Stenliden, Linnéa; Elvstrand, Helene; Lago, Lina

Digital learning activities at school-age educare when policy reforms calls for educational change

International journal for research on extended education : IJREE 10 (2022) 1, S. 4-18

General Contribution

Digital Learning Activities at School-age Educare when Policy Reforms Calls for Educational Change

Linnéa Stenliden, Helene Elvstrand, Lina Lago

Abstract: This study examines teachers' accounts of what is happening in practices of the School-age Educare centre (SAEC) when faced with pressure from policy reforms to adopt digital technology and promote digital competence as both a requirement and a right for all children. The aim is to explain anticipated tensions that may produce the (im)possible digital practices of SAECs. The study is conducted with teachers from three SAECs in Sweden. Reflection conversations and interviews were used to produce data that was analysed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The study contributes to understandings of teachers' main concerns when SAECs are requested to adopt technology and align with reforms. It explains how tensions emerge, impact SAEC teachers' actions towards revised curricula and affect the distribution of digital learning activities. Attention is asked to ensure that the rights of also young pupils are upheld in the digital world of today and tomorrow.

Keywords: School-age Educare, policy reform, digital competence, digital learning activities, main concerns, educational change

Introduction

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, our society is increasingly becoming a digital culture. Today, children are active users of digital tools from an early age. The internet and digital worlds are central parts of their everyday lives. In other words, digital technology has become a significant feature of modern childhood (De Felice, 2017). At the same time, children have become objects of a multitude of monitoring devices including mobile media, wearable devices and social media platforms that generate detailed data about them (Lupton & Williamson, 2017). Accordingly, recent policy reforms highlight that those children are entitled to profit from these environments but also to understand their privacy rights online, to freedom of expression as well as be protected from sexual and aggressive threats variously mediated and amplified by the internet (e. g. Livingstone, 2016; UN, 2018; UN, 2021). Hence, digital competence has been underlined in educational policy both as a requirement and a right for these children (Ferrari, 2013; Long & Margerko, 2020), since both national and global authorities consider policy implementation appropriate means of control, govern, and change of standard in education (Ball, et, al., 2012; Braun, et, al., 2010; Viennet, & Pont, 2017). This paper reflects on the pressure for educational practices to align with the policy reforms that concern digital competence (European Commission, 2018; Ministry of Education and Re-

https://doi.org/10.3224/ijree.v10i1.02

search, 2017; UNESCO, 2019; UNICEF, 2020) using Sweden's School-age Educare centres (SAEC) as an example. The attention is directed to SAEC as it is an important emissary arena for developing children's digital skills, at the same time the Swedish policy documents both leave much space for interpretation and little guidance for the SAEC teachers in this regard (Martinez, 2019). Understanding SAEC teachers' practices and factors that contribute to various approaches to digital media is essential, because disregard may effectively hinder children from their entitled rights to develop digital competence.

Many countries in Europe and Asia, as well as the US, are currently developing various extended activities like afterschool care or all-day school (see e. g., Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Huang, La Torre & Leon, 2014). Some afterschool programs are affiliated with national organizations, while others are sponsored by public institutions or agencies or operate as subunits within private organizations. The Swedish SAEC can also be described as an afterschool programme. However, compared with many other countries, Sweden has a long history of distributing afterschool care, dated back to the 19th century. Gradually, the afterschool care has become incorporated to the national educational system during the 20th century. The Swedish SAEC has been regulated by the domestic curriculum since 1998 (Rohlin, 2012).

Afterschool programmes in general, have often been described as intermediary spaces, which highlights the tensions around the social purposes in connection with children's wellbeing and the role of afterschool programmes emphasizing improved educational achievement (Noam, Biancarosa & Dechausay, 2003). Adding to the complexity around the social versus academic purposes of afterschool programmes, there are competing discourses about what children and young people need from digital media and how to serve those needs (Ammari, et al., 2015; Livingstone, 2016). This situation might be emphasized in Swedish SAECs because the institution, as mentioned, is being coordinated by the government policies for the educational institutions. This could make some of the highlighted issues more visible in the Swedish SAECs.

