned some complications related to observation, such as forgetting their pen and paper when going outdoors or children wondering what was going on when the teacher took notes. All in all, however, teachers reported that they did not feel that making solicited diaries was too difficult.

Each teacher produced 3–8 pages of text, for a total number of 60 pages. Diaries described teachers' actions in everyday activities, their conversations with children, parents, staff members and other partners in cooperation (such as special education teachers or speech therapists), and some special events and activities, such as field trips or spring festival rehearsals. Most typically, the diary included both indoor and outdoor activities where the teacher or another staff member was involved with children, transitions, lunch and planning, or administrative activities. Teachers described both situations where they seemed to be satisfied with their actions and situations which they critically reflected later on. A typical description of the working day compiled of the real examples of recurrent themes identified from the diaries can be found in Appendix 2. Typical story is given as

an example, rather than one of the diaries as such, in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and to give a picture of the preschool teacher's working day.

### ***Participant observation***

To better understand the institutional context of ECEC and to expand on the data produced by participant teachers, the observation data were generated by the researcher. The observation data focused on a four-month period of time at a small public preschool of approximately 40 children from May to October 2014. The observation was conducted in a group of 3–5-year-old children and four adults. The group became the object of this study via a key person whom I knew beforehand and who worked in the group. Two of the group's staff members worked as preschool teachers. The other two were nursery nurses with ISCED Level 3 qualification. Three of the children needed special support. The total group size altered between 26–28 children during the observation period. A group assistant joined the team in August to provide support for the children with special needs.

Consent to conduct the study was requested from the children's parents, the staff members and municipality. Both the children and the staff members welcomed me warmly.

During the observation phase, I visited the group approximately twice a week at the beginning and once every two weeks at the end of the observation phase, usually spending 3–4 hours in the morning and early afternoon. My role there could be described as participant observation. I wrote field notes during the day and transcribed them during the same or the next day. Some of the children were curious about me, but neither adults nor children really seemed to be surprised or distracted by my presence. Children learned quite soon to connect me to my notebook and writing notes, and sometimes they asked the teachers whether the lady who wrote notes would be coming tomorrow. They also wondered whether I wrote notes elsewhere – for example, at my work at the university.

Although the adults in the group were not familiar with someone else documenting their daily working life, it did not seem to have a significant influence on their behaviour. They expressed that they themselves were quite surprised that they were not bothered by my presence. I also had many discussions with the teachers about planned and previous activities, as well as my role in the group, and they reflected openly their practices and the practices of ECEC in general. These observations and discussions with the staff members were used both to better understand the things that preschool teachers talked about during the interviews and to help ask specific questions, as well as to complement discoveries which were made.

There are a plethora of studies aiming to understand the life of children in institutions and the meanings that children themselves give to their life circumstances and experiences (i.e., Strandell, 1994; Törrönen, 1999; Hilppö, 2016). For instance, the ways in which children manifest themselves as agents in ECEC

(Lehtinen, 2000; Rutanen, 2007a; Rutanen, 2012; Hilppö, 2016) and children's play (Kalliala, 1999; Rutanen, 2007b) have been studied ethnographically in Finnish context. Ethnographic research has also been conducted in Finland from feminist and post-structuralist perspectives focusing on the production of difference and normality in terms of questions such as gender and nationality in education (Lappalainen, 2004; Lappalainen, 2006) and the multifold nature of bodily and material environment, which construct children's identity or every day experiences (Paju, 2013; Kuukka, 2015; Vuorisalo, 2013). This thesis shares many similarities with these studies in terms of entry-level data collection and field-work. The basic ambition of all of these approaches is to explore social dynamics in a specific societal context, getting to know a practice from the inside and studying social-material interactions, rather than solemnly examining individual behaviour or institutional structures (Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Holland & Lave, 2001).

Literature on participant observation (e.g. Spradley, 1980) divides the researcher's participation into different degrees of involvement: 1) passive, 2) active, 3) moderate, and 4) complete participation. For the purpose of this dissertation, instead of categorizing my degree of involvement it might be more meaningful to note how differences in the investigated practices required me to vary my degree of participation according to the practice in which I was participating. This drift between different levels of participation helped me address the problem I was approaching. Since the researcher's participation does not have the power to instantly and directly change the socio-political context of ECEC, my presence and participation was not an issue during the data generation. When conducting participant observation, my position varied – sometimes I participated with the children, and sometimes I observed from a distance.

All in all, the observation data complement the diaries produced by participant teachers. It could be considered as a mixture of data and investigator triangulation, since both researcher and participant teachers participated in the generation of observation data to get a nuanced picture of the every-day life of preschools (see Denzin, 1989; Flick, 2017).

### ***Document data***

The theoretical and methodological starting point of this dissertation aims to help scrutinizing how institutional reality is constructed in discursive-material practices, namely, how various heterogeneous discursive-artifactual entities influence the ways in which we conceive of reality. Therefore, I needed to map discursive-artefactual context for institutional ECEC both internationally, nationally and in particular local case. Document data was used for mapping this discursive-artifactual context – namely inscriptions of ECEC.

*Individual ECEC plans*

All of the teacher participants were asked to deliver individual ECEC plans of the children in their group. The plan aims to take account of the child's individual needs and opinions and the parent's views in arranging the child's ECEC. The plan includes an agreement on the most important aims of ECEC of the particular child, how the individual needs are taken into account in the everyday life of preschool, and an evaluation of how earlier aims have been met. The plan is updated once or twice a year unless there is a need for more frequent discussions concerning the child's needs or development. The parents' written consent for using these documents as research data was requested.

*Municipal documents*

Since the study paid close attention to the instruments governing teachers work, I attended the weekly meetings of the group where I generated the ethnographic data when it could be easily arranged, and I collected the minutes of the meetings, plans created and instructions provided for the staff. These documents were further discussed with a teacher of the group.

Also, documents related to the governance tool developed in the municipality (i.e. the measurement device), were used as additional data: a research report on the project by the researcher involved in the development work, as well as the measurement device (i.e. the productivity matrix) and the documents we received from the interviewees and from Internet searches related to the case. In total, 446 pages of text were included in this data source.

*National documents*

In order to map national policy discourse, government bills (n=47) and parliament responses (n=47) concerning institutional child care and ECEC from 1973 to 2014 were used as data. The examination began from the first formulation of the Act on Children's Day Care (1973), since this was the first law covering the whole of institutional ECEC in Finland. Relevant documents were identified by using Parliament's database search. The search term used was 'lasten päivähoidto' ('child care'). There were also documents not generated from this search that were also added to the sample. These documents were identified from earlier historical overviews concerning Finnish ECEC (Alila, 2013; Onnismaa, 2010; Välimäki, 1998). They concerned qualification requirements of child care centre workers.

*International documents*

The bulk of the international policy data of this research is based on three documents published by the OECD between 2001 and 2012. Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD, 2001), Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD, 2006) and Starting Strong III: A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care (OECD, 2012) form the data set

of this study. From now on, I will refer to these as Starting Strong I, Starting Strong II and Starting Strong III.

The first two documents, Starting Strong I and Starting Strong II, report on the project Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Policy, which was launched by the OECD's Education Policy Committee in March of 1998. The impetus for the project was the 1996 ministerial meeting on Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All, in which education ministers assigned a high priority to the goal of improving access to and quality in ECE. From the perspective of the OECD Education Policy Committee, the rationales for the project were to strengthen the foundations for lifelong learning, provide a fair start in life for all children, and contribute to educational equity and social integration (OECD 2006). Starting Strong III, which is part of the project 'Encouraging Quality in ECEC', was also launched by the OECD Education Policy Committee, and it capitalized on the findings presented in Starting Strong I and II.

The documents represent the core of ECEC policy in the Global North for two reasons. First, they have a quite special epistemic community related to them: the Education Directorate has engaged outside ECEC experts for the project. In addition, a large number of countries, their state officials and experts of ECEC have contributed to the documents. Secondly, the documents cover the entire timeframe of the OECD's Starting Strong (Early Childhood Education and Care) Networks quality projects. The documents examined in this thesis document the work of the OECD's Starting Strong (ECEC) Network, which operates with the mandate of the OECD's Education Policy Committee. While ECEC is also dealt with in other documents commissioned by the OECD (for example, the Babies and Bosses series by the Employment and Training division of the OECD (OECD, 2007)), only Starting Strong documents I–III fall within the rubric of the Early Childhood Education and Care Network. The aim of the network is to support the development of approaches and good practices in the field of ECEC policy in the participating countries and to assist them in developing effective and efficient policies for education and learning to meet individual, social, cultural and economic objectives (Starting Strong Network, 2012).

### ***Document-aided interviews***

Document-aided interviews were used when generating preschool level and municipal-level data. This method was used to connect documents and observation data. Document-aided interviews were conducted to provoke arguments, discussion and reflection on the societal roles of ECEC and on mundane everyday practices which may have otherwise escaped notice. Interviews 'elicited' or 'facilitated' by material have been used, for example, in participatory research with children using photos (Hilppö, 2016) and with youth using mental maps (Pyyry, 2015) or photos (Janhonen, 2016; Pyyry, 2015).

With teachers, the documents used for aiding the interviews were one-work day self-reports – the diaries made by preschool teachers themselves, the individual ECEC plans of the children in their child group, and the ECEC plans of the preschool they worked in. Examination of the teachers' work (that is, first-level data), also brings the institution into view (Smith, 2006). The interest of this thesis was to examine to what extent governing instruments intertwined with the discourses concerning the societal role of ECEC participated in the formation of the institutional reality of ECEC. Thus, the diaries and the education plans were discussed with the participant teachers. The interviews with the participant teachers took place individually, shortly after they had sent the diaries.

Two test interviews were conducted. Based on these interviews, I decided that it was both useful and ethical to provide reflection questions for interviewees beforehand. By doing that I aimed to provide sufficient information about what to expect to prevent the interviewees from feeling intimidated or judged prior, during or after the interview (for more information concerning the ethics of interviewing to unpack cultural constructions see Hammersley, 2014). Thus, prior to the interview sessions but after they had conducted observations and delivered the diary, the teachers were asked to reflect on the diaries with the following questions in mind: Why was each act conducted? Was it based on some kind of document, guideline or policy, or due to other reasons? The first question helped to map the discursive features directing meaning-making while the second focused more on the governing arrangements guiding the decisions of preschool teachers. To examine the interplay between imaginaries, the teachers were also asked to reflect on the acts reported in the diaries in terms of whether some activity replaced, interrupted or prevented another activity. They were also asked to reflect on individual ECEC plans and unit curricula with a focus on the questions on to what extent the plans were carried out during the year and what had hindered or aided their execution. In addition, they reflected on situations where they felt that two (or more) different goals set for ECEC were in conflict in their work and how the situation was resolved. The themes discussed with the teachers are provided in Appendix 3.

The key societal roles of ECEC identified from the earlier literature and the researcher's observations were provided to the preschool teachers during or before the sessions. Then, with the help of the framework, the diaries and plans were re-examined in cooperation with the participant and a researcher in the interview situation (see also Wagner, 2011). Participants were reminded that the list of key societal roles provided for them was not comprehensive so it was possible to refer to more than a one societal role of ECEC when framing the acts and plans. They utilized that opportunity and brought up issues not listed beforehand, and they felt free to say that they didn't think it was relevant for certain actions. Although the use of pre-selected conceptual schemes has sometimes been avoided since it may

cause retrospective rationalizations of action, they are not considered here as artefactual responses – this kind of retrospective deliberation also happens within the discourses surrounding ECEC. This kind of retrospective rationalization arrives at the manners of justification which are considered valid, and thus exposes the discursive component of imaginaries.

The plans and especially the diaries inspired a lot of discussion. Documents related to one's everyday life affect us, and they also had performative power in the interviews. During the sessions, my role as a researcher was to centre the discussion on the different societal roles of ECEC and ask clarifying questions, especially if there was a moment of hesitation or if I wasn't quite sure if my interpretation of the participants' expression did justice to it.

The document-aided interviews of the participant teachers were recorded. The lengths of these sessions varied from 52 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. In all, they lasted 17 hours and 20 minutes. The audio files were transcribed verbatim.

The document-aided interviews were also used for generating data concerning the municipal's governing tool – the matrix for productivity – which had a notable role in teachers' every-day life. For a better understanding of the process in which this new type of governing tool enters into the ECEC sector, interviews with all the members I was able to contact from the development team involved in the development process — a researcher, a preschool manager, a district manager and one of the accounting experts — constitute the data of the municipal level of this study. The opinions of two members of the development team are not included in the data, since my attempts to contact them were not successful. The interviews took place at the workplaces of the interviewees. The themes of the interview concerned the aim and development process of the matrix, enabling factors for implementing the matrix, definitions of key concepts such as productivity and quality, and how they were manifested in the matrix and the development work (Appendix 4). The interviewees were advised to browse material such as e-mails, hand-outs and memos concerning the development work beforehand and to keep them at hand as reminders of what they felt was important to share. If an interviewee had any materials with them, they were used in joint reflections during the interview (see also Wagner, 2011). Three of the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, while one was documented based on notes written during and immediately after the interview. The duration of these thematic interviews varied from 55 to 90 minutes. All of the interviewees received information on the research topic. The interviewees also had access to and the opportunity to comment on the interpretations, translations of the excerpts selected from the interview data, and results of this sub-study.

## 2.4.4 Analysis

### ***First phase: entry to the data***

Since the premises I applied here look at language use, not only from the viewpoint of meaning (i.e. how signs designate things), but also from the viewpoint of action (i.e. how signs also form the reality in which they are used), it is crucial to approach imaginaries from the viewpoint of actual practices. Therefore, the story of analysis needs to begin from the viewpoint of actual practices in preschool. Therefore, the first phase of the analysis this thesis is based on focused on the every day life of preschool (Article III). In particular, the analysis focused on acts by preschool teachers, given that the definition of institutional ECEC in this study is that it is an act inscribed in imaginaries of ECEC. The data utilized in this phase included the preschool teachers' diaries, document-aided interviews of the teachers, and the researcher's observations. The acts reported in the diaries written by preschool teachers were selected for further examination. These acts were reflected on with the help of the researcher's observation data for providing a thick understanding of the every day life of preschool.

Entry-level analysis leads to what is conceptualized here as second-level analysis, such as analysis of discourses and governing tools (Campbell & Gregor, 2002) in order to identify the imaginaries shaping our social life. The second-level analysis is described in the next section.

### ***Second phase – analysis of governing tools and discourses***

The second phase of the analysis allowed return to a cultural-political context, especially national, historical inscriptions and international inscriptions of ECEC, in order to understand the formation of everyday life (Article I & Article II). There are several types of data used in this phase of the doctoral study: document-aided interviews (with teacher's and officials), the researcher's observations and municipal, national and international documentation.

To find out what kinds of the imaginaries were constituted, the data were scrutinized in terms of what kinds of inscriptions (i.e. a combination of governance tools and discourses) the acts reported by kindergarten teachers were related to. To be more precise, it was examined, how the participants deliberated on their acts (e.g. Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013), and what kinds of material arrangements and governing instruments, if any, were related to these acts. All excerpts featuring such deliberations were selected for further examination.

To examine the transnational aspect of imaginaries, inscriptions of ECEC in national (Article II) and international (Article I) needed to be mapped. Discourse analysis played an important role in this phase of the dissertation study, particularly in terms of identifying ways of perceiving the societal roles of ECEC.

The purpose of discourse analysis is not to reveal the hidden truths 'behind' discourse. Rather, analysis begins from the premise that nothing social is outside

of texts (Ferraris, 2013). Accordingly, when conducting discourse analysis, my goal was not to differentiate between true and false statements, but instead to “work with what has actually been said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21). Specifically, I have applied analytical tools influenced by Fairclough’s and Fairclough’s (2013) thinking to the question of which presuppositions are in line with Jessop’s concept of imaginary (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2002).

The emphasis in this phase of the study was on the kinds of claims that these texts (including documents and interviews) employ in order to constitute a common understanding of the societal role of ECEC. In Articles I and II that examined the international and national policy documents for the constructions of the societal roles of ECEC, the main method applied was Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2013) notion of practical argument. I asked what discourses were used to justify the policy measures proposed and how they were connected to different kinds and types of governance tools. Finally, imaginaries identified from the preschool context were reflected with the inscriptions identified in national and international contexts. In that way, the potential transnational nature of imaginaries could be uncovered.

### ***Third phase - Interplay between imaginaries***

For examining the interplay between imaginaries, the episodes where teachers described conflicting imaginaries were selected, and the following question was posed: What occurred in these conflict situations, and in particular, which imaginary survived? The imaginaries that survived and those which faded in the conflict situations were juxtaposed with all imaginaries identified in the data. It was investigated, whether any patterns could be found in the interplay between the different imaginaries.

