PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL FREEDOM
Public preschools dealing with the market

Marie Karlsson, Annica Löfdahl & Héctor Pérez Prieto*

The aim of this article is to contribute to the discussion of the privatisation and marketisation of childcare in Sweden from the perspective of public preschool teachers. Interviews were conducted with three teachers and their principal. The respondents were asked to elaborate on their experiences of the recent establishment of a nearby private preschool and its possible impact on their own preschool practice. A narrative analysis revealed three key narratives in the data: the market narrative, the narrative of the good public preschool and the narrative of professional freedom. The key narratives made visible a local sense making and re-negotiation of cultural discourses about marketisation, making freedom of choice a prerogative for public preschool teachers instead of for parents. We argue that this may have implications for the teaching profession and teacher identity.

Key-words: privatisation, Swedish preschool, teacher professionalism, teacher identity, narrative analysis

Introduction

Privatisation and marketisation of the educational sector in general and of the preschool in particular, have been strongly pushed in Sweden during previous decades. As the consequences have mostly been discussed in terms of social and cultural segregation, there is a need to examine the ways in which the social and cultural landscape of educational policy and discourse has been altered on the ground (Apple, 2006). However, few studies about these processes have been carried out in relation to childcare, and our knowledge about how they affect preschool practices is

* Faculty of Arts and Education, Karlstad University (Karlstad/Sweden).