The regulations stipulate that Swedish SAECs are places where self-directed and group-based learning should be designed around each pupil's interests, adapted to children's culture and formal learning goals. In 2016, the national curriculum for SAECs was first revised to strengthen the learning goals in general, and then also the importance of developing digital competence among children was highlighted (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, rev. 2018 and 2019; Swedish Municipalities and Regions, 2019). So, teachers working at SAECs in Sweden, who undergo three-year teacher education at the university level, are increasingly expected to be adept at a variety of technology-based approaches for content delivery, goal-oriented learner support, and assessment. At the same time, they are also supposed, as mentioned, to organize learning activities that are characterized by informal learning situations where children's perspectives are considered important (Lager, 2020).

Hence, in this study it is of particular interest, to examine teachers' accounts of what is happening in SAECs practices when faced with pressure from policy reforms to adopt digital technology and make SAECs an institution where digital competence is promoted as both a requirement and a right for all children (UN, 2021). The aim is to explain anticipated tensions that may produce the (im)possible digital practices of SAECs by scrutinizing the following research questions:

1. What main concerns do SAEC teachers have in relation to digital activities at SAECs?
2. What consequences might emerging tensions have on the digital practices at SAECs?

The study is conducted in two medium-sized cities in Sweden using reflection conversations and interviews with teachers from three schools, who all work at their SAECs with the younger children (age 6–8).

School-age Educare: Digital Activities and Traditions

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2018) highlights that the practices at Swedish SAECs are not yet sufficiently supported by digital tools. They found in their review, that few SAECs used digital tools in the learning activities. At the SAECs, it was primarily the older pupils (aged 9 to 12 years) who were given opportunities to work with digital tools and play digital games. For the younger pupils (aged 6 to 8 years), the teachers decided which games were suitable or unsuitable for them to play. Interestingly, in a recent study, Lago & Elvstrand (2021) have found that pupil's themselves emphasize the importance of having access to digital tools in the SAEC.

A possible explanation for the lack of access and digital activities could be a central mindset among many teachers at Swedish SAECs today. An important value in the history of the institution is that children's development and learning are related to their practical "doings" (Jansson, 2018). There is, for example, a long tradition of praising "the handicrafts of the hand" and discountenancing technology as affording the extension of thought. Handicraft activities are valued and presented as "good" choices for children (Halldén, 2009). Studies indicate a more ambivalent attitude towards digital activities (Lago & Elvstrand, 2021; Martinez, 2019). Another related mindset is that children's senses and curiosity should be stimulated in "the wild" (Sandberg & Vourinen, 2006). Children's health, motor skills and environmental thinking are linked to fresh air and time spent outdoors (Mårtensson & Jansson, 2014). Thereby, at least in the Nordic countries, nature and outdoor activities signify a proper environment for children and are symbols of a "good" childhood (Halldén, 2009). Klerfelt (2007) explains how this kind of thinking creates a distance to children and their involvement with digital media.

At the same time, the integration of digital media into children's everyday lives and their interest in its adaption (Johnson, et, al., 2014), leads to the argument that SAEC activities should provide ways for young pupils to continue to choose and engage in digital activities according to their interests and required learning goals (Harvard, 2015; Martinez, 2019; 2021; Lago & Elvstrand, 2021). The making of the educational practice thus becomes a complex process when teachers' norms about childhood, their ideas about their assignment, their traditional habits within the institution and new digital demands from policy and curriculum incentives all come together (cf. Hallett & Meanwell, 2016). For example, Haglund & Peterson (2018) have through a web survey, in a Facebook group around SAEC, studied the use of board games and digital games. Board games are seen as contributing to the core work of SAECs which is looked upon as supporting social structure. Digital games are not, as they are viewed as enacted in isolation and therefore do not enhance children's social competence. Furthermore, Martinez has with help of interviews studied how teachers in SAEC work to

promote responsible online communication (2021) and critical digital literacy (2019) and showed how various frictions evolved among the teachers concerning their teaching assignment.

Through this review of afterschool programmes and Swedish SAEC about digital media and digital activities, it is evident that the 'digital' spheres present challenges for the afterschool institution. As the Swedish Media Council (2017) highlights, it is of uttermost importance to develop digital competence among children, as digital tools play a central role for them. The Council argues that to understand the digital worlds, children cannot be left alone in their interactions with digital media. Policy both expect education initiative and continued systematic digital transformation work (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011; Ministry of Education and Research, 2017; Swedish Parliament, 2020) and claim the rights of children (UN, 2018: UN, 2021). Hence, more empirical studies are needed to better understand digital practices within SAECs.