Also, the intertwining between inscriptions was analysed in local (Article II) context. I was particularly interested in finding out how the documents and interviewees used policy buzzwords when defending their positions, political agendas or practical decision making. In addition, I examined the premises their arguments were built on. By revealing the underlying premises of the argumentation, one is able to reveal the prevalent values of the society. That is, speakers routinely appeal to premises or values that they assume to be shared by the audience. Therefore, it was expedient to ask how the societal role of ECEC was viewed in the documents and interviews. Examples of the use of these analytical tools can be found in Articles I–III. By foregrounding the tacit premises of the rhetoric, in line with Foucault’s (1972) thinking, I also aimed to shed light on in what ways (and why) certain buzzwords and governance tools had a bridging function for the local discourse on education policy.

## ***Methodological triangulation***

### *Researcher's positionality*

Being attached to social and cultural approaches to policy studies, my approach also considers my own positionality as a researcher, specifically both as an insider having worked as a preschool teacher myself and an outsider dependent on the cooperation of the people I engaged with. Both the interviews with officials and the observation in the field were complex and contested social encounters were not simply opportunities to exchange information but comprising power relations and other social objects.

This notion was also utilized when triangulating the analysis with the help of my own observation data. It is important to note that the conditions of the observer when taking part reveal something about the particular practice (see also Højholt & Kousholt, 2014). These conditions and dilemmas provide an entry point to the ruling relations within the institution: being open for situations that arise in the field strengthens the notions made when analyzing primary data in terms of the relation between every day practices and the socio-political context they are situated in.

### *Quantitative analysis*

When examining the potential usefulness of using governance tools created by teachers themselves, in this case, the individual ECEC plans of the children, quantitative examination was used. Thus, it served as a mean for triangulation. First, descriptive analyses were conducted. To examine equality in terms of gender and the need for special care, the means of the number of agreements in which a child's perspective was directly referenced were compared among groups with the Mann-Whitney U -test. Nonparametric tests were conducted since the variables were not normally distributed.

## **2.4.5 Research ethics**

This research project followed the ethical standards of scientific research set forth by the University of Helsinki and the ethical principles of research in the humanities and the social and behavioural sciences, provided by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2009). The principles applied in the research project include that participation in empirical studies was voluntary for all children, teachers and officials.

In addition, the official permission for the study was applied from the city administration. Parents, teachers and officials were informed of the aims and procedures of the study, and they were informed about the possibility of being able to suspend their participation. Parental consent was asked for all children.

The issue of informed consent of children is not a simple one (see, for example, Abebe & Bessell, 2014). In the preschool where I observed the children, I told children that I was doing research about what happens at preschool – what the adults and the children were doing during their daily life at preschool. I also told that I would write some notes so that I could better remember everything that I saw there and that they could say if they did not want me to take notes on what they were doing. If I noticed a need for privacy or felt that my presence interrupted something, I decided not to take any notes or I left the situation. This happened a couple of times during my fieldwork.

Reality is more complex than these common ethical procedures. For example, a couple of children's parents did not give me permission to observe their child so I did not make any notes specifically focusing on them, nor have I included these children in any of my empirical analyses. From the point of view of my data gathering, I did not find the fact that I could not collect data from these children to be problematic. However, for one particular child the situation was sometimes confusing. She/he often asked me to come to see what s/he was doing and was seemingly unhappy if I moved on following what happened somewhere else. In these cases, I stopped to listen to what s/he was saying and followed her/his play for a while without taking any notes.

I have tried to write so that the children and teachers that I am writing about cannot be identified. I have not used the participants' real names. However, the interviews with the officials involved in the development work of the governing tool (Article II) cannot be fully anonymized. This was discussed with the participants before the interview. Nevertheless, I haven't used their names or other identification information unnecessarily.

Respecting the research participants and their work has been an important principle of this research more generally. The wishes of the research participants concerning their participation were respected: once the recording of an interview was stopped when an interviewee felt uncomfortable speaking about certain matters on tape. Also, once I deleted a document which participant had send by e-mail when the participant later said that s/he had not meant to send that particular document to me.

Furthermore, it is not unimportant what and how the researcher writes about the practices and contexts to which she has been invited. However, there is also an ethical demand to be critical about the phenomena at hand and truthful concerning observed issues. Therefore, even when writing critically about practices, I have tried to do it in such way that it respects the participants involved in the research process. I have tried to treat their work with respect – the focus of this study is not to evaluate their work which is also influenced by institutional features and multiple expectations surrounding it. In addition, I have aimed at accuracy in presenting, and evaluating the research results. That is what I aim to do in the next section of this thesis.

### 3 FORMATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ECEC

This section brings together the results from the sub-publications of this thesis and connects them with the earlier literature. It aims to draw overarching conclusions from the results of Articles I—IV and earlier studies. Since this study can be seen as having multimethod design, it uses interpretive integration. This means integration of the results of different sets of data and analysis procedures with the help of a cohesive theoretical understanding (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Thus, this section is built to further understanding of the role of the scale and the literature on intertwinement of policies introduced in earlier following the idea of transparadigmatic research. First and foremost, it examines and interprets the earlier literature and the result of the studies of this thesis from the perspective of imaginaries. The results of the first two articles are seen as enhancing an understanding of the results of Articles III & IV.

The focus of this section is on the imaginaries of ECEC. Using the perspective of scale (Keil & Mahon, 2009), I will first tackle the research objective concerning the existing inscriptions of ECEC. Specifically, I will concentrate on international, national and local governance practices and presuppositions of the societal role of ECEC. This examination provides a context for further examining the local formation process of institutional ECEC and addresses the objective 1. Then I will explain how these governing practices and presuppositions are related in forming imaginaries of ECEC. This addresses the objective 2: I will examine how the combinations identified become actualized in the everyday life of preschool.

The second part of this section, Chapter 3.2, aims to understand the transformation of imaginaries. It addresses the objective 3: it examines the processes and mechanisms through which some societal roles of ECEC become institutionalized over other societal roles of ECEC. It first introduces four different kinds of transformation processes, two of which include intertwinement of imaginaries. It presents the formation of local imaginaries of ECEC being a transnational process involving both vertical and horizontal movements. Secondly, it introduces a three-fold process of intertwinement and mutation of imaginaries that consists of discursive-material elements.

#### 3.1 The formation of ECEC in the transnational era

Increasing interconnectedness across nation states in terms of the flow of capital has led to strong discourse concerning the limiting role of the state leading to the

race to the bottom – minimizing regulation and social security and moving the responsibility of organizing public services to private companies. Hence, international organisations have taken the role of promoting these social investments (Deacon, 2007). It has been argued that international organisations indeed influence national governments and policies (Rinne & Ozga, 2011). Therefore, there is first a need to examine what different international organisations mean by these investments and what kinds of policies and governance they promote. This examination provides a context for further examining the local formation process of institutional ECEC.

### **3.1.1 International inscriptions of ECEC**

This section maps both the discourses on the societal role of ECEC and trends of governance in international policy. It consists of the results of Article I and the earlier literature on the topic. The international policies of ECEC have already been dealt with by many researchers, for example Moss (2007), Mahon (2002; 2010) and Penn (2011a). In this section, the results of Article I will be reflected in light of this earlier literature. Integration is done with the help of the conceptualization of institutional reality introduced in Chapter 2.2.1. Since this section does not include an analysis of acts, we are dealing with inscriptions of ECEC. Thus, by integrating the results of Article I and the earlier literature, discourses on the societal roles of ECEC and governance practices of ECEC internationally, this section introduces international inscriptions of institutional ECEC.

#### ***From enabling labour market participation to saving the poor with conditional fiscal tools***

Before the 1990s, discourse by international organizations concerning ECEC focused mainly on ‘child care’ rather than education. Interest into ECEC mainly arose from labour market policy goals. By the end of the 1980’s the World Bank started to promote investing in poor people. The World Bank’s reports related to ECEC drew heavily on Anglo-American research focusing on investments in early years. The primary interest was on promoting human capital formation by improving ‘school readiness’ and laying the foundations for success in school for subsequent labour market performance (Mahon, 2016).

According to Mahon (2010), the World Bank’s discourse, which is most commonly directed at the Global South, emphasizes market-based provision with public support targeted at poor families. Projects financed by the World Bank aim to reach indigenous peoples, girls outside of education and the very poor. For example, the World Bank’s report *Investing in Young Children* (Naudeau, 2011) notes that in low and middle income countries, poor children fall behind because of poor

nutrition, health and stimulation. The suggested solution is to provide more information for parents. Thus, the report paints a picture of the parents of the poor children being ignorant of the ‘right way’ to nourish and to raise their offspring. In the absence of ECEC, poor parents are thus likely to, according to this view, pass poverty onto their children because they provide poor care for them, contributing to the intergenerational transmission of poverty and being less likely to contribute to the growth of their country (Mahon, 2010).

The World Bank has both commissioned research and used fiscal tools for governing ECEC in countries where investment in early childhood development has been low (World Bank, 2015). The conditional fiscal tools have advocated support for non-formal programs that enlist local mothers as caregivers, providing them with training in proper nutrition, hygiene and techniques of cognitive and socio-emotional stimulation. The reason for poverty is seen as being a matter of incompetent individuals rather than a matter of unfair structures (Mahon, 2010). The societal role of ECEC presented by the World Bank is to socialize children for a world whose future and demands we already know. The combination of outcome-based, fiscal governance tools and discourse on parents that threaten to pass poverty onto their children through inadequate parenting practices, unless targeted investments in ECEC are made, form an inscription that promises a better future by enhanced school readiness and school performance, better jobs, higher income and, furthermore, a stronger contribution to the nation’s economy through a market-based system supported by targeted interventions for those in ‘threat’ (see also Penn, 2010). Poverty can be combated by parental education and public investments should be targeted at ‘vulnerable’ groups of children, while the market-based system delivers for the needs of others.

### ***Towards universalism – democracy and inclusiveness by information and participatory governance***

Also, the importance of ECEC and the international governance of it have been highlighted by the European Union. In 1996, a working group of 12 member states of the European Union produced a report *Quality Targets in Services for Young Children*, which targets highlighted that the process of defining the content of the service should be participatory, democratic, dynamic and continuously involving different groups including children, parents, families and professionals, and that the services should be inclusive, universal and based on a holistic understanding of children, learning and development (Moss, 2007).

UNESCO’s aim is to improve conditions in the Global South and the post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe. It focuses on perspectives of the rights of children. In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), attended by over 150 countries, recognized that learning begins at birth. The 2000 Dakar Framework for Action’s first goal was to expand and improve comprehensive ECEC, especially for the most disadvantaged. They also recognized that the main

reason for child poverty is related to inequalities in resources, access, and opportunity, which are shaped by both global and local factors. Although UNESCO has aimed to help poor children, they prefer to promote universal ECEC and the view that ECEC programs are more likely to be better quality if they also include children of middle-class parents. Strong Foundations and the Moscow Action Agenda viewed the concept of ‘quality’ as being participatory in nature. It praises programs that build on local knowledge and respect the diversity of children and their cultural background. In addition, UNESCO has also reproduced the ‘investment in human capital’ discourse. ECEC has been framed as indispensable for the development of certain regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia and the Arab countries (Mahon, 2016).

Contrary to the World Bank’s structural adjustment governance and policy, EU and UNESCO have used governance tools which are called soft forms of governance (see for example Ozga, Dahler-Larsen, Segerholm & Simola, 2011). These soft forms of governance (i.e. information tools) have included for example country reports and research briefs. Their main role has been as a policy advocate, disseminating different policy options. In this inscription democracy and inclusiveness are thus connected to information tools.

### ***Focus on economic benefits – fading of democratic views on quality***

While the mapping of ECEC policies of other international organisations has been comprehensive, there has been a need to examine the recent developments of ECEC policies of the OECD. While the OECD’s Starting Strong I and II documents and Babies and Bosses – reports have been examined earlier (Mahon, 2006), there has also been a need to study the developmental features of the documents and ways of governance when the newest ones are included as well. Article I of this thesis addresses this need.

The OECD’s Education Policy Committee launched the Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Policy in March of 1998. The rationales for the project were to strengthen the foundations for lifelong learning, provide a fair start in life for all children, and contribute to educational equity and social integration (OECD, 2006).

Both Starting Strong I (OECD, 2001) and Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006) deliberated on public investments in ECEC, and referred to both instrumental, utilitarian ideas of investment in quality ECEC in order to gain economic and societal benefits and principles of equal rights in education. Starting Strong II (OECD, 2006) aimed to provide more evidence for these elements, identified in the first round of the country reviews, and deepened the information concerning them. All in all, the policy solutions in Starting Strong I and II focused significantly on democracy, participation, public funding and a reduction of social exclusion (Article I).

However, in the next document, *Starting Strong III* (OECD, 2012), there was a shift in the discourse. While according to *Starting Strong I* and *II*, reduction of poverty and exclusion were important and every child had a right to quality ECEC, *Starting Strong III* was more clearly focused on instrumental arguments and opaque conceptualisations of the aims and goals of ECEC. Whereas *Starting Strong II* suggested that children should have the right to express their views on day-to-day activities in ECEC services, in order to foster democracy, *Starting Strong III* mainly refers to the role of children's participation when speaking of effective learning. Only once does it refer to the possibility that children's participation could be important in its own right:

Research shows that children are more competent and creative across a range of cognitive areas when they are given the choice to engage in different well-organised and age-appropriate activities (CCL, 2006). A curriculum can stimulate this behaviour through including cross-disciplinary learning activities that trigger children's curiosity. Fun and interesting themes, such as "Alive!" (the study of living vs. non-living things), can make learning more personal and relevant for young learners (NIEER, 2007). Implementing such activities in small groups can encourage greater autonomy (Eurydice, 2009; Laevers, 2011) and provides more space for spontaneous or emergent learning (NIEER, 2007). Children's participation is not only important in order to facilitate effective learning of different curriculum elements but *can* [emphasis added] be important in its own right and foster democratic values. (OECD, 2012, p. 88)

Whereas understandings about children and childhood, children as beings and children as becomings (James & Prout, 2015), were all taken into account in the first two documents, the last document drew its views mainly from the discourse of investment in human capital. In *Starting Strong III*, deliberation on children's rights had a less important role than in the earlier documents. In contrast to the lack of deliberation referring to the rights of children in *Starting Strong III*, the participation of parents in defining quality ECEC was justified by referring to their rights to be involved in the decision-making concerning their own child. Also, the main role for their participation was to ensure the appropriateness of the home curriculum – ensuring that parents interact with their children in a way that supports child development (Article I):

Parental engagement is increasingly seen as an important policy lever to enhance healthy child development and learning. There is recognition that it is a fundamental right and obligation for parents to be involved in their children's education. And parental partnership is critical in enhancing ECEC staff knowledge about their children. Furthermore, research has

shown that parental engagement – especially in ensuring high-quality children’s learning at home and communicating with ECEC staff – is strongly associated with children’s later academic success, high school completion, socio-emotional development and adaptation in society. (OECD, 2012: 217)

The inscriptions of the OECD’s ECEC network which highlighted the rights of all children had faded and the organization had taken a step away from the presuppositions of ECEC’s role as enhancing children’s agency and participation in approaching the future.

An examination of the policies of international organisations sheds light onto the international trends – the documents are the result of coalition-building among a large variety of actors within the ECEC sector. If we focused only on the international governmental organisations’ inscriptions, it could be argued that they have somewhat converged: investment discourse has been wide spread and all of the organisations argue that public investments should be made. However, as noticed by others (for example, Mahon, 2010) as well, there is a variation within imaginaries highlighting social investments identified among international policies: one which aims to socialize children from a disadvantaged background in particular and another which highlights the equity of agency of all children.

