Global Learning Journey

Sweden | Stockholm, Haninge, & Västerås

Reggio Emilia Institutet

BY: MARGIE COOPER

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The 1st NAREA Summer Conference
TOP: **Speakers Amelia Gambetti and Sandra Piccinini**
BOTTOM: **Conference participants**

Introduction

Since NAREA's first summer conference in 2005 in St. Paul, Minnesota, more than 11,000 participants have been welcomed by 26 communities throughout Canada and the United States for professional learning inspired by the approach to early childhood education of Reggio Emilia, Italy. NAREA, Reggio Children, and host communities work collaboratively to frame a learning experience that is desired, meaningful, and generative. More than 800 scholarships have been awarded and 43 speakers from Reggio Emilia have shared ongoing research and practice from their infant-toddler centers, preschools, and city.

We know that life as an educator is a permanent process of learning with children, their families, and other professional educators. The widespread interest in Reggio Emilia's philosophies and experiences in so many places throughout Canada and the United States propels NAREA to live out its work in the real world of communities where social, cultural, educational, and political differences come alive. Although our profession has moved deeply into views that seem to make *place* irrelevant, as evidenced by one-size-fits-all state standards and quality assurance measures, daily life with young children and families always reminds us of children's drive to make meaning of *their* immediate world. And the world is not one-size-fits-all. Place *is* relevant. So, what better time than now to enlarge our offerings for professional learning into global communities whose work is also inspired by the philosophies and experiences of Reggio Emilia, Italy?

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TOP ROW: **Julia, Courtney, Kulwinder** SECOND ROW: **Jennifer, Cinder** THIRD ROW: **Natalie, Lexie, Joey, Jeena, Toni**
FOURTH ROW: **Cris, Lea, Indy, Margie, Jane, Kristi, Jesse, Michelle** BOTTOM ROW: **Shakara**

Our first Global Learning Journey to Stockholm, Sweden, in November 2024, included 11 persons from the United States, 7 from Canada, and 1 from Australia. The profiles within the group included classroom teachers, resource teachers, directors, administrators, and university faculty. Just one person had been to Sweden previously.

A Snapshot of Sweden

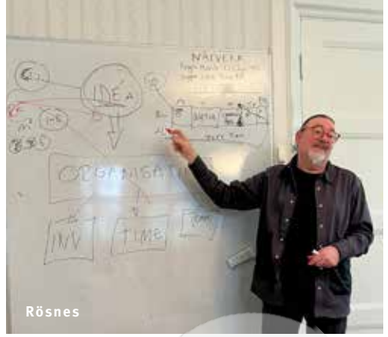
Compared to the geographic scale of Canada or the U.S., Sweden is a small country located on the Scandinavian Peninsula above Northern Europe. Its population of 10.6 million people compares closely to the population of the state of Georgia, while its land area is comparable to the state of California.

According to the Swedish Institute (2024b), the known history of Sweden stretches from the Ice Age to the IT Age. Sweden has never been colonized by another country and Sweden's monarchy is one of the oldest in the world at more than 1,000 years. Today, the monarchy is mostly ceremonial as the country has moved over time to a constitutional democracy. It joined the European Union in 1995 yet retains its own currency. Sweden has been neutral in war since 1814.

Perhaps this long, modern period of peace, which Sweden chose, has contributed to the financial and dispositional attitudes for investing in the welfare of its citizens that we discovered. This article will touch on some of the welfare benefits related to children and families that Swedes receive and their interconnectedness to the education system, as well as a brief overview of the Reggio Emilia Institutet (REI), which hosted us during our learning days in Sweden.

Stockholm City Centre

Borough of Kungsholmen



Rösnes

Reggio Emilia Institute

Göthson

Reggio Emilia Institute

We gathered in the REI building located in the Marieberg district in the Borough of Kungsholmen in Stockholm City Centre. Built in the late 1800s in the style of an Italian villa, it once served as the private home of the head physician of a nearby psychiatric hospital that once existed, which is now converted to university student housing. The REI villa houses several offices for staff, atelier spaces, a lecture space, a kitchen, and a conference room. Throughout, displays of the institute's history, projects, people, and places are expressed. There, we met stories and experiences that told of REI's 30-year history.