Symbolic Interactionism and Inhabited Institutions

In this study, a constructivist grounded theory approach is used to understand how teachers create meaning about their pedagogical practice, how they might change or preserve according to altered policies (cf. Charmaz, 2014). Many terms are trying to define this process, bringing together altered policies with the process of change or reform as "enactment" (Bell & Stevenson, 2015), "realisation" (Donaldson, 2015) or "educational change" (Fullan, 2015). The process can also be expounded by the theoretical frameworks of symbolic interactionism (SI) (Blumer, 1969). SI describe the process to create meaning as emerging through human interaction. As humans are social and reflective actors, they interpret these actions and different situations are thereby defined (Blumer, 1969). As highlighted by Everitt (2012) the interpretation of situations is an ongoing and constantly changing process. In this case the teachers' interpretation of a situation includes expectations from new policy related to digital competence that in one way or another influence them and their actions. Consequently, in this study SI provides tools to understand how situations are defined and tensions might emerge for SAEC teachers as they confront new policies for practice at SAECs.

Furthermore, the history and norms of the institution also become important prerequisites for teachers' possibilities to act within the institution while maintaining, shaping and changing what is possible within the institution through their actions. According to Hallett and Ventresca (2006), this is illustrated by the concept inhabited institution. On the one hand, institutions provide material conditions and guidelines for social interaction, and on the other hand, the meanings of these institutions are constructed by the actors through their social interaction. Hence, this concept can further help us understand the processes of how teachers interpret and enact new policy expectations.

As Everitt (2012, p. 205) points out, "people interpret and change in their institutional environment based on how they define their prior experience within that environment" (cf. also Weick, 1976). What people see as important in the environment is determined by institutional rules, (here for example the SAEC organization's policies), and how these rules are enacted. This is explained by Charmaz (2014) as people's main concerns. Main concerns are

often unstated in conversations; they involve interpretations of what becomes important when participants reflect on a subject (Charmaz, 2014).

In the study, symbolic interactionism, inhabited institutions and the concept of main concern are used as analytical tools that help to clarify teachers' accounts of digital activities in the practices of SAECs. They are used to analyse how emotions or traditions may produce options for the actions, come into conflict and/or create tensions for specific individuals and the institution. This study will thereby contribute to understandings how SAECs as educational institutions meet new policies promoting digital competence and children's rights. That is, how teachers understand the "changed" expectations on their assignment in terms of how they receive, interpret, and translate the policy into their pedagogical practice.

Method

The study is a part of a larger action research project where different aspects concerning SAECs were studied, and the use and perceptions of digital tools were one aspect.

This study builds on reflection conversations with a group of seven SAEC teachers involved and individual interviews with two SAEC teachers. The teachers who participated in the reflection conversations worked at the same school while the interviews were conducted with teachers from two other schools. Altogether, the sampling consists of teachers from three different schools. All the participants were asked to participate in the study. The SAEC teachers who participated in the reflection conversations had registered their interest in participating in the action research project and the SAEC teachers who took part in the individual interviews were asked by the researchers if they wanted to participate in the study.

Reflection Conversations

Reflection conversations were used to allow the participating teachers to share views, understandings, and feelings in a dialectical process as such discussions may cover various subjects and can include a variety of voices (Feldman, 1999). Participants in such conversations can come close to one another, "to what they know, desire, imagine and believe in" (Buchmann, 1983, p. 21). This was one way to grasp emerging concerns among the teachers which often are implicitly expressed in conversations – an approach to understanding what becomes important when participants reflect on a subject.

The reflection conversations were conducted in the form of a series of meetings that ran for a period of one year and consisted of six meetings. Each individual meeting was about ninety minutes long and the same group of SAEC teachers participated in the entire series. During the reflection conversations the participants had the agenda to raise questions which was of importance for them. The discussions therefore dwelt on many different issues but contained several examples of how the SAEC teachers talked about and related to digital tools and their use at SAECs in different ways. In the conversations, the teacher's different ideas could collide and mingle with other ideas. The discussions had an allowing character which means it was enough that the teachers entered the conversation and liberated their opinions,

they did not have to insist that their colleagues followed and agreed on what was deliberated (Feldman, 1999).