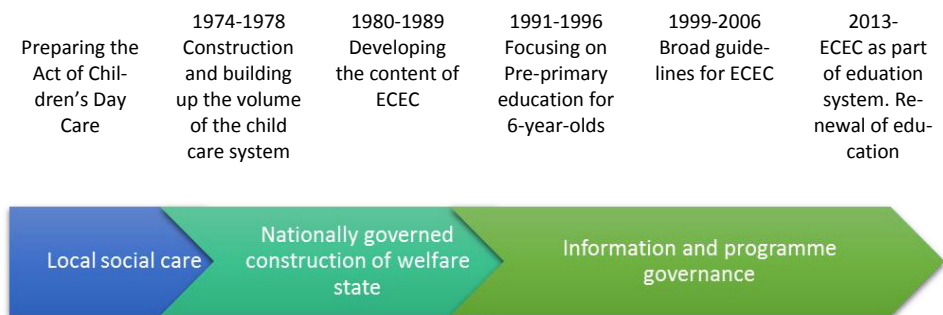
In sum, the first inscription of ECEC was motivated by the need to support work force participation. The second was related to the image of children as victims of parental ignorance, not of the structural hierarchies generating inequality. The third was informed by the idea of children’s holistic development, the locality of pedagogical decision-making and the principle of universality. While the OECD’s imaginary of ECEC could earlier be described as representing presuppositions of the latter inscription, Article I explicated that it has shifted both its view of the societal role of ECEC and ideals of governance tools to be closer to former inscriptions. The proportion of utilitarian arguments increased, the concept of quality ceased to be pluralistic and local, and instead of examining local contexts closely and developing local ECEC together with country representatives, it provided a check-list more typically used in the context of licensing practices connected to the ideals of new public management (Article I).

In conclusion, investment discourse entails the attempt to find financially profitable ECEC policy solutions. Therefore the transnational trend of stressing accountability and performativity goes hand in hand with the investment narratives. A higher level of performativity is believed to be achieved by governing by numbers and assuring quality through check-lists, rating-scales and rankings, using targets and performance indicators for evaluating and comparing educational outcomes – in other words, outcome based governing tools.

### 3.1.2 Finnish inscriptions of ECEC

In what follows, I will map the inscriptions of Finnish ECEC by examining national governance tools and discourses of ECEC in them based on the earlier literature and the findings of Article II.

Historical developments of Finnish ECEC policy and governance have been reported in detail (see, for example Välimäki (1998), Onnismaa (2010) and Alila (2013)). They have focused on national developments of the ECEC system and policy deliberation, concluding that the history of Finnish ECEC governance can be divided into different phases. These are synthesized and summarised in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Policy and governance history of Finnish ECEC

Until 1970, Finnish preschools were seen as part of the child welfare system, and although somewhat nationally subsidised, ECEC was very loosely regulated (Alila, 2013). Pihlaja (2003) and Alila (2013) cite the period of 1970–1993 as the era of construction of the welfare state. Governance structure was hierarchical and provincial with government-monitored municipalities that provided ECEC services regulated by the National Board of Social Affairs.

According to Alila (2013) and Pihlaja (2003), the time of information governance began in the 1990's when the central administrative boards were closed and more autonomy was given to municipalities. Throughout the 1990s, the Finnish education system also more generally speaking shifted from a centralised to a heavily decentralised. The governance of ECEC was transferred from the National Board of Social Affairs to the Centre for Research and Development of Welfare and Health (STAKES). STAKES did not have the authority to set norms but its duty was instead to monitor ECEC and provide statistics, research and information concerning it.

The principle of universality – the idea that everyone should have access to good-quality services – is also one of the common features of the ECEC in Nordic

countries (Mahon et al., 2012). In Finnish ECEC, it has manifested in the idea of the subjective right to day-care. Since 1996, parents of all children under school age have enjoyed the right to a day-care place provided by their local authorities. In 1998, pre-primary education for six-year-olds (400 hours per year) became free of charge and was attached to the Basic Education Act (1998/628).

Alila (2013) differentiates programme governance from information governance. Policy programmes such as the development programme for social and health affairs (KASTE) and the Child, Youth and Families policy programme were introduced in the 2000s and they coordinated local development projects. However, I prefer to not separate these two phases, since I feel that these policy programmes did not drastically change the governance environment or focus of the governance.

In this way, the contemporary governance of ECEC in Finland forms a twofold system where the nation-state and municipalities play their own roles in ECEC policies. At the moment, there are both tools of information governance and governance by norms used in Finnish ECEC nationally.

The minimum standards for staff qualifications and child-staff ratio are regulated by law. The Act on Children's Day Care (1973/63) sets the requirements for the staff-child ratio and staff qualifications. At the minimum, national law prescribes that staff working for an ECEC institution should have at least a secondary-level education, and one third of the staff must have a post-secondary, higher education-level degree (bachelor of education, master of education, bachelor of social sciences). Child-staff ratios set in legislation required, at the time of generating the data, that in full-time ECEC there should be at least one child nurse or preschool teacher for every 4 children under 3, and one child nurse or preschool teacher for every 7 children over 3 years old. From the beginning of August 2016, there can be a maximum of 8 children over 3 years per one staff member. In part-day services for children over 3 years old, the ratio is 13 children per one child nurse or preschool teacher (Act on Children's Day Care, 1973).

The National Curriculum Guidelines for ECEC, which guide ECEC for under six-year-olds and were developed in the era of information governance, were not binding at the time of generating the data of this thesis<sup>3</sup>. Rather than setting goals for children, the guidelines set comprehensive standards for environments and activities that address the children's holistic needs. Diverting from ECEC for under six-year-olds, the National Core curriculum for pre-primary education for six-year-olds is binding. This aims to guarantee equal opportunities for children to begin school and to learn. There are no other binding national-level governance tools specifically designed for governing ECEC.

---

<sup>3</sup> The National Curriculum Guidelines for ECEC (2016) are binding and local ECEC plans based on the new guidelines will be taken into use by October 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 (National Board of Education, 2016)

Both the Core Curriculum for pre-primary education and the National Curriculum Guidelines for ECEC provide a basis for the local curricula drawn up by municipalities. In addition, there can be unit-specific curricula that should complement the local ones. Moreover, they are expected to include principles for drafting the ECEC plans that are made for every child individually.

The fee for ECEC for those under six years old depends on the income and size of the family. The maximum fee was 264 euros/month per child in public day-care in 2014. According to the OECD (2007), Finnish two-earner families spend approximately 7% of their income on child care, compared to the OECD average of 17%. These (internationally speaking) reasonable fees can be seen being resonant with the principle of universality. For example these features have been said to connect Finnish ECEC to the ECEC of other Nordic countries. Their welfare policies more generally are also based on the idea of investment in good-quality public services (Esping-Andersen, 1996; Mahon, 2002; OECD, 2006).

Although countries vary in the extent to which the responsibility for governance of ECEC services has been transferred to local or regional authorities, decentralisation has been a strong travelling policy trend across nations (Neuman, 2005). Cross-nationally, governments deliberate and justify decentralisation by referring to the aim of promoting local democracy, reducing bureaucracy, and encouraging more client-oriented services (Oberhuemer & Ulich, 1997).

There are also some fiscal tools of governance used in the domain of Finnish ECEC. Such policies include the 1985 decision allowing parents to use home care allowances to pay private care service fees and the 1996 introduction of private day-care allowance (Child Home Care and Private Care Allowance Act 1128/1996). These policies resonate with the pressure faced by Nordic countries to promote 'efficiency' and 'freedom of choice' in human services (Mahon et al., 2012).

As Table 3 shows, a considerable number of the rationales upon which Finnish ECEC policies are deliberated concern labour market needs. These rationales are mostly economic in nature in policy deliberation.

**Table 3.** Rationales used in deliberation of Finnish ECEC policies

Year	Policy milestone	Main rationale
1973	Day Care Act	Enabling parents' labour market participation
1982	National objectives for day-care	Child-related deliberation
1985	CHCA for purchasing private care	Promoting parents' right to choose (private care)
1990–1997	Subjective universal right to day-care (phased removal of means test)	Enabling parents' labour market participation
1993	Education for practical nurses merged and replaced 10 different vocational qualifications in the domain of social and health care	More flexible workforce for the labour market
1995	University-level preschool teacher education	No explicit rationale
1997	Private day-care allowance	Enabling parents to choose private care, increasing the proportion of private care
1999–2000	Enactment laws concerning pre-primary education (for six-year-olds) appended to the Basic Education Act—universal right to free pre-primary education, binding national core curriculum for pre-primary education	Equalising differences among children
2001	Possibility for municipalities to decide the governing body for ECEC services	Increasing municipal autonomy
2005	Possibility to qualify as a preschool teacher by completing a bachelor of social services degree	Legitimizing existing practice
2007	Obligation of municipalities to provide special preschool teacher expertise if needed	Improving the position of children needing special education
2011	Possibility to apply for a day-care place from a different municipality	Promoting parents' right to choose
2013	Transfer of governance of ECE from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture	Educational continuity and cohesion

However, what is interesting is that unlike the current transnational investment discourse, economic deliberation has not occurred alongside child-related rationales. This aligns with Onnismaa's and Kalliala's (2010) and Alila's (2013) earlier notions concerning ECEC policy priorities in Finland.

How, then, does Finnish ECEC resonate with international inscriptions? In sum, although the Finnish ECEC system may be in line to some extent with the international policy ideals set by EU, UNESCO and OECD's Starting Strong I & II which highlighted holistic approach, well-educated staff and affordable and reachable services, the Finnish inscriptions of ECEC – a combination of policy

deliberation and technical governing instruments concerning ECEC – have differed from it. Even though Finland has invested in ECEC, the ideals which have manifested in policy deliberation have been increasingly dominated by the idea of public services as a public expenditure and consumption rather than public investment. Also, the use of technical, outcome-based governing instruments or apparatuses reifying child-related economic deliberation and highlighting accountability has not been characteristics of Finnish ECEC policy. There have been no mandatory performance requirements for teachers and no performance requirements for children.

### **3.1.3 Imaginarities of ECEC in everyday life at preschool**

Now that we are familiar with the dominant international and national historical inscriptions of ECEC, it is time to examine how these different inscriptions are enacted into ECEC imaginaries in the everyday life of preschool. This section draws on the results of Article III. First I will explain the local governance context of ECEC in the municipality under examination, then unfold the local discourses of societal roles of ECEC. Finally, I will illustrate how combinations of them construct everyday life at the preschool.

#### ***Governance by transmodern resources***

As mentioned earlier, municipalities have a key role in organizing and governing local ECEC in Finland. It could be said that municipalities in Finland have authorship over curricula. Both the Core Curriculum for pre-primary education and the National Curriculum Guidelines for ECEC provide a rather loose basis for the local curricula drawn up by municipalities. Preschools may create unit-specific curricula to complement local and national ones. Moreover, ECEC plans are made for every child individually. In the municipality where this study took place, the local curriculum defined ‘securing prerequisites for children’s development and learning’ as the main aim of ECEC. More precise objectives of the local curriculum are listed below.

- creating trust between children and adults
- child’s growth as healthy and lively being
- child’s age appropriate independence and learning to live with others
- constructing ones identity
- learning social interaction as part of social network
- learning to considerate behavior
- learning processes of solving problems
- learning to utilize different tools and methods of learning
- learning about environment and life skills
- attaching oneself to Finnish culture

- adopting principles of civilized being

The preschools with teachers that took part in the study were in the process of updating their unit curricula. The aim of this was to concretize local objectives.

Every child in the participants' groups had an individual educational plan, which was co-created with the parents. This kind of participatory view of the aims of ECEC can be conceptualized as being 'transmodern' (Fenech, 2011) or 'democratic' (Moss, 2014). According to Alasuutari & Alasuutari (2012), these educational plans are a result of an intertwinement process between international and national traditions. Most often these plans included a description of the child and her/his interests and a few, usually quite open, aims for their ECEC, such as enhancing their ability to express their own views or encouraging and supporting the child's ability to put his/her clothes on by him/herself.

Also, other kinds of information tools and resources were used for governing the practices in municipal-level ECEC. For example, in service training was provided and the municipality had experts providing consultation to support children with special needs and children requiring teaching of Finnish as a second language.

### ***Outcome based governance***

The decentralization that has happened in Finnish ECEC policy has in many countries been accompanied by a demand for accountability (Sahlberg, 2016). Although decentralization has not yet led to the development of performance criteria for ECEC professional nor children at the national level in Finland (as explained in an earlier section of this dissertation), municipalities are using more and more quantitative data and statistics as tools for governing ECEC. This has not been tackled by the earlier research, which has been more focused on the national-level governance of ECEC.

The municipality where this study took place used such a measuring tool – a productivity matrix – for governing ECEC. The aim of this matrix was to use resources efficiently and to manage ECEC costs, that is to say, to intensify ECEC services. The measurements encompassed the costs of child day-care, the number of staff sick days, the child-staff ratio, the utilization rate, parents' satisfaction with ECEC services and the proportion of children needing to learn Finnish as a second language. The use of these kinds of measurements seems to be increasing, at least in larger Finnish municipalities (see Article II).

Using the information gathered with the help of the productivity matrix, the municipality enacted intensification measures. These measures were introduced as a result of the municipality seeking to use resources more efficiently and to manage the costs of ECEC services. In addition, the increased number of children in need of an ECEC place influenced the organization of ECEC. Since there were

not enough ECEC places for the children, and the municipality had a legal obligation to arrange them, the municipality's solution was to intensify the ECEC. Intensification measures included increasing the utilization rate (i.e., the proportion of the average daily number of children in preschool compared to the legal maximum) and increasing the number of both children and adults in preschools. Efficiency was examined monthly – preschool managers were accountable for meeting the goal for the utilization rate, which for 2014 was 92.5%. Also, non-recurring performance-related pay was introduced, based on the data gathered with the help of the productivity matrix. If the performance criteria, including efficiency objectives and objectives related to the parents' quantitative evaluation of perceived quality of service guidance, were reached in the ECEC district, all of the staff members in the area would receive an extra pay. Therefore, in addition to the governing tools which have been traditional in Nordic countries, including non-binding information governance tools, the municipality used outcome-based governance tools which have not been common in Finnish ECEC earlier but are in line with some international developments as seen in the earlier chapter.

### ***Local discourses of ECEC***

When I examined the deliberation the preschool teachers used, four differing societal roles of ECEC could be found: Addressing parents' needs and wishes, preparing children for the future, supporting individual rights and supporting equality and equity. Examples of these discourses are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Discourses of the societal roles of ECEC by Finnish preschool teachers

Discourse	Example
Addressing parents' needs and wishes	"It [swimming lessons] is all about their wishes. Our group has attended those lessons every year I have worked here. Since parents' have to pay for it by themselves it have to be so that they want it. I cannot decide that now we are going to attend and ask them to bring the money. Definitely it is crucial that the choice is theirs."
Preparing children for the future	"The aim is to learn how to take of your own belongings. It is about preparing for school. You can't always do everything you want in life."
Individual rights	"I think sitting silently at the table for long periods of time is not their natural way of learning and acting. I think the more natural way of acting for them is running around. I like to offer those opportunities to them: 'Now it is time for you to do it'. I would think you need to look it from the perspective of rights."
Equality and equity	"It is about equality of opportunities to learn. Each child should have an opportunity to learn by playing, and that is why I think it is crucial that adults are engaged as well. It is also important that it is not always the same child or children whose play does not work out. It should be ensured that everyone is able to have experiences of engagement in play. And also to feel that they are a well-liked and important members of the peer group."

*Addressing parents' needs and wishes* -category contains excerpts of the data where teachers justified their activities referring to the parents' working arrangements, for example, early/late work shifts or regular days off when describing the structure of the day or week. Also, the category contains excerpts in which the teachers justify their activities by referring to parents' choice. In the example in Table 3 the teacher tells about the swimming lessons a part of the group has attended. The swimming lessons are organized by a third party and the parents pay the fee if they want their child to attend. The teacher uses the discourse of parents' choice for justifying the swimming lessons which sometimes interrupt the activities and plans of other groups – if one of the adults of the group is in sick leave, an adult of another group joins them even if it means the activities of the other group needs to be cancelled. They felt that they could not cancel the swimming lessons since the parents had paid extra.

The category of *'preparing children for the future'* included excerpts in which teachers justified their activities, such as teaching a child to dress up by him/herself by referring to a child's future. The future meant most often the near future – for example, it was argued that children needed to learn certain things before they

could be transferred from a group of under three year olds to a group of over three years olds or from pre-primary education to primary education. The category also included two excerpts in which ‘the future’ referred to working life. With the exception of one excerpt, all of the excerpts using this kind of discourse positioned a child as someone who needed to be changed – a child lacked skills she/he needed to learn.

The discourse of *individual rights* included moments where the concept of ‘right’ was used for justifying activities or single actions. These moments were related to a child’s right to be heard as in the example presented in Table 3, a child’s right to physical activities, learning and play and a child’s right not to be disturbed or hurt by anyone else.

*Equality and equity* discourse was used when talking about preschool environments or practices that did not serve the interest of a child or a particular group of children. It was used both to describe contradictions which a teacher felt she/he could not resolve in a way that would support equality or equity and moments when she/he was able to alter the situation or environment in a way that she/he felt satisfied with. Most often the discourse of equality and equity was connected to play situations as in the example in Table 3.