Managing Director Greger Rösnes (2024) attributes Sweden's initial connection with Reggio Emilia to a visit that Swedish early childhood educator Anna Barsotti and her husband Carlo Barsotti had to Carlo's hometown in Tuscany, Italy, in the late 1970s. Upon hearing she was working in a preschool near Stockholm, it was suggested she should visit the preschools in Reggio Emilia, which she did. In the years following, Barsotti built relationships and became friends with Loris Malaguzzi and Vea Vecchi, and the long exchange between Sweden and Reggio Emilia began.

A significant influence on Sweden's interest in the early education project of Reggio Emilia occurred in 1981 when *The Hundred Languages of Children* exhibition was invited to be displayed in the prominent Modern Museum of Art in Stockholm. Interest grew even more because of the exhibition, and thereafter Barsotti accompanied several Swedish groups to Reggio through the 1980s. Harold Göthson (2024b), former REI director and founding member, recalled Barsotti growing uncomfortable with early interpretations by some, as they were inclined toward an impression of Reggio as an art education initiative. Realizing it was much broader; she reached out to a group of nine Swedes to form what was called *The Working Group for Studying Reggio Emilia*.

Gunilla Dahlberg and Harold Göthson were both participants in that initial working group. At that time, Dahlberg, a psychologist, was professor of education at Stockholm University, and Göthson worked at the national board for social welfare. Recalling those years, Dahlberg (2024) shares,


Dahlberg

Could I start with bringing Reggio to Sweden? That's the first issue we struggled with because we have never brought Reggio to Sweden. And talking with Malaguzzi, he said, in the 80s when we were there, "Now we have told you a lot about our experience. Now you go home and forget everything and start where you are and ask your questions and see how you can make change happen."

Göthson's (2024a) recollection of those early years emphasizes the early conviction about the necessity of the working group—and later, REI—to stay rooted in the Swedish experience:

> This group looked through what Loris had told in his lectures and tried to analyze what he said and combine that with our deep knowledge about the Swedish discussion of children's learning and childcare and so on. From that, we went to Reggio Emilia and in that process, we came home and wondered what shall we do with our group?
>
> When we put out the statutes for the Reggio Emilia Institute, we were very eager to make it a *Swedish* institute for developing practice—of teaching, of directing, and of making policy—inspired by Loris Malaguzzi and the work from the teachers in Reggio Emilia.

According to Rösnes (2024), The Reggio Emilia Institute has always been characterized as an institute for the development of practice. Practice is a term used not only to express what happens inside preschools or schools, but also for considering the practice of leadership, for example. While the REI's orientation to Reggio Emilia is one of inspiration, keeping the Swedish identity in the forefront of their work is paramount, rather than looking to Reggio Emilia for adoption, implementation, or modeling.

We learn from Rösnes (2024) that the REI was founded in 1993 by 5 persons as an economical association open to members, which is something akin to a limited liability partnership in the United States. Today, there are more than 100 members in that economical association. A commercial arm was later added in the form of a limited company (another type of company structure), which enabled many professional learning activities to be carried out. More informally, a Swedish Network grew alongside REI and exists in complement to REI by offering leadership for and engagement in REI's activities. REI member Sara Nilsson Bruun (2024) shared that there are approximately 9,000 preschools in Sweden; perhaps 2,500 of those identify as Reggio-inspired.

REI's first initiative was a 3-year research project funded by the national government of Sweden that was designed to explore what would happen when traditional Swedish preschools met the municipal schools of Reggio Emilia. This project helped develop a style of working in which REI arranged national network meetings twice a year, throughout the country, to keep information about the research project flowing to those interested in the work of the project. From this beginning, REI developed a style grounded in networking and sharing, which continues today.