Semi-structured Interviews

To gain an even deeper understanding of the use of digital tools at SAECs semi-structured interviews were also conducted with two SAEC teachers to follow up the data in the reflection conversations. This kind of interview is a flexible and powerful way to capture voices and the ways people make meaning of their experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The interviews were carried out using snowball sampling as we were looking for people who had experiences of digital activities at SAECs (Bryman, 2014). The two interviewees were initiated and therefore provided rich material. The disadvantage of this is that we have probably obtained a selection of SAEC teachers who might be explicitly positive about using digital tools. In these interviews, the use of digital tools at SAECs was the explicated topic. This distinguishes the interviews from the reflection conversations, and they provide more focused data. Each interview was approximately 1 hour.

Analysis

Both the reflection meetings and the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. As previously mentioned, the data were analysed using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014). The data were coded and categorized according to the ideas of theoretical sampling (Ibid.), meaning that the work involved in gathering and analysing the data was an ongoing process where initial findings led us further in the data sampling process. Thornberg (2016, p. 357) describes this as a process where "data and theories are not simply discovered but constructed by the researcher and participants". In the analyses of the teachers' discussions and statements, the focus was on the participants' main concerns in relation to their work with digital activities in SAEC (Charmaz, 2014). Main concerns can be understood as something that is negotiated between the actors in SAEC (teachers and pupils), policy demands and values.

The codes were categorized identifying five different actions described by the teachers to relate to digital activities in SAEC:

- Avoid
- Protect
- Support
- Integrate
- Adding value

Building on the codes and categorizations two main concerns emerge among the SAEC teachers regarding digital activities in SAEC, these can be described in terms of a tension between to keep away versus embrace digital activities.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the whole research process, we have taken into consideration the ethical guidelines of social science research formulated by the Swedish Research Council (2017). Specifically, this means that we have informed all the participants about the overall aim of the research and asked for their consent and all participating teachers and schools are anonymized. In relation to the reflection conversations that were part of the larger action research project, continual ethical reflection has been of particular importance. As action research goes on for a long time, the consent to participate needs to be confirmed.

Results

The results are presented based on the identified "actions", avoid, protect, support, integrate, adding value and concluded by highlighting the tension between the participants' main concerns, to keep away versus embrace digital activities. The main concerns and related actions are presented separately from each other, but this is an analytical simplification to reach visibility and enable a discussion of the teachers' different approaches. The categories are more or less entangled in the teachers' reasoning and even if an individual teacher to a great extent describes one action, he or she can also describe other and conflicting actions.

To Keep Away from Digital Activities

The participants' main concern related to keep away from digital activities include the associated actions; avoid and protect. Consistently, the analyses considering the tension regarding this main concern will be presented in the following corresponding two subsections.

Avoid

One important aspect related to digital activities in SAEC that emerged was the teachers' preconceptions of the role digital tools play in society and within children's lives.

Some of the teachers talked about how the SAEC should be a sort of "sanctuary" where pupils are offered an expanded repertoire of activities and where digital activities should be avoided. The underlying idea is that children already encounter digital activities to a large extent and that SAEC should avoid further contributing to one-sided activities for pupils. Anna explains how her colleagues argue about giving pupils alternative activities:

> Many teachers think children should do pottery rather than playing computer games. That is a fact. But I think… when in world history have parents not had a hard time accepting their children's culture?
> (Interview)

Anna, critically, describes a notion where teachers are concerned about what kinds of activities children are supposed to engage in, what is "good" for them and what signifies proper activities for children. In this case, Annas colleagues promote learning activities related to practical references such as handicrafts and digital activities that are avoided by some teachers. It is also clear that it is difficult for teachers to agree on how to adapt to children's

culture or if digital technology is appropriate for SAEC activities. We can see similar arguing in other teachers talk about their thinking.

Digital tools are also described in terms of risk – digital activities are interpreted as not being very good for pupils. Instead of offering opportunities for digital activities, with the risk that pupils becoming sedentary, teachers argue that SAECs should become a place for movement and outdoor activities. Kim advocates this:

> I think the children of today spend too much time using computers. A whole net is open and there is no filter at all, everything is only one push of a button away. I think we at the SAEC have a mission, to show them other things. Like being outdoors, learning about nature and so on. Therefore, we do not use computers in our daily activities.
> (Reflection conversation)

Nature and outdoor activities thereby seem to be viewed as central for children, signifying a more "proper" environment for pupils, and as such become a symbol of a "good" childhood (cf. Halldén, 2009). The teachers also see themselves as having a mission to give children opportunities to do other things than using digital tools.