### ***Imaginarities of ECEC in everyday life of preschool***

How, then, did the combinations of governance tools and discourses – inscriptions of ECEC – then become actualized in the everyday life of preschool and how do they help us understand it? When examining the acts reported by preschool teachers and observed by the researcher in the everyday life of preschool and how they were connected to the intertwinings of the deliberation of Finnish preschool teachers and the governing tools, five different imaginaries of ECEC could be found: 1) serving the needs of parents, 2) socializing children to adapt to existing circumstances, 3) protecting negative rights of the children, 4) building up the right for a reciprocally constructed social space and 5) building up social justice through inclusion.

These imaginaries will be summarized in Table 4. The table does not aim to produce a generable model for predicting practices based on governance tools and dominant discourses regardless of the governance system or historical context. Rather, it provides an example of the use of a conceptual tool of ‘Imaginary’ for reflecting connections between the aims, tools and practices of ECEC.

## Imaginarities of Early Childhood Education

**Table 4.** Imaginarities of ECEC in every day life of preschool

Rights discourses	Governance by norms and resources	Governance by outcomes
<p><b>Building up the right for a reciprocally constructed social space</b></p> <p>Pauline has made a drawing for a nursery nurse, Maria. She explains that they are guidelines for Maria: she has drawn a picture of a kangaroo-ball to make a suggestion that they could take them outdoors that day. Maria pins the drawing on the wall.</p> <p>Later in the day, Maria made sure that kangaroo-balls were taken out to be used by the children. She explained that it was because she remembered Pauline's suggestion. When asked, why she found it important, she explained: "It's about the children's rights to be heard".</p>	<p><b>Protecting the negative rights of the children</b></p> <p>The example of protecting the negative rights of children is drawn from a preschool teacher's diary:</p> <p>"I went to the hall to welcome the children coming in from outdoor play. I greeted them and shushed those who were being loud. I reminded them not to shout indoors. Oscar's entrance wasn't good: he laughed meanly at a child who was changing his clothes. I told him to go back outside to think about what would be an appropriate way to come in. Then I went to the class to start our circle time with the children, and my co-worker took care of Oscar's entrance."</p> <p>In the interview the teacher deliberates over the situation: "I think it is about good manners and the rights of other children. How you treat your friends and classmates ... It is even a bit challenging in this group. Not everyone is comfortable with changing their clothes in the hall in front of everyone else but since there are no other options you have to do it. I have to say that I felt quite bad when I read this diary yesterday and noticed that in many situations we shunted the children to other rooms or turned them back to finish or redo something."</p> <p>Researcher: "Is that a normal practice here?"</p> <p>Teacher J.: "That is what we have been doing. It is probably because there are only two of us. And then, when one of us is away the other is kind of all alone with the group and if someone kicks up a row, what can you do? When there are two [adults present], it is easier since one of us can just ask the child to discuss the matter alone."</p>	

Utility discourses

**Serving the needs of parents**

The teacher explains that some of the goals set for the child's ECEC have not been achieved due to the child regularly arriving late. A parent of the child is often at home late in the morning. The family has thus preferred not to bring the child to the preschool until they go to work, even though the staff have encouraged them to do so. The staff have wondered if the difficulties the child has had are because of a lack of practice or because of some kind of learning difficulties. They have recommended further examination in order to better help the child, but the parents have decided not to bring the child to occupational therapy since they feel that they do not have an opportunity to commit to that, due to a lack of time and their heavy workloads.

**Socializing children to adapt**

The teacher explains how she has selected good seating for six-year-old Benjamin:

"The most important thing when selecting the seating for Benjamin has been that he can better show his abilities. He is quite clever but he uses all his energy on goofing around. We thought that it would be important to find a place where he could focus on the issues we are dealing with and not on everything else. I think it is a matter of being prepared for school as well. Although he is already six years old, there has been a need to remind him that I don't know if he has learned these things if he doesn't show it. I have tried to explain that he needs to show what he has learned instead of just saying that he knows. If you don't participate, are not active and don't show what you are capable of, I don't know what you have learned. I can't be sure."

Equity discourses

**Building up social justice through inclusion**

The teacher highlighted the play situation in her diary and in the interview. She framed supporting play as being a matter of equality by saying that children who are not so fluent in social play situations and who have difficulty engaging in activities that interest them should also have satisfying play experiences.

Researcher: "The text returns to the topic of play. It is stated [in the preschool's ECEC plan] that the aim is to have long-lasting play themes and that the children become engaged in the play activities. Is this still an important aim for you?"

Teacher H: "Yeah, it really is. At least in our group. The goal for the adults is that we focus hard on enriching and being involved in the play activities...it is about equality of opportunities to learn. Each child should have an opportunity to learn by playing, and that is why I think it is crucial that adults are engaged as well. It is also important that it is not always the same child or children whose play does not work out. It should be ensured that everyone is able to have experiences of engagement in play. And also to feel that they are a well-liked and important member of the peer group."

## Imaginarities of Early Childhood Education

In the imaginary of '*Building up the right for a reciprocally constructed social space*' rights discourse is used for justifying the acts a teacher conducts in order to take children's opinions and perspectives into account. In these moments the teachers express satisfaction regarding their actions. In terms of governance tools, Curriculum guidelines for ECEC, individual ECEC plans for children, pedagogical documentation (i.e.) open ended governance tools and resources are referred to. Most often girls rather than boys are active in these moments as in the example in Table 4 (see also Article IV). Children with special needs do not play a role in these moments.

The imaginary '*Protecting the negative rights of the children*' included the moments where teachers felt that children's actions or behaviors needed to be restricted. This was justified by referring to the rights of other children as in the example in Table 4 which describes the conflict when Oscar comes in from outdoor play. The teacher deliberates her act of sending Oscar back out by referring to the rights of others': "It is about good manners and the children's rights. How do you treat your friends." In terms of governing tools, when this kind of negative rights –discourse takes place, outcome based governing tool is referred to. In the example in Table 4, the teacher brings up the fact that there were only two adults, and they needed to be in separate places – if there had been another adult it would have provided an opportunity to act differently. The intensification measures supported by outcome based governing tools had increased working in groups of two adults (instead of three). Among the participant preschools, all except two of them had two groups of two adults working in shared group area. Previously, there had most commonly been one group of three adults instead. Staggering the use of spaces required that the division of duties between adults was clear: They needed to have an agreement on the responsibilities of each adult at any given time in order to ensure smooth transitions. This meant, however, that there was only a little leeway for making decisions based on teachers' contextual evaluation. Thus, the intensification measures conducted with the help of outcome based governing tool supported the occurrence of such situations as Oscar's entrance: there was an increased demand for the children to adjust to the circumstances. The discourses of individual rights seemed to help teachers accept and deliberate on their increased role in socializing children to narrowing institutional demands.

The acts related to imaginary of '*Socializing children to adapt*' resembled somewhat the acts included in the imaginary of '*Protecting the negative rights of the children*'. The discourse of preparing for the future was used for justifying the need to socialize children to adapt to institutional norms. In terms of younger children, this kind of rationalization was related to similar kinds of institutional arrangements to the imaginary of protecting negative rights – intensification of ECEC work. The application of productivity matrix not only increased the performance criteria for the adults but also for children. In the example in Table 4 the teacher explains a situation in which she/he is selecting a seating for a 6-year-old

Benjamin in preprimary education class. The teacher finds it important to know whether Benjamin has learned the things the teacher finds important. She expects Benjamin to perform his learning. Later on the teacher explained the difference between her logic of organizing preprimary education and early childhood education for under 6-year-olds by stating that diverting from ECEC for under 6-year-olds the National Core Curriculum for preprimary education for 6-year-olds sets binding regulations for the activities. Therefore, she needed to make sure that the children learn the things she had planned. There were only 1-2 examples of somewhat similar situations in the data in which teachers referred to binding learning criteria. Therefore it is difficult to say anything conclusive concerning them. This kind of focus on performance does not resonate well with the historical tradition of Finnish early childhood education as explained in section 3.1.2. Yet, this kind of focus on performance has been reported elsewhere in the countries where learning objectives have been directly set for children. Based on this data, it cannot be said whether these kinds of activities were common or new in the field of Finnish early childhood education. Yet, it can be concluded that emphasis on future skills especially when connected with narrow contextual decision-making opportunities for teachers increased the expectations concerning the desired level of skills and development of the children – more waiting and adapting were expected from children.

Imaginary of '*servicing the need of parents*' consists of acts which were justified by referring to the parents labour force participation or they wishes. This kind of justification is not new in Finnish context as we saw in Chapter 3.1.2. The only governance tool directly related to these moments in the data was the Act on Children's Day Care (1973) that sets an obligation for municipalities to organize day-care for all children. It was interpreted by local ECEC authorities through the lens of parents' choice: it was up to parents to decide at what time a child arrives and leaves kindergarten. Even if parents asked what would be a good time for a child to arrive, a preschool manager did not give any recommendation. Thus, this imaginary, for example, set some boundary markers for the planning of the structure of the day.

Imaginary of '*building up social justice through inclusion*' consisted of acts inscribed in Curriculum guidelines for ECEC, individual ECEC plans or other open ended governance tools or resources interpreted through the cultural understanding of ECEC's role as supporting equality and equity. These acts were targeted to changing the environment or practices that the teacher considered unfair from the viewpoint of a child or a childgroup as in the example in Table 4.

All of the discourses included in the imaginaries of every day life of preschools can be found in international discourses. From these discourses the rights discourse which was part of the imaginaries of 'building up the right for a reciprocally constructed social space' and 'protecting the negative rights of the children' has not been common in the history of Finnish ECEC as shown in Chapter 3.1.2.

The governance tools related to the imaginaries of ‘socialising children to adapt’ and ‘protecting the negative rights of the children’ are related to outcome based governance tools and performance criteria that have not been traditionally used in Finnish ECEC as reported in the earlier section. Rather, they are a result of the application the international accountability developments as shown in Article II. The transnational nature of the imaginaries in which the productivity matrix and intensification measures played a role will be explicated with more precision in the next section.

When examining the moments where different imaginaries were in conflict in Article III, both the imaginary highlighting the role of ECEC protecting the negative rights of children and the imaginary of ECEC socializing children to adapt to existing circumstances survived in conflict situations. These imaginaries were materialized in situations where transnational outcome based governing tools regulated acts. Moreover, the imaginary of social justice was diminished when conflicting with other imaginaries. The next section tries to find some explanations for these findings.

### **3.2 Transformation of imaginaries through intertwinement**

Now that we have noted the transformation of imaginaries on different policy levels, this section aims to address the question concerning of how we can theoretically portray the way in which certain societal roles of ECEC become institutionalized over others. It also underlines how the concept of imaginary consisting of three-part process helps us understand policy intertwinement. It draws on the results of Articles I–IV.

#### **3.2.1 Intertwinement of imaginaries: Hybridisation and ousterisation**

The aim of this section is to discuss how local reforms are linked with international trends. The concepts of intertwinement and entanglement have been used for understanding the formation of institutional ECEC in a local context in the transnational world. Hybridisation refers to the intertwinement process in which different rationales arising from national or international ideals intersect (Maroy, 2009). Different imaginaries go through a metamorphosis when they arrive in a local context. They morph as they move (Cowen, 2009). As mentioned earlier, according to Steiner-Khamsi (2014), there is at least three different types of processes in localized policy cases: 1) a process in which original policy is replaced by a borrowed one, 2) intertwinement of different trends, and 3) reinforcement of original policy via deliberation originating from international discourse. This section builds on this understanding, arguing that by drawing on the conceptualization of imaginaries, a fourth type of process can be identified – or rather, the process of

intertwinement can be divided into two different kinds of processes, namely, a process of hybridisation and a process of ousterisation.

Article II, which scrutinized the local governance reform of ECEC in one Finnish municipality, revealed how inscriptions highlighting the long-term societal effects of ECEC were dislodged by the inscriptions highlighting the short-term costs. The case examined the entering of an outcome-oriented governing tool, a productivity matrix, which has not been typical in Finnish ECEC. I introduced this in Chapter 3.1.3 (more precisely in Article II), and I believe that it serves as an example of the complexity with which local reforms are related to international ideas. In the case of implementing the reform which included the productivity matrix, local officials did not simply adopt international policies, but were actively engaged in the development project to fit it into the perceived need of the municipality. Although all the officials and experts interviewed felt that it was important to have tools for managing costs (i.e., they expressed the idea of public services as consumption), they also stressed that it would be important to examine the quality of the process and the long-term outcome. Both the ideal of public services as consumption in need of harnessing and the ideal stressing of child-centred, long-term societal effects were present in the interviews. Especially the latter ideal can be considered as being part of international trends – investment narratives maintained by international organisations, as argued in Chapter 3.1.1. This type of discourse has not been prevalent in Finnish national ECEC policy as shown in Chapter 3.1.2 (and more precisely in Article II). The next excerpt, in which the preschool manager reflects on the measurement system, highlights the manifestation of these rationales:

In my opinion, it is important to note that this is not at all a ready measurement system. Real ways of measuring quality and the mediational factors affecting it should be found. It is, however, extremely difficult, and we are so focused on economic issues, which is okay. In my opinion, this is a good start, and it was worth a go, but it didn't quite measure the right things. You will probably ask what those right things are. I don't know. This process looked at why we are working here, what we are doing. We should still keep the things we are doing well. In a car factory or somewhere like that, you could examine the number of cars returned. We can't do that. It is damn hard to measure it. So it is really about images.

In this case the inscription stressing the long-term benefits of a well-organised ECEC system retreated from the inscription stressing the efficiency of public services. However, it was argued in the material introducing the new governing instrument, the productivity matrix, that it entailed and aimed for long-term effects in health, education and the standard of living. While the interviewees and the international literature that was used as a bases of development work stated that

the concept of productivity entailed the effectiveness of services, the interviewees clearly wanted to emphasize that the aim of the productivity matrix was not to measure effectiveness but to deliver information about the structure of the cost of ECEC services. Thus, the actual measurement system developed during the process was an instrument for measuring functional efficiency rather than productivity despite its name.

The efficiency indicators (i.e. the price of a computational day of day-care, the child-staff and child-space ratios) were given a combined weighted value of 75% in the matrix. ‘Soft indicators’, as some of the interviewees called the rest of the indicators, obtained a weighted value of 25%. ‘Soft indicators’ included the proportion of children requiring teaching of Finnish as a second language, staff sick leaves and parental satisfaction. The interviewees were very sceptical about the validity of operationalising the quality of the services. It was stated that the response rate of the survey targeted at parents (for capturing the quality of ECEC) was low, while parental satisfaction was very high in general. Moreover, another ‘soft indicator’, the proportion of children requiring teaching of Finnish as a second language, which describes the special nature of the service offered, does not aim to capture mediational effects in long-term effectiveness in the same way as staff sick leave and parental satisfaction but rather, the proportion (instead of quality) of this type of services provided. The solutions made in the process of developing the matrix were justified by the discourse of the need to reduce the costs of ECEC services and the discourse of the effective implementation of the policy. The inspiration for the logic of matrix originated in the international service management literature rather than in the international trends of ECEC, even though the deliberation used to justify the need for matrix was related to the international human capital investment –discourse.

The travelling policy of outcome-based governing was thus *ousterized* by the local stakeholders. Although international discourses were present – and discourses were transnational in nature – dominant societal roles of ECEC reproduced in the matrix aligned with historical national policy discourse viewing the societal role of ECEC as serving the needs of parents to participate in the labour force. Only a new type of governing tool was introduced. In the process, both ideals and a governing tool morphed and were transformed to fit the objectives of the officials involved in the development work. For example, Silova (2005) has recognized similar phenomena in the context of Central Asia and illuminated, how travelling policies have been ‘hijacked’ by local policy-makers and used for their own purposes nationally.

Whereas in the process of reinforcement, local historical traditions and policy trajectories are shifted to transnational discourses, in the process of ousterisation local expectations and discourses are reified in new kinds of governance solutions which are not in line with the historical inscriptions. It is a process where one

inscription uses other inscription's discursive means without adapting its rationales at the level of materialized governing tools. In this new categorization, the development of actual practices in the everyday life of the people affected by the reform is taken into account. As noted in Chapter 3.1.3, which dealt with the imaginaries of ECEC in the everyday life of preschool in this particular municipality, this outcome-based governance tool, which was a result of an intertwinement process, led to a strengthening of the imaginaries of protecting the negative rights of the children and socializing children to adapt to existing circumstances. At the same time, it participated in the fading of the imaginaries of building the right to a reciprocally constructed social space and building social justice through inclusion. A categorization of this is pictured in Figure 2.