From that first initiative, the early work of REI evolved in response to requests from educators and municipalities for more exchange and professional learning initiatives. Several lectures and courses were developed, and the magazine *Modern Childhood* was also launched. Over time, REI became the organizer of study groups to Reggio Emilia, the Swedish translator of Reggio Children's publications, and a key source for the education of teachers, atelieristas, and pedagogistas in Sweden.

Through these initial efforts by a small number of people, the marriage of Swedish viewpoints on early childhood education to Reggio Emilia inspiration has grown in its projects, in its relationships, and in its impact on early childhood praxis in Sweden. For further reading, Chapter Six ("The Stockholm Project: Constructing a Pedagogy that Speaks in the Voice of the Child, the Pedagogue and the Parent") in *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence, 2013), remains a good resource for encountering more detail of the early perspectives and efforts of Swedish educators to build on the possibilities of Reggio inspiration.

Child Welfare Through Policy in Sweden

Headmaster Sara Nilsson Bruun (2024) of the Karlstad municipality, which is halfway between Stockholm and Oslo, shared an overview of Sweden's education system and the supports in place for children. As with any country's education system, one of the first things to know is how it is funded. Bruun shared that although the Swedish government alternates between being governed on the right, or the left, or through center coalitions based on elections, there has been broad agreement that the welfare of citizens should be largely financed through taxes.

According to the Swedish Institute (2024c), taxes are levied in the following ways:

- For most individuals, gross wages in Sweden are taxed in the range of 29% to 35%, while wealthy individuals pay a much higher rate that is over 50% of earnings. Most taxes are collected by municipal governments, although the national government collects an additional 20% in taxes from high wealth taxpayers.
- The standard tax rate on goods and services is 25%, with substantially lower rates on foodstuffs and passenger transport, for example.
- Like in the United States, corporations pay a lower tax rate than individuals, which in Sweden is approximately 21%.

Bruun (2024) noted that it is the responsibility of municipalities to provide childcare, compulsory school, social care, and elder care, while it is the responsibility of the regions to provide healthcare. Underpinning tax policy is a general Swedish standpoint that everyone contributes, and everyone has equal access to public services, including programs aimed for the overall well-being of people.

Bruun (2024) explains that welfare policies supported by taxes assist families in raising their children but are widely viewed through the lens of supporting the welfare of Sweden's children; for example, providing what is called "parental insurance" is Sweden's way of caring for children through a system governing maternity and paternity leave in the child's first year of life, leave to care for children when they are sick, and the monthly child benefit allowance (*Barnbidrag*), which is presently the equivalent of approximately 115 U.S. dollars per child, up to 4 children.


Bruun

"Parents are entitled to 480 days of paid leave when they have a child through birth or adoption, and this leave can be taken up until the child turns eight years old" (Dutta, 2024). Both parents have the right to stay home with their infant for 10 days after birth with pay; thereafter, the parental insurance continues supporting one parent to stay home for one year while continuing to receive 80% of their salary (Bruun, 2024). Parental leave may be shared by both parents. Larsson (2018) writes that to boost the participation of men using the parental leave policy, the Swedish government introduced a quota of days that could be used only by fathers. Today, that quota is 90 days. If the father doesn't use them, they cannot be passed to the mother and are, therefore, lost. This policy increased the percentage of fathers participating in paternity leave. Further, Dutta (2024) shares that parents have the legal right to reduce their working hours by 25% until their child turns 8.

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The interconnectedness of good practice in education is inextricably tied to underlying policies that support children and families. Sweden's child welfare policies that begin with the newborn and continue into the preschool years (and beyond), influence not only affordability, but the provision of infrastructure, well-educated teachers, and national curricula that paints a vision for early education and rests on the trust in the professionalism of educators.