Protect

The avoidance of digital activities is also related to protection. Teachers argue that digital activities like surfing the net or engaging in social media are unsuitable activities for children. Their view is that there are various risks associated with for example using the internet, like online bullying or coming across paedophiles. Hence, to "keep away" digital technologies as computers from SAEC seems to be one approach. Nor is the use of mobile phones an option for this group of teachers. Kim goes on to describe the opinions among her colleagues when it comes to mobile phones:

> … a sensitivity barometer among my colleagues would suggest a complete ban. We have chosen not to allow mobile phones at the SAEC for various reasons: jealousy, equality for all and our decision that we are going to work with the technology we have…
> (Reflection conversation)

It seems like this teacher, tries to establish the opinion that most of the teachers understand digital technology as something which risks having several negative consequences for children in SAEC. To protect children from these negative consequences, digital activities and technologies are banned. Instead, they emphasize other values and activities in SAEC.

To Embrace Digital Activities

The participants' main concern to embrace digital activities include the identified actions; support, integrate and add value. Correspondingly, the analyses regarding this concern will be presented in three subsequent sections.

Support

Some of the teachers, pay attention to their supportive role and describe digital tools as characterizing our modern world, emphasizing the importance of giving children competence and knowledge to handle digital tools and ethical questions about the use of digital tools. Just as the teachers that describe an avoiding strategy and highlight that SAEC should provide

opportunities to other activities to complement the digital activities in children's lives, teachers who advocate a supportive strategy rather talk about how guidance is needed since digital activities already are happening in children's lives. Elsa expresses it as follows:

As a teacher you must know what the kids are doing on the web, you must follow them and give alternatives. (Reflection conversation)

This quotation can be interpreted as it being important for teachers to relate SAEC activities to digital media and to take into consideration the children's interests and their digitalized culture. At the same time, it is of importance to be active and show them alternatives during their activities online. SAEC should, hence, both utilize and support children's digital use.

Giving support is also related to possible risks and the teachers talk about how children must be given support to manage risk. In this, the teachers also struggle with their competence and uncertainty about whether they always have enough skills to support children's digital use. Karen explains:

I think the children are much more knowledgeable than we adults are because they have tried to push the buttons of a computer. And so I hope we are there and can help them if needed.
(Reflection conversation)

At the same time as children are viewed as competent digital users, this becomes a teaching problem since teachers might not always be able to support them properly. In Karen's statement, digital competence becomes both a strength to build on and an issue to be handled.

So, even when teachers seem positive towards using digital tools at SAECs, they also describe them as potentially problematic. Having digital skills as a teacher is largely about managing the dilemmas that can arise when using technology. The role of the teacher is to guide the pupils. Being able to do this, based on the interests of the pupils, probably requires teachers who are interested and present in the pupils' digital activities. As an example, the teachers at one SAEC described the characters in one of the computer games that the children played frequently as being very gender-stereotyped. To address this issue, the teachers created an avatar of their own and played the game with the children. The teachers' inside knowledge, in this case, created a good opportunity to discuss the activities within the games and gender issues.

Integrate

Some teachers emphasize that digital media brings value for pupils attending SAECs. These teachers see digital devices as tools for learning that offer enhanced options as communication tools, as searching tools, for Edu-gaming or collaborative learning. It is also highlighted, how the digital tools/activities are something that pupils need to gain knowledge about, now and for the future. The teachers emphasize that they have an important role to play in guiding and helping pupils in the digital world. They underline the importance of SAECs as a learning institution that should prepare pupils for the forthcoming need to use digital tools. It is also stressed that SAECs are an institution that might become especially qualified for this assignment, in this way, the digital activities are integrated into a SAEC approach. The teacher Martin says:

I think digital tools at the SAEC offer enormous opportunities to access things that few other institutions do. I'm thinking first and foremost about the socio-digital…

… and the possibility to teach children and pupils how to deal with the digital from a social perspective, and I almost think that we have exclusive rights, or the SAEC has such a unique opportunity to do it.
(Interview)

Here, the SAEC core assignment is underlined along with the opportunity to train pupils how to act and behave with social media and social digital networks. Martin has discovered that it might be possible to harness the social dynamics for learning agendas that are often keyed to adult social worlds and how the SAEC might have an exclusive opportunity for successful intervention in these socio-digital spaces that other institutions do not have.