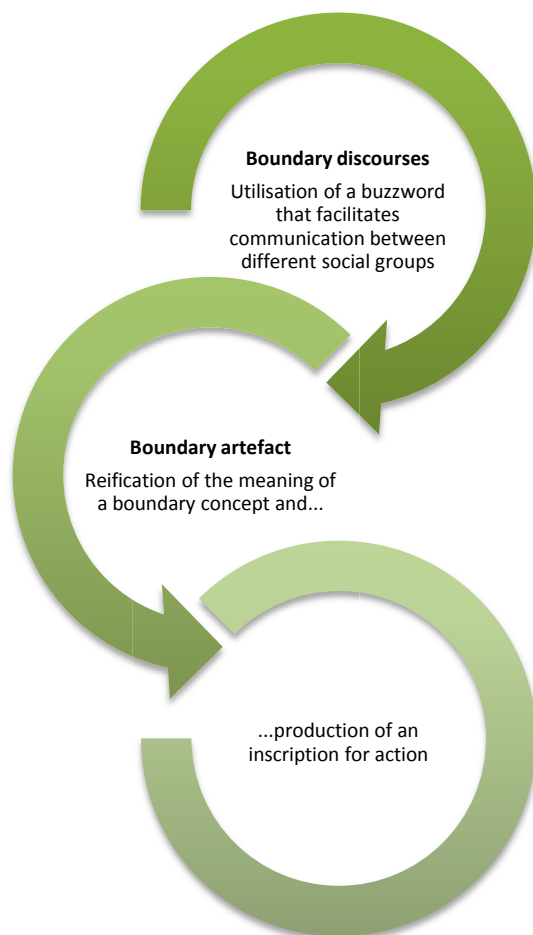


**Figure 2.** Four types of transformation of imaginaries

### **3.2.2 Threefold process of intertwinement of imaginaries**

The analysis of the development of the productivity matrix reported in Article II illuminated that the mechanisms through which imaginaries become institutionalized over other imaginaries can be seen to be threefold. It consists of the use of a boundary concept, or more broadly, boundary discourse, which becomes reified in a governing tool that needs to have performative power. Intertwinement happens in this threefold process (embedded in the concept of imaginary). Examination of the results of Articles III & IV align with these notions. As noted in Article III, every governing tool governing the everyday life of preschool is re-interpreted through discourse of the societal role of ECEC. According to the results of Articles III & IV, governing tool needs to be specific and make concrete statements

concerning preschool life in order to be materialized. This threefold process, combination of discourses and governing tools that together have performative power, explained the strengthening and the diminishing of imaginaries. The threefold process is represented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Threefold process of entanglement of imaginaries

***Boundary discourses***

In the first part of the diffusion process, a tension between imaginaries is resolved with the help of a neutral concept which is fuzzy enough that it can be accepted by many different groups of people. In Articles I and II, concepts of ‘productivity’

and ‘quality’ were used as boundary concepts. In Article I, the concept of ‘quality’ transformed from transparent and participatory to opaque and normative. In Article II, the concept of productivity shifted to signify functional efficiency. The results of Article III uncovered the way in which teachers reconstructed practices which they might have otherwise seen questionable, for example, with the help of the discourses of ‘right’ and ‘preparing to future’.

The fact that this kind of process can be identified is not a novel revelation. For example Steiner-Khamsi (2014) has also observed that certain concepts such as “21st century skills” and “best practices” function as catalysts for change. She notes that this might be because there is no agreement about what they actually mean, such that they can be filled with local meanings. The boundary concept redefines an existing term that is deployed to serve the interest of the definer (Skinner, 2002) by cutting across boundaries. Thus, a boundary concept is usually a buzzword whose fuzziness facilitates communication between different social groups (Löwy, 1992). A boundary concept and discourse develop in interaction between different stakeholder groups in hybrid social arenas. These boundary discourses have the potential to build bridges among interest groups which otherwise would be in opposition.

### ***Boundary artefact***

Articles II and III revealed how the productivity matrix was used as a boundary artefact for crossing between the domains of municipal-level decision-making and the everyday work of preschool teachers. The boundary concept was reified in a mediating artefact which performed as a prescription for action (Ferraris, 2013).

This finding accords well with the earlier notions of Gutiérrez, Baquedán-López and Tejada (1999), Star and Griesemer (1989), and Akkerman and Bakker (2011). As noted by Star and Griesemer (1989), boundary artefacts have different meanings in different social worlds; but at the same time, they have a structure or elements which are common enough to make them usable in different contexts.

Furthermore, Article I illuminated the relations between boundary concept and boundary artefact. When reviewing OECD’s Starting Strong Documents, Article I noted that the transformation of the boundary concept ‘quality’ took place simultaneously with the change of the governance tool: the concept of ‘quality’ ceased to be transparent and open-ended – as it had been in Starting Strong I and II – when it was connected to new type of governing instrument in Starting Strong III (i.e. the check list that reified outcome based performance criteria for quality). It is very hard for outcome-based criteria to be open-ended – and that is why they fit very poorly with transparent and fluid understandings of the societal role of ECEC.

A similar change can be found in Articles I–III of this thesis. When the governing tool is outcome-oriented, the imaginary is not in line with the ideals of

ECEC as fostering democratic participation. This is not surprising: when an outcome is already defined, it is hard to contribute to defining the direction and function of ECEC in society. Outcome-oriented criteria reduce the leeway teachers have for decision-making and make it hard to take into account the perspectives of those children who did not fit into the institutions' expectations.

On the other hand, the observations made in Articles III and IV illuminated that the governing tools that teachers themselves formulated had the potential to function as a sounding board for reflecting the societal roles of ECEC and intensifying the imaginaries that they found important. With the help of material equipment such as open-ended planning charts, calendar markings or pedagogical documentation, teachers can revisit their earlier plans and evaluate how the societal roles of ECEC they found important (in this case, ECEC as building a reciprocally constructed social space and ECEC as ensuring equity) materialized in the everyday life of preschool. This is further explained in the next section.

### ***Inscription for action***

In institutions, nothing social exists outside the text; therefore, papers, archives and documents constitute the fundamental elements of institutional reality. Institutional reality is not based on communication but on registration, which has performative power (Ferraris, 2013). Combination of discourses and governing tools that together have performative power explained the strengthening of imaginaries which highlighted the role of ECEC protecting the negative rights of children and the imaginary of ECEC socializing children to adapt to existing circumstances and the diminishing of the imaginary of social justice.

In reporting practices in everyday life at preschool, Articles III and IV illustrated that governance tools which had performative power formed resilient imaginaries. Those imaginaries that contained an outcome-based governing system that very concretely governed the material life of preschool (i.e. the use of spaces and the number of staff members), survived in situations where different societal roles of ECEC conflicted. The imaginaries equipped with the governing tool that governed material circumstances overrode the others. The officials interviewed in Article II reported that due to the concrete numbers provided by the productivity matrix, managers became more aware of the role of everyday decisions in the ratio between a day-care day and its costs.

If preschool managers have found this useful for their work, the reason may be that this [productivity matrix] puts together different instruments for evaluation so that it becomes an ensemble that you are able, to some extent, to follow. The matrix triggered discussion on leadership and management. Governance and different kinds of practices [tools for management] became more visible.

The outcome-based governing tools that provided clear incentives for actions in preschools produced new intersection points between different agendas and aims. Consequently, they increased the chain-reaction of changes, as well as a number of decisions that teachers needed to make and the things that they needed to take into account when making those decisions. This decision-making appeared like solving a Rubik's cube: the daily life of the preschool resembled a combination puzzle with around 43 quintillion possible positions, with finding an optimal solution being complicated by the fact that every move affects the other parts and the following moves as well. Like in solving a Rubik's cube, it was impossible to engage in an act that would not have an influence on other acts as well. Outcome-based governance tools narrowed the opportunities for teachers' decision-making.

Yet, preschool teachers also cited the fact that they made material inscriptions of actions, which makes imaginaries durable, to manage their work. For example, work distribution charts, written yard rules and calendars were used to produce inscriptions for staff actions to reify the imaginaries the teachers found important. The next excerpt illustrates the use of a shared notebook for planning:

We have had [in this preschool] two identical groups on this floor from the beginning. We share some spaces and take turns using them also in the mornings. While some are outside, the others are inside. We have felt that it is good to do the planning together. We utilize and apply the same plan in both groups... We have never cancelled the things we have planned. Even if some of the adults have not been here, we haven't cancelled anything. Even when I have been absent [as a teacher] they have carried out the plan anyway. If I have not made a plan, the other teacher on this floor has probably done it. If she hasn't done it, our nursery nurses are able to check the earlier plans [from the notebook] and see what we have done and apply something they feel they are capable of doing ... It is important, because then all the children have the possibility to participate [since the whole group does not have the same activities at the same time].

The teacher finds it important that the shared notebook makes it possible for all children to have similar kinds of opportunities for learning and participation. Moreover, Article IV shows that individual ECEC plans had the opportunity to strengthen the imaginaries teachers found important. It required that the plan was concrete and specific. Yet, it was not very common that individual ECEC plans were used in this manner. All in all, it can be concluded that defining and materializing relations by specific inscriptions enabled openings for the enactment of imaginaries.

## 4 REFLECTIONS

This section reflects on the results of the thesis in relation to the aim of the study. The theoretical aim of the study was to examine whether and to what extent the re-definition of institutional reality as transnational imaginaries - acts inscribed in a combination of a discourse of ECEC and a material artifact for governing - helps understand the formation of institutional ECEC. The objectives of this study, set in order to reach the aim, were to map what kinds of combinations of governing tools and views of the societal roles of ECEC can be identified from different levels of policy and governance and how they become actualized in everyday life of preschool and to examine the processes and mechanisms through which some societal roles of ECEC become institutionalized over other societal roles of ECEC.

In addition, this section deals with the other possible contributions, including methodological and practical contributions, accomplished along the way. Although these possible contributions overlap somewhat, I have divided these reflections into three sections in order to better accommodate those readers who may be interested only in one or some of them. In doing this, unfortunately, repetition cannot be fully avoided. In addition to the contributions, this section reflects on the blind spots of this study, which are considered here as possible future directions of ECEC research.

### 4.1 Theoretical reflections

#### 4.1.1 From international to transnational

This section aims to underline the argument that this dissertation has made: moving from international comparisons to examine the transnational developments is useful. Although it has been acknowledged that imaginaries are formed in complex national and multinational relations in local contexts – going beyond international relations – methodologies still mostly deal with the topic from an international perspective: they compare the developments between national-level policies by examining national documents and documents of international organisations. Moreover, as noted in Chapter 2.2.2, typical research on relations between international and local has been trying to answer the question of how a particular policy is deliberated – in other words, what the “selling points” of the policy are (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p. 155). The use of externalization (such as references to other countries, to international organizations, to research or the best practices of other countries) to legitimise the reforms have been noted to be common (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Morrell & Lucas, 2012). It has been argued that there is a need to

understand the process of construction of these selling points and their role in policymaking. Moreover, the implications of the intertwinements of different practices in different scales of governance are not known (see Bulkeley, 2006).

Quite interestingly, in the case of developing the productivity matrix that Article II of this thesis examined, direct references to international education policies, for example, ideas concerning quality ECEC or accountability, or references to other countries, were not used. This dissertation highlights that the origin of imaginaries is complex – they are constructed in complex relations between different actors from different fields. In this study the inspiration for the matrix originated in the international service management literature. Yet the deliberation used to justify the need for matrix reproduced the investment discourse that is prevalent in international discussions concerning ECEC. The intersection of international trends and national traditions was visible, but not highlighted or even recognized – not to mention intended – by the participants. The origin of the new governing tool was in a different field and sector of governance. Since imaginaries are shifting intertwinings rather than solid and simple entities, their so-called origin – where they have their inspirations and triggers – is also complex. Thus, when examining travelling policies, policy convergence or policy diffusion, it is justified and necessary not only to examine those policies (or inscriptions), that are stated to be borrowed from other contexts, but also those that more or less drift into new places and possibly form different kinds of policies and practices when intertwined with local traditions. Thus, it is important in the study of institutional realities that we remain open to seeing both horizontal and vertical movements (i.e., the movements that cover national and sectoral and disciplinary boundaries) within the process of formation of discourses and governance models and, furthermore, imaginaries. This resonates with earlier notions by Steiner-Khamsi (2004) and Waldow (2012).

This notion was possible to make by examining the process of formation of imaginaries (and inscriptions) as being transnational rather than international – giving space for alternative interpretations concerning the origin and formation of imaginaries – by very closely examining the local case. It revealed that formation of imaginaries accrues multiform and varying transitions of both international and sectoral boundaries, rather than simple practices travelling across national borders. Thus, it is important to conceptualize the perspective of scale as being multi-level and multi-directional – and conceptualize imaginaries as being transnational.

#### **4.1.2 The concept of imaginary as a tool for bridging governance and policy studies**

There has been an increasing number of studies which have paid close attention to intertwinings between human/non-human actors and socio-material analysis, and which have thus aimed to make visible those aspects of infrastructure that

function ideologically (Fenwick and Landri, 2012). This study focused more on a specific type of socio-materiality: namely, the institutionalized reality of ECEC and governance instruments. This thesis aimed to explore whether the re-conceptualisation of 'social' aligning with new realisms can help us map the process of formation of institutional ECEC in the transnational era in a fruitful way. The re-conceptualisation of institutional reality inspired by Ferraris' (2013) Documentality and Jessop's (2010) concept of 'imaginary' helped shifting the focus onto intertwinings which consist of governing instruments and societal roles of ECEC and led to examinations of them beginning from acts in the every-day life of preschool. This resulted in a new kind of approach towards and knowledge of ECEC policy and governance.

The integration of the results of Articles I–IV illuminated how it was useful to analyse both the discourse that was used for deliberating acts and material circumstances and ways of governing the ECEC, in order to understand how certain imaginaries strengthened and others faded. Inscriptions that contained a governing system that very concretely governed the material life of preschool (i.e. the use of spaces and the number of staff members) were found appealing, and moreover, survived in situations where different societal roles of ECEC conflicted.

I have illuminated that examining dynamics with the help of the concept of imaginary directs us to take both policy discourses and materialized governance practices into account, providing as more nuanced tool for understanding transnational intertwinement processes. Thus, this thesis suggests that examining the metamorphoses of policies through the lens of imaginaries would provide a tentative framework for further examinations, so that the drift between social sub-systems could become more clearly visible as well.

Scholarship on governmental technologies has tended to make the understanding of politics more technical by presenting instrumental activities or techniques of governing (Barry, 2002). However, by re-assessing the debates about the governmental technologies of ECEC, the depoliticization of ECEC and the global diffusion of ECEC policies and discourses, some useful avenues may be developed. This thesis argues that the concept of imaginary which takes seriously the discursive turn in policy studies but stresses the importance of material aspects in formation of cultural processes helps us develop a more nuanced view of both institutional ECEC and policy diffusion. Combining these aspects was made possible by applying Ferraris' (2013) theory of ontology of social.

It is important to note that presuppositions of the societal role of ECEC, not to speak of an act conducted in an ECEC setting, do not belong to just one policy tradition or regime. Therefore, when examining the everyday life of ECEC, it is useful to have more nuanced conceptual tools than, for example, 'neo-liberalism' (which is very often used in a pejorative manner) or 'social democratic welfare regime' (which is often presented as an ideal, unanimous model), as they do not

help us understand the every day practices of preschools. Even though all the different imaginaries are present in the everyday life of ECEC, there is a variation in the balance between different imaginaries in different socio-political traditions, especially in terms of how they are related to different governing mechanisms.

As I have noted earlier in this thesis, studies on travelling policies and particularly on policy intertwinement and assemblages reveal a commitment to the understanding of mobility being part of the realm of ‘social’ which makes it also power-laden. The results have strengthened the view of ECEC policy as not simply negotiated between politicians and bureaucrats but also between citizens, i.e., teachers, nursery nurses, parents and children in their every day practices. Policy does not just involve relationships between national or international governmental organizations, but also relationships between local authorities, ordinary people doing their every day work, governance tools and the every day environment.