Two Different Stories of Preschool Legislation

The 1970s marked a crest when some countries began enacting policies to support families with young children and some countries did not. In the United States, for example, it is well-known, but maybe not well-remembered, that Congress passed the Comprehensive Child Development Act in 1971, with bipartisan support, to create a network of federally subsidized childcare centers. Democratic Senator Walter Mondale was the bill's main sponsor. Prior to the passage of this bill and shortly after taking office in January 1969, President Richard Nixon spoke to the employees of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare saying,

> What happens to the child from a nutritional standpoint, from an educational standpoint, from an environmental standpoint in the years between 1 and 5 may affect that child for the balance of his life regardless of what may happen after that time. (Ludden, 2016)

Later, a White House conference on children declared childcare a priority, leading to the bipartisan passage of the Comprehensive Child Development Act; when it came to signing the fruits of these efforts into law, however, Nixon vetoed the bipartisan bill. In his address to Congress on December 9, 1971, he warned that passage would be "a long leap into the dark" and "would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over [and] against the family-centered approach (Nixon, 1971).

Nancy Cohen (2013) writes,

> In 1975, child care legislation expired for good, buried under an avalanche of angry letters against the very idea of publicly supported child care. The *coup de grace* was delivered by a grassroots movement of fundamentalists—many of them women—galvanized by an anonymous flyer that circulated widely in churches in the South and West. The flyer made false and unhinged claims—that it would be illegal for parents to make their children go to church or take out the trash, that children would have the right to sue their parents and organize labor unions.

By contrast, the modern growth of the Swedish preschool began with their National Preschool Act of 1975 intended to expand the public childcare system by disbursing responsibility for it to municipalities. Larsson (2018) recalls that fifteen weekly hours of free preschool for 6-year-old children was the starting point, and public opinion was strongly in favor of preschool reforms, as parent marches demanding "childcare for all" became commonplace. The Preschool Act helped address another issue at the time for Sweden, which was a labor shortage. When childcare began to be funded, female labor force participation grew from 59.3% to 81.7% between 1970 and 1988.

> Besides increased female workforce participation, the result of the legislative efforts that began in the 1970s was also evident in the increasing numbers of children attending Swedish preschools. Between 1970 and 1998, the number of children in full-time care increased from 71,000 to 720,000 and, by 1998, 73% of all children aged between one and five attended either preschools or family daycare centres. (Larsson, 2018)

Today, the percentage of children participating in preschool has risen to approximately 85% of 1- and 2-year-old children and 95% of children aged 3 to 5 (Lindén, 2018).

By contrast, Ricci (2015) observes,

> In the United States and Britain, childcare is not formally assimilated with education, nor is it subsidised or regulated in the same way. Consequently, availability, quality and cost vary enormously. Expense is a factor that prevents many women from returning to work. For example, OECD figures show that childcare costs can represent as much as 30 per cent of income in some countries, compared to Sweden's 4 per cent.

Beyond child welfare policies, other types of policies contribute to the health of the children's preschools in Sweden. Discharging responsibility for education to municipalities has meant that municipalities are necessarily innovating good administrative practices to better support their schools at all levels. One example is that municipalities average the rent costs for all public preschools in their territory, and all preschools pay the same rental fee (H. Göthson, personal communication, February 5, 2025). Public preschools might use buildings belonging to the municipality, or they might use space within an apartment complex or other structure. Regardless of the facility in which they are located, all public preschools are charged the same rent by the municipality. The Swedish way of thinking searches for fairness, equity, and shared participation.

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Further contributing to the health of the preschools is what Bruun (2024) describes as the requirement that preschool teachers attend university for 3–4 years to obtain a preschool teaching license. Every preschool is staffed by a constellation of professional educators and colleagues called "child-minders," who are not required to attend university and earn less than licensed teachers. The university education requirement has worked effectively because it corresponds to a national policy of free university tuition and materials for all citizens. Of course, beyond the formal education requirements imposed by the government to obtain a teaching license, municipalities continue investing in the professional learning of teachers in the field. REI has been a strong source of ongoing professional learning, involving many within the Swedish Network in sharing presentations, courses, seminars, and working groups, for example, which has built up a style of "on demand" professional learning throughout Sweden (Rösnes, 2024).