Adding Value

There are also several other aspects highlighted by the teachers where they believe that digital tools add value for the pupils at the SAEC. They argue, for example, that digital media might offer time for relaxation and recovery for the pupils. One teacher, John, says:

I usually take an example of a pupil to explain how time with digital tools offers a space to relax. He comes around 7 am and has been at school the whole day. He has time for SAEC in the afternoon and a little bit in the morning, and when it's three o'clock he has time to sit down and play computer games for a short while. At that point, he has had eight hours of a social inferno.
As a teacher, I can understand that you may need to have time for gaming then and just take it easy because the activities we have at school and SAEC are all pumped up and we have few activities for those who need to recharge their energy.
(Reflection conversation)

As school days are long and intense, this teacher sees an opportunity for the pupil to relax and reenergize while gaming for a while, by himself. The teacher exemplifies this further by drawing a parallel to 'before' when the pupils did the same thing by reading comics. In this case, the fact that "digital tools offer a space to relax" contributes to the execution of one of SAEC's assignments, that pupils must be allowed to rest and recreation.

Another aspect that is considered to add value is that digital tools might help pupils who require special support. Karen exemplifies this by speaking about a boy who has difficulties with social relationships and connecting with other pupils, and who has severe difficulties taking part in playground games.

You know, we cannot get him involved in playing ordinarily, so now we have a more relaxed way where he can feel that he does not have to show us something all the time /…/
So, for this image of himself, he could do this digitally and that meant that other children also engaged in this and talked with him. It became a different kind of social interaction. He was very skilled at this, and it adds to his status in the group when he can talk about this.
(Reflection conversation)

In this case, the teachers have allowed the boy to stick to digital activities instead, to solve some of his social interaction problems. However, it seems that the teachers are conscious and concerned about this solution, as they explain why they have had to ignore the ordinary rules and they argue for the solution by pointing out the status the boy has now gained in the group.

As illustrated in the result section as a whole, some teachers at SAEC strive for engagement with digital activities and thus attempt to support, integrate, or see digital activities as adding value to the children, while other teachers put up resistance to the assignment aiming for digital competence. In the latter case, digital activities are avoided and SAEC should offer protection and alternatives to them.

Emerging Tensions: Consequences for the Digital Practices at the SAEC

This section allows us to understand how the teachers manage the stipulated assignment to include digital activities in SAEC, as well as how the teachers do not act independently from history and the inhabited norms of the SAECs (cf. Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). It became evident in the analyses, that pressure for change created tensions between different values related to digital activities at the SAEC. The teachers coped with the situation in different ways, with different actions. Even if not explicitly stated in the conversations, it became obvious that when teachers reflected on the subject of digital activities at SAEC, two main concerns emerged: to keep away from digital activities or to embrace digital activities. However, the identified main concerns do not arise in a vacuum but are linked to both traditions and the conditions at SAECs where policy plays one important part. Yet, the teachers' different concerns, their various actions and the emerging tensions are expected to affect both present and future prospects for digital activities at SAEC. According to the identified main concerns of SAEC teachers in this study, there are at least two different angles that can be distinguished to impinge the practice's possibilities, both conform to traditions and conditions at SAEC. For example, one explanation for teachers to engage in and provide digital activities for the pupils can be that he/she leans on the part of SAEC tradition that emphasises children's interests and their digital culture; another explanation can thus be the condition that one teacher has own digital competence, for example, based on own interest or continuing education.

In the same way, teachers who argue that digital activities should have little or no space in the SAEC can do so based on traditions in line with for example ideas of SAEC as a place for handicraft activities and outdoor time (cf. Halldén, 2009; Jansson, 2018) or based on other conditions as, for example, several participants highlight that there is a shortage of digital tools at SAEC. One of the teachers describes "at the SAEC there are only five tablets for more than 100 pupils". So, in this context, of importance is also to underline other circumstances that affect the work with digital activities at SAEC. In the interviews, the SAECs teachers highlighted a lack of competence to work with digital tools. Many of the teachers seemed to look upon themselves as lacking this competence related to their work as teachers, but they also reflected on the challenge of developing these skills. In the long run, it can be expected that matters like these will affect how SAEC teachers handle the pressure from policy to include digital activities or not.