## 4.2 Practical reflections

The transnational era is marked by increased flows of foreign capital, increased foreign investment in some parts of the world, increased world trade, the global interconnectedness of production, the increased movement of people for labour purposes and an increased flow of information and communication (Deacon, 2007). This kind of interconnectedness influences the formation of ECEC in the local context; these developments have set nation states in competition with each other. Since capital investments are important for national economies, states have reduced their welfare commitments, including the ECEC sector, in order to lower taxes, employer costs and to be more appealing from the point of view of capital investments. This has been argued to produce a race to the bottom among welfare states – minimizing regulation and social security and moving the responsibility of organizing public services to private companies. Global interconnectedness has turned the attention to national-level economic competitiveness. These kinds of ideals, often called neoliberalism, rely on a greater role of markets and greater individual responsibility. The continuing claim is that private companies, individuals and, most importantly, unhindered markets can best generate economic growth and welfare (Deacon, 2007).

The premises of this line of thinking are that inequalities are acceptable as far as they are a result of individual choices and as far as everyone has equal opportunities to make choices concerning their life course and to pursue their personal goals. The obvious shortcoming of this premise is the inequality of childhood. Children are born in different kinds of families with different resources. Young children are not able to make choices concerning their life course, and they are dependent on the support and choices of their parents. Free markets have not been

able to produce services which are as equitable as publicly run ECEC systems (Lloyd & Penn, 2012).

Statistical knowledge has allowed preschools to be compared giving both municipal administrators and preschool managers the sense of having some oversight into each preschool's functional efficiency. This has led to a pressure to meet rising expectations of efficiency, and more importantly, a pressure to demonstrate performance. This kind of performativity development is in line with developments in other countries (see Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016, 2015; Ball, 2003). Outcome-based governance has been noted to encourage a functional "datafication" of pedagogy, so that the teacher's work is increasingly constrained by performativity demands. Thus, these measurement systems act as a "meta-policy" that steers the every day life of the preschool and has the power to challenge, disrupt and constrain early-years teachers' pedagogical values (Roberts-Holms, 2015, p. 302). Outcome-based governance strategies have resulted in the loss of professionalism in ECEC.

This study suggests that outcome-based governance tools, together with the discourses of individual rights and preparing for further life, may direct the development of everyday practices of ECEC to require children to excessively adapt to rigid and tightening norms. Discourses of individual rights (and the demand to concentrate on school readiness in other occasions of the data) helped teachers justify their increased role in socializing children to narrowing institutional demands. This development is especially disadvantageous for those who do not fit into these norms and would benefit from the scaffolding of their agency. This kind of scaffolding became difficult if there was not room for teacher's contextual decision making.

This all is in line with what Blackmore (2004) describes as the structural reforms in the fields of education in the 1990s, which drew on new modes of governmentality. These developments, however, were focused on supporting children in least favorable positions – as highlighted also for example by the World Bank – whereas enacted imaginaries in Finland, to some extent, let down the children in need. Both of these developments discarded tradition of highlighting democracy and inclusion, which support social policy as 'a means of securing social cohesion' (Deacon, 2007, p. 25).

The unintended consequences of performing accountability, which seem to always be paired with outcome-based governance tools, have been observed several times before. It has been noted that professionals have become subjected to processes that underline and diminish their agency (Elton, 2000; Settlage & Meadows, 2002), and performance measures have been used for justifying and facilitating markets by framing schools abandoned by the state as public sector failures (Lipman, 2013). There is a danger of both of these unfortunate developments in Finnish ECEC.

Outcome-based governance would require critical examination if we want to foster the idea of the societal role of ECEC to enhance social justice and equity. The results revealed that there are indeed signs that the imaginary highlighting equity and democratic participation in Finnish ECEC is diminishing. Emphasis on these aims has been characteristic of Finnish and Nordic ECEC (Mahon et al. 2012). Among the lack of opportunities to make situative decisions on a pedagogical basis, one of the reasons why the imaginary of social justice was fading was the lack of adult involvement in play. Studies report that adult engagement in play is important for the social justice perspective. If children receive the support needed to participate in a peer group they are likely to have friends. It safeguards children from social isolation and is associated with social and academic success. Yet, children with different kinds of social skills than expected by the ECEC institution have more difficulties in making or developing friendships than their peers (see for example Kim & Cicchetti, 2010). Therefore, a lack of staff engagement is more likely to affect children that would benefit from adult support. This may lead to indifference regarding the opportunities for children with different kinds of culturally constructed capacities.

These findings of this dissertation resonate with earlier studies which have noted that managerial governance reduces opportunities for social equity and democratic participation (for example, Bartlett et al. 2002). By reducing the autonomy of teachers, it creates inefficient practices, since the full capacity of the teachers' expertise cannot be utilized. Yet, there are still possibilities for resisting this regulatory gaze by governance tools created by teachers themselves. Supporting the earlier notions of Fenech and Sumsion (2007) and Osgood (2006), this study showed how teachers are able to utilize regulations for strengthening imaginaries they find appealing. This study suggests that it may be that a strong discourse of equity and/or governance by norms and recourses rather than governance by outcomes is needed to meet the aim of equity in childhood.

The ECEC policy and governance developments in Finland can be understood by examining both the historical development of Finnish ECEC policy and international ECEC policy trends. In Finnish ECEC policies, the dominant imaginary primarily considers ECEC an expense for society which is necessary for providing parents with the opportunity to participate in working life. Thus, the child-related idea of investment in ECEC that dominates international documents concerning ECEC (Dahlberg and Moss, 2004; Mahon, 2009; Penn, 2011a) has been absent from institutionalised imaginaries in Finnish ECEC. The interpretation here is twofold: first, because Finnish teachers in schools and preschools are highly educated and have had rather autonomous positions, there has been no need for or history of measuring the quality of ECEC and creating reified standards for it. Also, Finnish ECEC was governed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health until the beginning of 2013; thus, the national documents guiding curricula have been recommendations rather than legal requirements. Secondly, since the Nordic

countries have had a tradition of providing accessible public services, there has been no need for deliberations on investments in ECEC. This thesis suggests that the imaginary stressing efficiency and utility replaced the imaginaries highlighting equity and democratic participation since the latter discourse has not manifested in officially binding documents. These developments may indicate why the imaginary stressing investment on children has been lacking in Finland. This has created a tension between the imaginary stressing the importance of the efficiency of public services and rationales highlighting the long-term societal role of ECEC. Although they are not theoretically unfit, they are not easily combined due to historical legacies and due to the incompatibility of outcome-focused governance tools and aims of equity and democratic participation.

However, although the inscriptions manifested and institutionalised in official national documents do not meet the international inscriptions of investment in ECEC, in a more informal context the idea of investment has begun to appear in public discussions on ECEC (for example, Karlsson & Kalliomaa, 2015; Sipilä, 2015). Finnish ECEC is at a transition point. Even though historical trajectories play an important part in defining future policy directions, new kinds of governing tools that produce inscriptions for action have the power to transform these trajectories. The friction between the outcome-based tools and equity discourse materializes as a disjuncture between 1) the way the preschool teachers organized their actions as a response to governance practices and 2) their ideals. The feeling of being overloaded by conflicting aims shaped the teachers' practices which were grounded in the actualities of their daily work.

It is worth emphasizing here that in trying to make sense of policy developments in ECEC, there is a need to be careful. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the representation of policy and governance experiences as cases of either success or failure is never neutral; it is a deeply ideological process. Therefore, asking if a policy is a failure or success is not a possible starting point because it assumes that their status as such is unquestionable and unproblematic. In sum, it is critical not to frame governance tools as a smooth and purely technical matter. Although using these tools offers a convenient technocratic language to frame different kinds of activities, this should not be seen as evidence that they implement some predefined policy aims. As it became clear in Article III and again in Chapter 4.1.3, they clearly did not. What can be concluded is that it is important to remember that any tool of governance needs to serve as a lens, not as blinders for decision-making.

### 4.3 Methodological reflections

This section reflects on the question to what extent the methodological approach selected and further developed in this study helps increase our understanding on ECEC policy.

The critics have argued that traditional policy analysis in education has a history of viewing policy as a top-down process (Sutton & Levinson, 2001). Also the focus of the earlier examinations of ECEC policy has mainly been on mapping the different types of governance of ECEC systems or the discourses that can be identified from policy texts (for example Gibson, McArdle & Hatcher, 2015), rather than the everyday life of children and ECEC workers. On the other hand, although there are a great number of micro-level studies – some of which look beyond the level of every day life and focus on the ways in which different roles of ECEC become enacted and interpreted in different countries (Tobin, 2005) – they often pass over the transnational flow of ideas and international and national policy and governance trends. Therefore, there has been a need to challenge the tendency to conduct social analyses only on the level of either individuals (micro-reductionism) or society as a whole (macro-reductionism) (DeLanda, 2006).

Accordingly, in an effort to not fall into the pits of micro- or macro-reductionism, this thesis used a multimethod approach to provide both a perspective of scale (Keil & Mahon, 2009) and the perspective of every day practices. This was not a completely novel idea, however: post-transfer literature has previously tried to follow the policy rather than assuming the nature of the journey in advance (Peck and Theodore, 2012). Such studies have, however, been rare in ECEC policy research. Therefore, one of the potential contributions of this thesis to the academic discussion is its methodological experimentation.

For educational and social science research to be valuable, it needs to be in touch, one way or another, with the people whose world and life are being researched. The results of this thesis supported the idea that it is crucial to investigate ECEC practices ethnographically when examining the policies and governance of ECEC. For example, Articles III and IV revealed that some of the teachers were very skilled at managing their practices in such a way that they did not feel that they were encountering tensions between imaginaries. Creating material devices helped them coordinate their work so that it had the societal meaning of ECEC they felt significant. These material devices, which could not have been obtained by examining national or transnational documents, influenced the formation of ECEC.

Moreover, the document-aided interviews allowed for the bridging of information concerning practices and policy context. By merely observing, it would not have been possible to grasp how teachers constructed the meanings of their every day practices. In addition, by only interviewing the participants, it would

not have been possible to gain detailed information concerning their actual everyday activities. In this study, the participatory approach (i.e. observation diary aided interviews) helped overcome this dilemma.

The methods used here would have provided a means to encounter preschool teachers or children as co-researchers. This kind of participatory focus is increasing in social and educational research (see for example Pyyry, 2015; Hilppö, 2016). However, although preschool teachers did take part in a preliminary analysis of the data during the interviews, I do not conceptualize them here as co-researchers. This would have required me to include them as participants posing questions and interpreting results, in addition to taking part in generating the data. In this study, this did not happen. Yet, this is one possible direction to take in further studies.

#### **4.4 The relevance and applicability of the research findings**

This section reflects the pragmatic validity (Kvale, 1995) – that is, the relevance and applicability – of the study. What is the value of this research academically and for ECEC more generally? What does this dissertation not cover?

Despite gaining valuable information from different scales, there are limitations in the scope of my analysis which are not trivial. While I have covered institutional ECEC in preschools in one municipality in Finland, there are other institutional child care settings such as family day-care which are not covered. Also, even though there has been a universal access to ECEC in Finland, this does not mean that the attendance is equally distributed between different kinds of families. In terms of what kinds of views of children and their future become manifested when parents are making child care choices, a lot happens: whether parents prefer, feel obliged or need to take care of their children at home, use public ECEC services or select a private provider. In order to have a holistic picture of the ECEC system, this needs to be covered in later studies.

The ethnographic part of the study took place in one municipality in Finland. It is thus a case study which results concerning the every day life practices in preschools cannot be directly generalized. Yet, this was not the aim of the study. The empirical results serve here as a means to approach theoretical and methodological questions. As I have already tried to point out, my way of theorizing the formation of institutional ECEC in this study offers understanding that can be used for research and developing purposes more generally.

The study made visible the contradictions that educators struggle with on a daily basis and brought in focus the complexity of ECEC governance and practices. As I explicated in Chapter 1, this research is situated in a specific historical

time – the rise of the era of accountability and transnational time. Studying governance and policies of ECEC in this historical time has revealed important aspects of the particularity of the prerequisites of this era.

With the help of the four research articles included in this thesis, it is not possible to state to what extent transnational developments influence national trajectories or local practices more generally; the phenomenon is complicated and the answer open-ended. The contribution of my findings is found in the careful examination and clarification of the processes of hybridization and ousterization where new governing practices emerged and became possible, as well as how governing tools that govern the material circumstances of preschool have power over traditional imaginaries of ECEC.

I began this book by referring to the idea of Hannah Arendt, according to which one of the roles of research is to help develop democratic oases in the desert (Isaac, 1994). I hope that this study contributes to the academic field by offering one line for continuous discussion on theoretical concepts concerning travelling policies and governance as well as for discussion of onto-epistemological groundings of multidisciplinary methodology and methodology of policy and governance research. This would be considered having “heuristic validity” (Kvale, 1995). I hope that by doing this, the study has contributed to building understandings that will help the academic community along with other people involved in ECEC issues to continue developing the oases that are yet to be found.

## References

- Abebe, T., & Bessell, S. (2014). Advancing ethical research with children: critical reflections on ethical guidelines. *Children's Geographies*, 12(1), 126–133.
- Act on Children's Day Care (1973). [Finland].
- Akkerman, S. & Bakker, A. (2011) Boundary Crossing and Boundary Objects. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 132–169.
- Alasuutari, P., & Alasuutari, M. (2012). The domestication of early childhood education plans in Finland. *Global Social Policy*, 12(2), 129–148.
- Alasuutari, P., & Qadir, A. (2013). *National policy-making: domestication of global trends*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Alén, S. (2015, September 23). Päiväkodeissa on jo nyt ahdasta [letter to the editor]. *Helsingin Sanomat*. Retrieved from <http://www.hs.fi/mielipide/a1442890439448> [March 15, 2016].
- Alila, K. (2013). *Varhaiskasvatuksen laadun ohjaus ja ohjauksen laatu. Laatu-puhe varhaiskasvatuksen valtionhallinnon ohjausasiakirjoissa 1972–2012*. Doctoral dissertation. Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Anderson-Levitt, K. (Ed.). (2003). *Local meanings, global schooling. Anthropology and world culture theory*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ball, S. J. (2000). Performativities and fabrications in the education economy: Towards the performative society? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 1–23.
- Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of education policy*, 18(2), 215–228.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barry, A. (2002). The Anti-Political Economy. *Economy & Society*, 31(2), 268–84.
- Bartlett, L., Frederick, M., Gulbrandsen, T. & Murillo, E. (2002). The marketization of education: Public schools for private ends. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 33(1), 5–29.
- Basic Education Act (1998/628). Finland.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. London: Duke University Press.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1991). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin UK. (Original work published 1966)
- Biesta, G. J. (2010). Why 'what works' still won't work: From evidence-based education to value-based education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 29(5), 491–503.

- Blackmore, J. (2004). Restructuring educational leadership in changing contexts: A local/global account of restructuring in Australia. *Journal of Educational Change*, 5(3), 267–288.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bulkeley, H. (2006). Urban sustainability: learning from best practice? *Environment and planning*, 38(6), 1029–1044.
- Burr, V. (1998). Overview: Realism, relativism, social constructionism and discourse. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism* (pp. 13–26). London: Sage.
- Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. M. (2002). *Mapping social relations: A primer in doing institutional ethnography*. University of Toronto Press.
- Campbell-Barr, V. (2012). Early years education and the value for money folklore. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 20(3), 423–437.
- Cannella, G. S. (1997). *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education: Social Justice and Revolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Carney, S. (2009). Negotiating policy in an age of globalization: Exploring educational “policyscapes” in Denmark, Nepal, and China. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(1), 63–88.
- Castoriadis, C. (1997). *The imaginary institution of society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cheeseman, S., Sumsion, J., & Press, F. (2014). Infants of the knowledge economy: the ambition of the Australian Government’s Early Years Learning Framework. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 22(3), 405–424.
- Child home care and private care allowance act 1128/1996 [Finland]
- Christina, R. (2006). *Tend the olive, water the vine: Globalization and the negotiation of early childhood in Palestine*. Greenwich: IAP.
- Coole, D. and Frost S. (Eds.). (2010). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*. London, Duke University Press.
- Corsaro, W. A., & Eder, D. (1990). Children's peer cultures. *Annual review of sociology*, 16, 197–220.
- Cowen, R. (2009). The transfer, translation and transformation of educational processes: and their shape - shifting? *Comparative Education*, 45(3), 315–327.
- Cunha, F., & Heckman, J. (2007). The technology of skill formation. *American Economic Review*, 97(2), 31–47.
- Dahlberg, G., & Moss, P. (2004). *Ethics and politics in early childhood education*. London: Routledge.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Languages of evaluation*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Deacon, B. [1997] (2007). *Global social policy: International organizations and the future of welfare*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- De Landa, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. London: A&C Black.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1980)
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *The research act* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- DeVault, M., & McCoy, L. (2002). Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method* (pp. 751–76). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Duncan, J. (2004). Misplacing the teacher? New Zealand early childhood teachers and early childhood education policy reforms, 1984–96. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 5(2), 160–177.
- Elliott, H. 1997. The use of diaries in sociological research on health experience. *Sociological Research Online*, 2(2). Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/2/2/7> [28 July, 2016].
- Elton, L. (2000). The UK research assessment exercise: unintended consequences. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 54(3), 274–283.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (Ed.). (1996). *Welfare states in transition: National adaptations in global economies*. London: Sage.
- EV 112/2015 [Parliament's reply no 122]. (2015). Retrieved from [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/eduskunnan-vastaus/Sivut/EV\\_112+2015.aspx](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/eduskunnan-vastaus/Sivut/EV_112+2015.aspx) [April 14, 2016]
- Fairclough, I., & Fairclough, N. (2013). *Political discourse analysis: A method for advanced students*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., Jessop, B., & Sayer, A. (2002). Critical realism and semiosis. *Alethia*, 5(1), 2–10.
- Fenech, M. (2011). An Analyses of the Conceptualisation of "Quality" in Early Childhood Education and Care Empirical Research: Promoting "blind spots" as foci for future research. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 12(2), 102–117.
- Fenech, M. (2013). Quality early childhood education for my child or for all children?: Parents as activists for equitable, high-quality early childhood education in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 38(4), 92–98.
- Fenech, M., & Sumsion, J. (2007). Early childhood teachers and regulation: Complicating power relations using a Foucauldian lens. *Contemporary issues in early childhood*, 8(2), 109–122.
- Fenwick, T., & Landri, P. (2012). Materialities, textures and pedagogies: socio-material assemblages in education. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 20(1), 1–7.