University educated preschool teachers earn what is described by Bruun (2024) as a middle-class salary of approximately 3,800 USD monthly, while child minders are paid a lower salary of approximately 2,400 USD monthly. Rösnes (2024) describes that rates of pay are taken up in discussion between municipalities and unions, with agreements lasting 3 years before renegotiation.

The vast differences between both Sweden's and Reggio Emilia's public sector models of early care and education provision, when compared to the U.S. private sector model of early care and education provision, cannot be over-emphasized. Between these contexts, fiscal realities for families and teachers are dramatically different, operating costs are dramatically different, and government investment in the formal preparation and ongoing professional learning of teachers is dramatically different, to name just a few.

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Swedish Preschool and Compulsory School

In the United States, the terms *preschool* and *childcare* typically represent the difference between part-day/part-year programs and full-day/full-year programs, respectively. In Sweden, the concepts of preschool and childcare were integrated through legislation in 1996, when the national government passed new legislation necessitating the creation of municipal boards to oversee both school and childcare (Korpi, 2106). By 1998, the responsibility for preschool oversight moved from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research, and a new national preschool curriculum was developed (Dutta, 2024). Today in Sweden, the term *preschool* is used to reference the care and education of children aged 1–6. The liberal parental leave policies described earlier are the reason preschools do not provide care for groups of children younger than 1 year of age; it is not needed.

According to the Swedish Institute (2024a), the term *preschool* (*förskola*) is used for the noncompulsory attendance of 1- to 5-year-old children, while the term *preschool class* (*förskoleklass*) refers to the noncompulsory "bridge year" for 6-year-old children. *Förskoleklass* is synonymously called the preschool year or year 0; the physical location of schooling changes for children in this bridge year, as 6-year-olds now attend school in the building where they will begin compulsory school the following year, at age 7. It is widely thought that the bridge year will eventually become compulsory in the Swedish education system (Bruun, 2024).

After the preschool year at age 6, three stages of compulsory education follow: *lågstadiet* (grades 1–3), *mellanstadiet* (grades 4–6), and *högstadiet* (grades 7–9). While attendance at the upper secondary school, commonly referred to as *gymnasium* for the grades 10–12, is not compulsory by law, attendance is high. "In 2023 (latest statistics), 85.2 percent of Swedish ninth-year students qualified for either a higher education preparatory *programme* or a vocational *programme*" (Swedish Institute, 2024a).

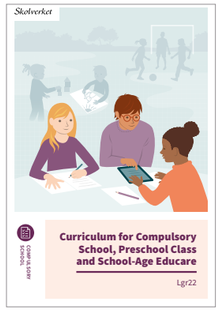
Compulsory education, *gymnasium*, and university education are all free of charge for Swedes, including all materials. Bruun (2024) shares, "It is forbidden by law to do activities in compulsory schools that require parents to pay. . . . The school has to be free of charge for everyone and that, I think, is a typical Swedish thing."

The Swedish Curriculum

Among the most striking observations of Sweden's approach to early childhood education and beyond, is the national government's vision for and purposes of education, which are reflected in the adoption of the national curricula. While in Sweden, we heard several educators refer to the national curriculum when introducing their school, which suggests it is a document utilized by teachers and staff. Even before we entered the first school, Bruun (2024) shared an overview from her perspective as a head (or principal) of a compulsory school,

> The curriculum for the compulsory school contains one section for each subject that tells you what the student should learn, what abilities they shall have developed. The curriculum also gives a very clear mission, which is that "the school shall allow each individual to find their unique identities in order to live in responsible freedom." It's almost poetry. . . . That's a really strong vision for democracy and teaching within all the subjects. It should really run through mathematics, languages, and social science, everything. So, I think that our school and our curriculum really give us possibility to strengthen democracy because we have every opportunity to draw inspiration from learning that we find in the inspiration of the preschools of Reggio Emilia. I think the preschools have the opportunity to do it and also the compulsory school. I think we have the curriculum that tells us that we can have teaching that speaks to both body and mind.