- Fenwick, T., Mangez, E., & Ozga, J. (Eds.). (2014). *World Yearbook of Education 2014: Governing Knowledge: Comparison, Knowledge-Based Technologies and Expertise in the Regulation of Education*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Ferrando, F. (2013). Posthumanism, transhumanism, antihumanism, metahumanism, and new materialisms: differences and relations. *Existenz*, 8(2), 26–32.
- Ferraris, M. (2013). *Documentality: Why It Is Necessary to Leave Traces*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. (2009). *Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences and proposals for ethical review*. National Advisory Board on Research Ethics. <http://www.tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/ethicalprinciples.pdf> [accessed March 30, 2016]
- Flick, U. (2017). Mantras and Myths. The Disenchantment of Mixed-Methods Research and Revisiting Triangulation as a Perspective. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(1), 46–57.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. (A. M. S. Smith, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books. (Original work published 1969)
- Gibson, M., McArdle, F., & Hatcher, C. (2015). Governing child care in neoliberal times: Discursive constructions of children as economic units and early childhood educators as investment brokers. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 5(3), 322–332.
- Guba, E. G. (Ed.). (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gutiérrez, K., Baquedano-López, P. & Tejeda, C. (1999). Rethinking Diversity: Hybridity and Hybrid Language Practices in the Third Space. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 6(4), 286–303.
- Haluaisin maksaa päivähoidosta enemmän. (2015 October 8). [letter to the editor] *Helsingin Sanomat*. Retrieved from <http://www.hs.fi/pai- vanlehti/08102015/a1444187791371> [March 15, 2016].
- Hammersley, M. (2014). On the ethics of interviewing for discourse analysis. *Qualitative Research*, 14(5), 529–541.
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Hatch, J. A., & Grieshaber, S. (2002). Child observation and accountability in early childhood education: Perspectives from Australia and the United States. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 29(4), 227–231.
- Hay, C. (2004). Common Trajectories, Variable Paces, Divergent Outcomes? Models of European Capitalism under Conditions of Complex Economic Interdependence, *Review of International Political Economy*, 11(2), 231–62.
- Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science*, 312, 1900–1902.

- Heiskanen, N. (2015, November 26). Varhaiskasvatus hyödyttää kaikkia lapsia [letter to the editor]. *Helsingin Sanomat*. Retrieved from <http://www.hs.fi/mielipide/a1448430313765> [March 15, 2016].
- Hilppö, J. (2016). *Children's Sense of Agency: a Co-Participatory Investigation*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Helsinki.
- Højholt, C., & Kousholt, D. (2014). Participant Observations of Children's Communities—Exploring Subjective Aspects of Social Practice. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(3), 316–334.
- Holland, D., & Lave, J. (Eds.). (2001). *History in person. Enduring Struggles: Contentious practice, intimate identities* (pp. 1–32). Oxford: James Currey.
- Howe, K. R. (1988). Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard. *Educational researcher, 17*(8), 10–16.
- Ibarreta, G. I., & McLeod, L. (2004). Thinking aloud on paper: An experience in journal writing. *Journal of Nursing Education, 43*(3), 134–137.
- Isaac, J. C. (1994). Oases in the Desert: Hannah Arendt on Democratic Politics. *American Political Science Review, 88*(1), 156–168.
- Jacelon, C. S., & Imperio, K. (2005). Participant diaries as a source of data in research with older adults. *Qualitative health research, 15*(7), 991–997.
- James, A., & Prout, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Janhonen, K. (2016). *Adolescents' Participation and Agency in Food Education*. Doctoral Dissertation. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Jenson, J. (2010). Diffusing Ideas for After Neoliberalism The Social Investment Perspective in Europe and Latin America. *Global Social Policy, 10*(1), 59–84.
- Jessop, B. (2008). A Cultural Political Economy of Competitiveness and Its Implications for Higher Education. In B. Jessop, N. Fairclough, & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe* (pp. 13–40). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Jessop, B. (2010). Cultural Political Economy and Critical Policy Studies. *Critical Policy Studies, 3*(3–4), 336–356.
- Jones, L., Osgood, J., Holmes, R., & MacLure, M. (2014). Eu(rope) (Re)assembling, (Re)casting, and (Re)aligning Lines of De- and Re-territorialisation of Early Childhood. *International Review of Qualitative Research, 7*(1), 58–79.
- Jääskeläinen, A. (2010). *Productivity Measurement and Management in Large Public Service Organizations*. Doctoral dissertation. Tampere: Tampere University of Technology Publication.
- Jørgensen, M. W., & Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage.

- Kagan, S. L., & Gomez, R. E. (Eds.). (2015). *Early Childhood Governance: Choices and Consequences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kalliala, M. (1999). *Enkeliprinsessa ja itsari liukumäessä: leikkikulttuuri ja yhteiskunnan muutos*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Karlsson, L., & Kalliomaa, M. (2015). Varhaiskasvatus on tuottava investointi [blog]. Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto. Retrieved from <http://www.mll.fi/blogi/?x16855855=w25935262> [March 17, 2016]
- Karila, K. (2012). A Nordic perspective on early childhood education and care policy. *European Journal of Education*, 47(4), 584–595.
- Keil, R., & Mahon, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Leviathan undone?: Towards political economy of scale*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Kim, J., & Cicchetti, D. (2010). Longitudinal pathways linking child maltreatment, emotion regulation, peer relations, and psychopathology. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 51(6), 706–716.
- Kuukka, A. (2015). *Lapset, ruumiillisuus ja päiväkodin järjestys: tutkimus ruumiillisuuden tuottamisesta ja merkityksellistymisestä lasten päiväkotiarjessa*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Jyväskylä.
- Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1, 19–40.
- Lappalainen, S. (2004). "Piiri pieni pyörii": pojat, kansallisuus ja erot esikouluissa. *Kasvatus*, 35(2), 133–144.
- Lappalainen, S. (2006). *Kansallisuus, etnisyyt ja sukupuoli lasten välisissä suhteissa ja esiopetuksen käytännöissä*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Helsinki.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Law, J. (2009). Actor network theory and material semiotics. In B.S. Turner (Eds.), *The new Blackwell companion to social theory* (pp. 141–158). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lehtinen, A. R. (2000). *Lasten kesken. Lapset toimijoina päiväkodissa*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto.
- Levinson, B. A., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2009). Education policy as a practice of power theoretical tools, ethnographic methods, democratic options. *Educational Policy*, 23(6), 767–795.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 4). (pp. 97–128). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lipman, P. (2013). Economic crisis, accountability, and the state's coercive assault on public education in the USA. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(5), 557–573.

- Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (Eds.) (2012). *Childcare Markets: Can They Deliver an Equitable Service?* Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Löwy, I. (1992). The Strength of Loose Concepts—Boundary Concepts, Federative Experimental Strategies and Disciplinary Growth: The Case of Immunology. *History of Science*, 30, 371–396.
- Mahon, R. (2002). Child care: Toward what kind of “social Europe”? *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 9(3), 343–379.
- Mahon, R. (2006). The OECD and the work/family reconciliation agenda: competing frames. In J. Lewis (Eds.), *Children, changing families and welfare states* (pp. 173–197). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Mahon, R. (2009). Of scalar hierarchies and welfare redesign: Childcare in four Canadian cities. In R. Kiel & R. Mahon (Eds.), *Leviathan undone? Towards political economy of scale* (pp. 209–230). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Mahon, R. (2010). After neo-liberalism? The OECD, the World Bank and the child. *Global Social Policy*, 10(2), 172–192.
- Mahon, R. (2016). Early Childhood Education and Care in Global Discourses. In K. Mundi, A. Green, B. Lindagard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *Handbook of Global Education Policy* (pp. 224–240). West Sussex: John Wiley and Son.
- Mahon, R., Anttonen, A., Bergqvist, C., Brennan, D., & Hobson, B. (2012). Convergent care regimes? Childcare arrangements in Australia, Canada, Finland and Sweden. *Journal of European social policy*, 22(4), 419–431.
- Maroy, C. (2009). Convergences and hybridization of educational policies around ‘post - bureaucratic’ models of regulation. *Compare*, 39(1), 71–84.
- Marston, S. A., Jones, J. P., & Woodward, K. (2005). Human geography without scale. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(4), 416–432.
- McCann, E. (2013). Policy boosterism, policy mobilities, and the extrospective city. *Urban Geography*, 34(1), 5–29.
- McCann, E., & Ward, K. (2012). Policy assemblages, mobilities and mutations: Toward a multidisciplinary conversation. *Political studies review*, 10(3), 325–332.
- Miller, T. R., Baird, T. D., Littlefield, C. M., Kofinas, G., Chapin III, F. S., & Redman, C. L. (2008). Epistemological pluralism: reorganizing interdisciplinary research. *Ecology and Society*, 13(2), 46.
- Ministry of Education and Culture (2014). Kohti varhaiskasvatustakia. Varhaiskasvatusta koskevan lainsäädännön uudistamistyöryhmän raportti. Helsinki. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2014:11.

- Moran-Ellis, J., Alexander, V. D., Cronin, A., Dickinson, M., Fielding, J., Sleney, J., & Thomas, H. (2006). Triangulation and integration: processes, claims and implications. *Qualitative research*, 6(1), 45–59.
- Morel, N., Palier, B., & Palme, J. (2012). *Towards a social investment welfare state?: ideas, policies and challenges*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Morrell, K., & Lucas, J. W. (2012). The replication problem and its implications for policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies*, 6(2), 182–200.
- Moss, P. (2007). Bringing politics into the nursery: Early childhood education as a democratic practice. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(1), 5–20.
- Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Moss, P., & Dahlberg, G. (2008). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care—Languages of evaluation*. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 5(1), 3–12.
- National Board of Education (2016). Määräys 39/011/2016.
- Naudeau, S. (2011). *Investing in young children: An early childhood development guide for policy dialogue and project preparation*. World Bank Publications.
- Naukkarinen, J. (2015 November 24). Mistä kotihoidossa oleva lapsi jää paitsi? [letter to the editor]. *Helsingin Sanomat*. Retrieved from <http://www.hs.fi/mielipide/a1448253790672> [March 15, 2016].
- Nespor, J. (2016). Future imaginaries of urban school reform. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(2), 1–30.
- Neuman, M. (2005). Governance of early childhood education and care: recent developments in OECD countries. *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 25(2), 129–141.
- Novinger, S., & O'Brien, L. (2003). Beyond 'Boring, Meaningless Shit' in the Academy: early childhood teacher educators under the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 4(1), 3–31.
- Oberhuemer, P., & Ulich, M. (1997). *Working with young children in Europe: Provision and staff training*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.
- OECD (2001). *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2006). *Starting strong II: Early childhood education and care*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2007). *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life. A Synthesis of Results*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD (2012). *Starting Strong III – A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.

- Onnismaa, E. L. (2010). *Lapsi, lapsuus ja perhe varhaiskasvatusasiakirjoissa 1967–1999*. Doctoral Dissertation. University of Helsinki.
- Onnismaa, E. L., & Kalliala, M. (2010). Finnish ECEC policy: interpretations, implementations and implications. *Early Years*, 30(3), 267–277.
- Osgood, J. (2006). Deconstructing professionalism in early childhood education: Resisting the regulatory gaze. *Contemporary issues in early childhood*, 7(1), 5–14.
- Osgood, J. (2010). Reconstructing professionalism in ECEC: the case for the ‘critically reflective emotional professional’. *Early Years*, 30(2), 119–133.
- Ozga, J., Dahler-Larsen, P., Segerholm, C. & Simola, H. (Eds.). (2011). *Fabricating quality in education: Data and governance in Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Ozga, J., & Jones, R. (2006). Travelling and embedded policy: the case of knowledge transfer. *Journal of education policy*, 21(1), 1–17.
- Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2005). The meanings embedded within childcare regulations: a historical analysis. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(1), 41–53.
- Paju, E. (2013). *Lasten arjen ainekset: Etnografinen tutkimus materiaalisuudesta, ruumiillisuudesta ja toimijuudesta päiväkodissa*. Doctoral dissertation. Helsinki: Episteme.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Peck, J. (2011). Geographies of policy: from transfer-diffusion to mobility-mutation. *Progress in Human Geography*, 35(6), 773–97.
- Peck, J., & Theodore, N. (2012). Reanimating neoliberalism: process geographies of neoliberalisation. *Social Anthropology*, 20(2), 177–185.
- Penn, H. (2009). *Early childhood education and care: Key lessons from research for policy makers*. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture.
- Penn, H. (2010). Shaping the future: How human capital arguments about investment in early childhood are being (mis)used in poor countries. In N. Yealland (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on early childhood education* (pp. 49–65). New York: Open University Press.
- Penn, H. (2011a). Travelling policies and global buzzwords: How international non-governmental organizations and charities spread the word about early childhood in the global South. *Childhood*, 18(1), 94–113.
- Penn, H. (2011b). *Quality in Early Childhood Services-An International Perspective: An International Perspective*. New York: Open University Press.
- Piattoeva, N. (2015). Elastic numbers: national examinations data as a technology of government. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30(3), 316–334.

- Pihlaja, P. (2003). Varhaiserityiskasvatus suomalaisessa päivähoidossa. Erityisen tuen tarpeet sosiaalis-emotionaalisisella ja kielellisen kehityksen alueilla. Turun yliopiston julkaisuja 208. Turku: University of Turku.
- Polamo, K. (2015, September 9). Suuret ryhmäkoot lisäävät lapsen stressiä [letter to the editor]. Helsingin Sanomat. <http://www.hs.fi/mielipide/a1441700363795> [accessed March 15, 2016].
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1997). A changing terrain of knowledge and power: A social epistemology of educational research. *Educational Researcher*, 26(9), 18–29.
- Power, M. (1997). *The audit society: Rituals of verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Prince, R. (2010). Policy transfer as policy assemblage: making policy for the creative industries in New Zealand. *Environment and Planning*, 42(1), 169–186.
- Prince, R. (2012). Policy transfer, consultants and the geographies of governance. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(2), 188–203.
- Pyry, N. (2016). Learning with the city via enchantment: photo-walks as creative encounters. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(1), 102–115.
- Ranson, S. (2003). Public accountability in the age of neo-liberal governance. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(5), 459–480.
- Rauhala, O., & Berg, L. (2015, October 9) Psykkisesti oireilevia lapsia ei saa jättää yksin [letter to the editor]. Helsingin Sanomat. Retrieved from <http://www.hs.fi/mielipide/a1444271907432> [March 15, 2016].
- Rautalin, M. (2013). *Domestication of International Comparisons: The role of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in Finnish education policy*. Doctoral Dissertation. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Rigby, E. (2007). Same policy area, different politics: How characteristics of policy tools alter the determinants of early childhood education policy. *Policy Studies Journal*, 35(4), 653–669.
- Rinne, R., & Ozga, J. (2011). Europe and the global: The role of the OECD in education politics. In J. Ozga, P. Dahler-Larsen, C. Segerholm, & H. Simola (Eds.), *Fabricating Quality in Education. Data and Governance in Europe* (pp. 66–75). Oxon: Routledge.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2015). The ‘datafication’ of early years pedagogy: ‘if the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there’s bad teaching, there is bad data’. *Journal of Education Policy*, 30(3), 302–315.
- Roberts-Holmes, G., & Bradbury, A. (2016). Governance, accountability and the datafication of early years education in England. *British Educational Research Journal*, 42(4), 600–613.