I think the challenge is to challenge tradition, for teachers to dare to think in new ways or in ways that are based on the image of children and the image of knowledge that is based on respect and faith in the future. . . . The curriculum in both preschool and compulsory school gives us the opportunity to really take inspiration from Reggio Emilia. There are no inconsistencies. And so, I think that we have to fight tradition when we want to catch inspiration from Reggio Emilia.



The National Curriculum

Alongside the *Curriculum for Compulsory School, Preschool Class and School-Age Educare*, to which Bruun referred above, there is the *Curriculum for the Preschool*, last updated in 2018. Colloquially, these documents are referred to as *the national curriculum*. While the first corresponds to the compulsory years of schooling, the second frames the work of municipalities and educators regarding the care and education of children aged 1 to 5. The back cover orients the document with the following guidance:

> The curriculum of the preschool is decided by the Government. It consists of two parts, the fundamental values and task of the preschool and goals and guidelines. To understand the mission of the preschool education it is important to read the two parts together.

The preschool curriculum is expressed in just 17 pages, beginning with an orientation of the *fundamental values*:

> The preschool is part of the school system and rests on the basis of democracy. The Education Act (2010:800) stipulates the purpose of education in the preschool is to ensure that children acquire and develop knowledge and values. It should promote all children's development and learning, and a life-long desire to learn. Education should also convey and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based.
>
> Every single person working in the preschool should promote respect for the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, girls and boys, and solidarity between people. No child in the preschool should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of the gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age, of the child or any person with whom the child is associated, or to any other abusive treatment. All such tendencies should be actively counteracted.
>
> Education should be undertaken in democratic forms and lay the foundation for a growing interest and responsibility among children for active participation in civic life and for sustainable development – not only economic, but also social and environmental. Both long-term and global future perspectives should be made explicit in education.
>
> The preschool should reflect the values and rights expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Education should therefore be based on what is deemed to be the child's best interests, that children have the right to participation and influence, and that children should be made aware of their rights. (p. 5)

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Seven subsections continue, which include understanding and compassion for others; objectivity and comprehensiveness; an equivalent education; the task of the preschool; care, development and learning; and the development of each preschool. In laying out the national viewpoint on the *task* of the preschool, teachers find clear language as it relates to their role. The following excerpt is an example:

Education includes teaching. Teaching means stimulating and challenging the children, taking the goals of the curriculum as a starting point and direction, and is aimed at encouraging development and learning among the children. Teaching should be based on content that is planned or appears spontaneously, as children's development and learning take place at all times. Preschool teachers should be responsible for the educational content of teaching and for targeted work to promote development and learning in children. Preschool teachers therefore have a special responsibility in the education provided jointly by the work team. Other members of the work team, e.g. child minders, also participate in teaching activities to promote children's development and learning.

> **Teaching should be based on content that is planned or appears spontaneously, as children's development and learning take place at all times.**

> The preschool should be a vibrant social community that provides security and creates a will and a desire to learn. Children create context and meaning based on their experiences and the way they think. When in the preschool, they must therefore be encountered with respect for them as a person and for the way they think and understand the world around them. Everyone who works in the preschool should provide every child with the conditions to develop trust and self-confidence. They should encourage the children's curiosity, creativity and interest. The rights of children to physical and personal integrity should also be respected. This applies, for example, in day-to-day care and in matters of documentation. (pp. 7–8)

The accessible and democratic language of Sweden's preschool curriculum, combined with its brevity, seems to have been widely embraced and appreciated by educators, as evidenced by the frequency with which it was referenced in conversations and during presentations. This might suggest a symbiotic rather than hierarchal relationship between government and the education sector in Sweden. Certainly, these two documents could serve as a strong resource of study and discussion by educators within schools for young children, especially in the United States where state standards are often hundreds of pages long and written from a kindergarten-readiness perspective. Sweden's *Curriculum for the Preschool*, instead, situates the preschool "as the basis for democracy," (2018, p. 5) which is bold, courageous, and echoes Reggio Emilia's vision of education as "a meeting place where freedom, democracy and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted" (Preschools and Infant-toddler Centres, 2010, p. 7).