- Rutanen, N. (2007a). Two-year-old children as co-constructors of culture. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15(1), 59–69.
- Rutanen, N. (2007b). *Water in action: Encounters among 2- to 3-year-old children, adults, and water in day care*. Doctoral dissertation. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Rutanen, N. (2012). Alle kolmivuotiaat paikkansa tuottajina päiväkodissa. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*, 1(1), 44–56.
- Sahlberg, P. (2016). The Global Educational Reform Movement and Its Impact on Schooling. In K. Mundy, A. Green, B. Lindgard, & A. Verger (Eds.), *Handbook of Global Education Policy* (pp. 128–144). Chichester: John Wiley and Son, Ltd.
- Salamon, L. M. (Ed.). (2002). *The tools of government: A guide to the new governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sayre, R. K., Devercelli, A. E., Neuman, M. J., & Wodon, Q. (2015). *Investing in Early Childhood Development: Review of the World Bank's Recent Experience*. World Bank Publications.
- Scanlan, J. M., Care, W. D., & Udod, S. (2002). Unraveling the unknowns of reflection in classroom teaching. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 38(2), 136–143.
- Selwyn, N. (2015). Data entry: Towards the critical study of digital data and education. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 40(1), 64–82.
- Settlage, J., & Meadows, L. (2002). Standards - based reform and its unintended consequences: Implications for science education within America's urban schools. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 39(2), 114–127.
- Silova, I. (2005). Traveling Policies: Hijacked in Central Asia. *European Educational Research Journal*, 4(1), 50–59.
- Silova, I. (2006). *From sites of occupation to symbols of multiculturalism: Transfer of global discourse and the metamorphosis of Russian schools in post-Soviet Latvia*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Sipilä, J. (2015). [Interview]. In Lapset ovat tärkein investointi tulevaisuuteen. Yle Uutiset. Retrieved from [http://yle.fi/uutiset/lapset\\_ovat\\_tarkein\\_investointi\\_tulevaisuuteen/6827642](http://yle.fi/uutiset/lapset_ovat_tarkein_investointi_tulevaisuuteen/6827642) [March 17, 2016]
- Skinner, Q. (2002). *Visions of Politics* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, D. E. (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Long Grove: Waveland Press.
- Star, S. & Griesemer, J. (1989). Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology 1907–39. *Social Studies of Science*, 19, 387–420.

- Starting Strong Network. 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/preschoolandschool/startingstrongearlychildhoodeducationandcarenetwork.htm>. [December 5, 2012]
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (Ed.) (2004). *The global politics of educational borrowing and lending*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2012). The global/local nexus in comparative policy studies: Analysing the triple bonus system in Mongolia over time. *Comparative Education*, 48(4), 455–471.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2014). Cross-national policy borrowing: understanding reception and translation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 34(2), 153–167.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. and Waldow, F. (Eds.) (2012). *World yearbook of education 2012: Policy borrowing and lending in education*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Strandell, H. (1994). Sociala mötesplatser för barn: aktivitetsprofiler och förhållningskulturer på daghem. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Strandell, H. (2012). Policies of early childhood education and care. In A. T. Kjørholt, & J. Qvortrup (Eds.), *The Modern Child and the Flexible Labour Market* (pp. 222–240). New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Sutton, M., & Levinson, B. A. (2001). *Policy as practice: Toward a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy* (Vol. 1). West Port: Alex Publishing.
- Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Therien, J. P. (1999). Beyond the North-South divide: the two tales of world poverty. *Third World Quarterly*, 20(4), 723–742.
- THL [Finnish National Institute of Health and Welfare] (2015). *Lasten päivähoido 2014 [Children's day care 2014]*. Statistical report. Helsinki: National Institute of Health and Welfare.
- Tobin, J. (2005). Quality in early childhood education: An anthropologist's perspective. *Early Education and Development*, 16(4), 421–434.
- Törrönen, M. (1999). Lapsi ja osallistuva havainnoiminen. In I. Ruoppila, E. Huusala, K. Karila, J. Kinos, P. Niiranen & M. Ojala (Eds.), *Varhaiskasvatuksen tutkimusmenetelmiä* (pp. 218–233). Jyväskylä: Atena.
- UNICEF (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- UNICEF (2000). UNICEF: ending poverty begins with children. [Press release] <http://www.unicef.org/newsline/00pr54.htm> [accessed March 16, 2016]
- Urban, M. (2015). From 'Closing the Gap' to an Ethics of Affirmation. Reconceptualising the Role of Early Childhood Services in Times of Uncertainty. *European Journal of Education*, 50(3), 293–306.
- Vandell, D.L., Belsky, J., Burkhinal, M., Steinberg, L., & Vandergrift, N. (2010). Do Effects of Early Child Care Extend to Age 15 Years? Results From the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. *Child Development*, 81(3), 737–756.

- Vuorisalo, M. (2013). *Lasten kentät ja pääomat. Osallistuminen ja eriarvoisuuksien rakentuminen päiväkodissa*. [Children's fields and capitals. Participation and the construction of inequality in preschool]. Doctoral dissertation. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research, 467. University of Jyväskylä.
- Välimäki, A. L. (1998). *Päivittäin: lasten (päivä) hoitojärjestelyn muotoutuminen varhaiskasvun ympäristönä suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa 1800- ja 1900-luvulla*. Oulu: University of Oulu.
- Wagner, J. (2011). Visual Studies and Empirical Social Inquiry. In E. Margolis, & L. Pauwels (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (pp. 72–96). London: Sage.
- Waldow, F. (2012). Standardisation and Legitimacy: two Central Concepts in Research on Educational Borrowing and Lending. In Steiner-Khamsi & F. Waldow (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 2012: Policy Borrowing and Lending in Education* (pp. 411–427). Oxon: Routledge.
- Wong, S. (2007). Looking back and moving forward: Historicising the social construction of early childhood education and care as national work. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 8(2), 144–156.
- World Bank (1995). *Investing in People*. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The World Bank.
- World Bank (2015). Ensuring Access to Quality Early Childhood Development. Anything but Child's Play. Retrieved from <http://worldbank.org/education/ensuring-access-quality-early-childhood-development-anything-child-s-play> [March 23, 2016]

Figure summarizes the content of and the relations between the key concepts which this dissertation utilizes as its premises. The smallest rectangle inside the other two rectangles represents the object of this dissertation study: the imaginaries of ECEC. All imaginaries of ECEC are institutional objects, and further, social objects.

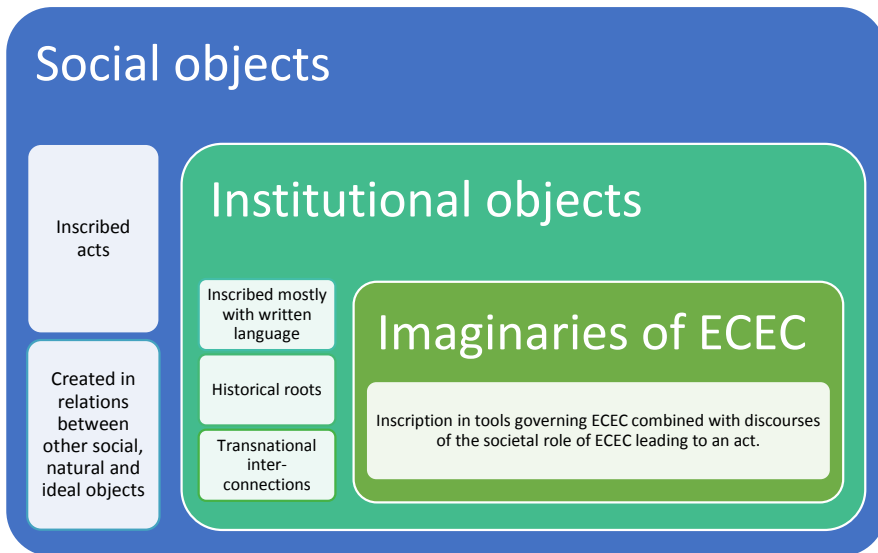


Figure. Imaginaries of ECEC

## Example of a description of the day care day<sup>1</sup>

APPENDIX 2

Daily schedule

6:15 Preschool opens

8:00 Breakfast

8:45 Small group activities indoors and outdoors

11:00 Lunch

12:00 Story and nap time

13:00 Play for those who are awake

14:00 Snack

14:30 Outdoor and indoor play

17:00 Preschool closes

---

<sup>1</sup> The example is a compilation of the typical features of the diaries made by kindergarten teachers

<b>Time:</b>	<b>Diary:</b>
7:45	<p>I arrive at the work place.</p> <p>I greet Sam who arrives with Dad and ask how they are doing. Also, Miina and Lucas arrive, wash they hands with their mums and dads. We chat about the coming day. I invite the children to join the breakfast which is beginning soon.</p>
8:00	<p>Miina and Lucas start running around the hall. "Ok. You can play tag until the breakfast arrives" I promise. My college takes them to the gym to play for a while.</p> <p>Sam, Pauli and Anna begin breakfast. We have porridge, berries, milk and rye crisp today. We discuss the forest fieldtrip they had yesterday. I reply to the text message Nicole's mum has sent to inform us that they will arrive later than usual. Anton arrives. He, Miina and Lucas join us for breakfast.</p>
8:30	<p>Eeva arrives with dad and starts crying when the dad leaves. I comfort her and she crawls on my lap. We examine the artwork on the wall. Also Pauli tries to comfort Eeva.</p> <p>I take them and Anna with me when I return the food trolley to the kitchen. When we come back, I suggest that they could play home together. Anna and Pauli agree that it is a good idea. Also Olli joins them when he arrives.</p> <p>Eeva wants to build a puzzle instead. I build it with her. Simon joins us first but then he leaves the room to do something else.</p>
9:00	<p>After finishing the puzzle, it is time for one small group to have sport activities. We gather together with Eeva, Miina, Lucas, Antton, Alex and Ruth and discuss what we are going to do. We have discussed football earlier – some of the children have been following football on TV at home and there has been a discussion whether we could play football with our small group. Now we have planned to do that. We fetch the football goals and set them up. First we move around with balls in different ways in pairs, then we practice rolling, kicking and catching the ball. Then we set up a play. Miina notices that she is wearing someone else's shoes. I ask her to return them after we have cleaned up.</p> <p>Meanwhile Anna, Pauli and Olli had continued playing home. 3 children are playing with cars in the hallway and 5 children are preparing spring festival decoration with another nursery nurse.</p> <p>Two children are playing a board game with an assistant. I ask whether Antton and Ruth can join them for a while, while the others prepare to go outdoors. The assistant seems to think that that is not a good idea and answers that there is not room in that play this time. I send them to change their clothes instead.</p> <p>We discuss with nursery nurse who will go out with children since other group needs some help due to a sick leave. I help the small group that is coming from the gym to change their clothes. Miina is searching for her own shoes. Lucas asks what should he were outside. I try to answer but at the same time nursery nurse tries to brief me on the happenings of the yesterday's field trip. I help Miina to pull the zipper and then move to the mud room to help children with their shoes. Miina, Ruth and Antton do not need help. I concentrate on chatting with them while helping the others.</p>

<p>10:00</p>	<p>I go outside with the first children while a nursery nurse helps the rest of them. I open the door of the store where we keep outdoor equipment and toys. Elmo wants to help me to use the key.</p> <p>Some of the children ask if they can use chalk to draw on the ground. I hand them a box of chalk.</p> <p>I notice that Antton is drawing on window with chalk. I advise him to draw on the ground and give him a cloth to wipe the window clean. He wipes the window.</p> <p>I start sweeping the yard. Soon four children join me and start collecting the sand that I have swept and moving it into the sand pit with spades and wheelbarrows.</p> <p>Children ask why I am writing notes and I explain what I am doing.</p>
<p>10:15</p>	<p>Lucas' appearance tells me that he has been eating sand. I wipe his face and I advise him not to eat sand.</p> <p>All the children are outside and nursery nurse comes to switch turns – she comes out to watch the children and I go inside.</p>
<p>10:40</p>	<p>The phone rings. It is Olavi's mum. We discuss their changing family situation, family counseling and settle a meeting. After the phone call, I call our area's special early childhood educator and ask for consultation.</p> <p>I start writing a pedagogical report for one child for the special needs assessment. Nicole comes in with her mum and I settle a meeting with the mum for assessing her individual ECEC plan.</p>
<p>11:00</p>	<p>Other children start coming in and I don't have an opportunity to finish the pedagogical report. I go to the hall to welcome the children. I greet them and shush those who are having a loud voice. I remind them not to shout indoors. Oscar's entrance is not good: he laughs meanly at a child who is changing his clothes. I tell him to go back outside to think about what would be an appropriate way to come in. I help children to change their clothes and advise them to wash their hands before the circle time. Then I go to the class to start our circle time with the children, and my co-worker took care of Oscar's entrance.</p> <p>Since the spring festival is coming we practice songs we are going to sing. Elmo does not want to participate but I tell that I still expect him to sit with us. Preschool manager comes to settle a time for a meeting with the staff of child welfare clinic. Pauli and Eeva help nursery nurse to set the tables and fetch the food trolley from the kitchen.</p>
<p>11:30</p>	<p>Lunch time. I help children to take their food and check that those who have special diets have their own meals. We have spaghetti Bolognese with green salad today. I am having a conversation concerning why Ada is not at the preschool today and what children's parents do for a living. Miina does not enjoy her food. I take her on my lap and help her to eat. She finds this funny and we goof around a bit.</p> <p>We wonder (with a nursery nurse) whether the nap room will become really hot today since the day is warm. I help some children with toilet things before nap time.</p>

	<p>A nursery nurse starts story time with children while I attend the preschool's weekly meeting. We discuss yard rules, the spring festival, preschool's alarm system and the principles of dividing children to the groups next year.</p> <p>I go back to the group area so that nursery nurse can have her coffee break. I also brief her about the discussions and agreements at the meeting. Some children are playing quietly and some are sleeping. Anna sits still on the floor and I ask her whether she would like to join Olavi's doll play or draw with some other children. She answers that she would like to think by herself for a while.</p> <p>Olavi comes to me and tell me that Miina went to the building block area without a permission. I ask him if he would like to join her. He nods and I promise to help him to ask whether he can join in. Miina and four other children are playing with the blocks and I tell them that Olavi is going to join them.</p> <p>Marina asks me to play with her and two other girls. I tell them that I am joining their play as soon as I have written the list of children and the other notes for the nursery nurse who is in the evening shift.</p> <p>I help Lucas to dress up when he wakes up.</p> <p>A kindergarten teacher from another group comes to remind me that she needs an electronic approval of the order form for making some purchases for preschool.</p> <p>I join Marina's play. The girls ask me to sit and draw something. Yet, I need to leave since Lucas and Oscar need some help with building up a hut. I help them to find a blanket and to set up the roof.</p> <p>A kindergarten teacher asks me to come to discuss the shifts of the becoming week. When we are finished and agreed the changed shifts I return to the class area and take the food trolley with the snack with me.</p> <p>A nursery nurse has woken up the rest of the children and helped them dress up.</p> <p>14:00 During the snack time I discuss the weekend plans with children.</p> <p>14:45 After a short discussion with the nursery nurse we decide to go outside immediately after the snack time. I go downstairs to help children get ready after I have returned the food trolley to the kitchen. The nursery nurse goes out with the children who are ready first.</p> <p>All the children are outside. I do some organizing (placing some drawings on the wall, organizing the home play, watering the flowers, checking the toilets and windows) before ending the work day at 15:25.</p>
--	--

The challenges while conducting the observation

Typical day care day

- Was the day that was reported ordinary? What parts of the day were not?

Justification of acts that were reported

- Why the act was important?
- What kinds of things influenced the decision making in the situation?
- Were there competing aims?

Justification of the aims set for ECEC in individual plans

- How were they implemented?
- If not, why?

Possible conflicting aims and goals? Describe situations.

## **The themes of the expert interviews**

APPENDIX 4

Reasons for creating the matrix

- What happened before?
- Why the implementing took place now?

The process of creating the matrix

- Who were involved in?
- The aims?
- Things that required negotiation
- The structure of the matrix

The quality indicators

- Why they were included?
- What other kinds of options were considered?
- Where did they come from?

Challenges, advantages and future directions