Like Sweden, Canada has strong examples of its government's interconnectedness with wisdom borne from democratic ideals as well as engagement with early childhood professionals that are keen on innovating tired traditions. The British Columbia Early Learning Framework (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2019) pledges:

> Communities and governments will work in partnership to affirm children as citizens who are valued members of their communities and contributors to their societies. . . . All levels of government and all communities will work together to nurture and support children and families, and to support parents, grandparents, and other family members in their efforts to promote children's learning and overall well-being. (pp. 12–13)

But beyond accolades for government's contribution to education in the form of intelligent guidance through policy and curricula documents, the daily life inside preschools expresses the clearest image of preschool education. Unsurprisingly, the three preschools we visited in Sweden were evidence of professional educators engaged in meaningful, beautiful work with children and families. When we try to describe what we see in preschools, too often we simply choose *good quality* or *poor quality* descriptors; Moss (2013) discusses his opposition to the language of quality that has become so ubiquitous in education, favoring instead that which centers "democracy, experimentation, potentiality" (p. 77). With this framing, the three preschools we visited were wonderous.

School Visits and Workshops

Our group was fortunate to visit preschools within three different communities. Förskolan Sture is a preschool located in central Stockholm within a large apartment community in space on the ground floor. Längbälinge is a preschool located in Jordbro, on the outskirts of Stockholm, where many immigrants live in the surrounding area. This preschool was in a dedicated school building that also housed a compulsory school. A third preschool, Fågelsångens, is located some distance from Stockholm Centre, in the Sollentuna community in a stand-alone preschool building.

Each of these three preschools gave us a glimpse of a cross-section of communities and socio-economic conditions. We met gracious and dedicated adults in each preschool, who clearly felt affection for the children and who crafted inviting environments of intrigue with the children. Each preschool had its own strong identity, was engaging, and expressed vividly the imaginary preschool Moss describes:

> A centre that occupies and contributes to an unfinished world, a place of infinite possibilities, giving constant rise to wonder and surprise, magic moments and goose bumps, and a source of hope and renewed belief in the world; a place, too, where 'freedom, democracy and solidarity are practiced and where the value of peace is promoted.' (2013, p. 82)

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Längbälinge

Förskolan Sture

Fågelsångens

Off to Västerås workshop with REI co-chair Anna Ahrborn and atelierista Leicy Olsborn Björby

Workshop with REI atelierista Karin Gandini

Concluding seminar with Dahlberg and Göthson

Conclusion

Within the global education community, Sweden is admired for its long-standing reputation of making continual strategic investments and advancements in education, especially in early childhood education. It embraces democracy and the welfare of its people. As a country, the steady pursuit of policies for child welfare has created a robust vision of the purpose of education, backed by both funding and action. A well-educated cadre of professional teachers in preschools means that the vision for education and its purposes established by the national government is trusted to be made manifest by those professionals.

As a country, the steady pursuit of policies for child welfare has created a robust vision of the purpose of education, backed by both funding and action.

Sweden's Ministry of Education and Research published *The Politics of Preschool: Intentions and Decisions Underlying the Emergence and Growth of the Swedish Preschool*, in which first edition author Barbara Martin Korpi (2016) wrote,

> In a retrospective view of this kind, it is easy to see the consistency with which Swedish childcare has been developed and how early on there was a clear vision about its purposes and objectives. The development of childcare in Sweden demonstrates what politics can achieve.

Perhaps one day more governments will similarly rise to view young children, their families, and their teachers as deserving of services that, as President Nixon once suggested, "may affect that child for the balance of his life regardless of what may happen after that time." Gratefully, the world has reference points like the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy, and the country of Sweden to inspire our possibilities.

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