Altogether, what the results show is how teachers' accounts of what is happening in SAECs practices are affected by inhabited values of the institution as well as the conditions for the practice including policy reforms asking for digitalization. It has been illustrated how the SAEC teachers' different actions associated with concerns around digital activities are established in various degrees somewhere between the antidotes "keep away" from digital activities and/or "embrace" them. Accordingly, the tensions do affect what kind of digital practices children can take part in at the SAECs. The consequences are that sometimes digital activities are possible, at other times (other SAECs) such activities become impossible. The effect of this is inequity, as some children are entitled to profit from digital environments, but others do not have this designated right highlighted in recent policy (e.g. Livingstone, 2016; UN, 2018; UN, 2021). Of course, this is not the case everywhere, which also is illustrated in this study.

Discussion

This study has focused on how SAEC teachers are increasingly expected to adopt recent educational policy reforms highlighting digital competence both as a requirement and a right for all children. What is illustrated is how learning environments including digital tools can be troublesome for teachers at the SAEC, an organization that is characterized by informal learning situations where children's perspectives are considered important at the same time anticipated is, according to government policies, that learning activities should include a variety of technology-based approaches for content delivery, goal-oriented learner support, and assessment.

Even though this study is limited, as it represents a few SAECs, it shows clearly how teachers are concerned how to deal with the expectations. Two main concerns are found emerging as a tension among the teachers regarding digital activities at SAEC. That is a tension related to the main concerns to keep away and/or embrace digital activities. The tension is constructed in an interplay among the identified actions to avoid, protect, support and integrate digital activities as well as their potential to add value. The analyses show how the main concerns are negotiated between the actors in SAEC (teachers and pupils), policy demands and values. Actions are directed to, for example, the teachers' individual beliefs such as what constitutes a 'good childhood', digital tools as potential risks for children, fear of the digital world, etcetera. Also, the inhabited values within the institution come into being in this negotiation, such as a desire to be "something else" for children or wanting to offer experiences that children do not get at home or in school. Similar, the conditions within the institution as (in)sufficient access to digital tools and digital competence among teachers matters in the bargaining. The intermingling relations, the tension within the SAEC institutions, affect teachers' possibilities to act and distribute digital activities. So, in these rather strained processes, SAEC teachers are recognized as actors who act in different ways towards new reforms and policymaking (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). It is therefore suggested that the Swedish Digitalization Commission (2014) still might be right in their statement that many teachers are concerned about using digital tools: some teachers arrange digital activities and see potentials from these in their practice, but many are not really involved in or avoid digital activities, or even actively resist digital activities in their practice.

Irrespective of the reasons for the emerging tensions and regardless of arguments from teachers who are pro or anti-digital media, the tensions lead to an uneven distribution of learning activities with digital tools at SAECs. Consequently, the formal/informal education around digital activities that takes place at SAECs does not always offer opportunities for all pupils to be digitally empowered. This being the case, it is obvious that such disparities are creating genuinely unfair treatment of children's requirements and right to develop digital competence.

Pushes for educational improvement where more equity in this matter is important. Digital tools need probably to be more widely accessible and critically used at SAECs as they are a part of children's everyday life. Teaching at SAECs needs to give all pupils opportunities to discuss the potentials and risks of digital tools, to develop digital competence. Of course, it is difficult to achieve equity regarding the distribution of digital activities, but the occurring situation calls for educational awareness to ensure that the rights of also young children can be upheld in relation to their digital sphere in the worlds of today and tomorrow. Therefore, it is

essential to further address the relationship between digital media on the one hand and the question of policy reforms for institutional development of SAECs on the other. Further research is needed about intermingling relations and the teachers' main concerns according to digital activities. To achieve an equal and coherent approach to children's evident right to develop digital competencies a deeper understanding of this interplay, affecting the (im) possible practices of the SAEC to fulfil its assignment, is central.

References

Ammari T, Kumar P, Lampe C, et al. (2015) Managing children's online identities: how parents decide what to disclose about their children online. In: *Proceedings of the 33rd annual ACM conference on human factors in computing systems (CHI '15)*, Seoul, Korea, 18–23 April, pp. 1895.1904. New York: ACM Press.

Bell, L. and H. Stevenson (2015), "Towards an analysis of the policies that shape public education: Setting the context for school leadership". *Management in Education, (29)*4, 146–150, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0892020614555593.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism: perspective and method.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Buchmann, M. (1983). *Argument and Conversation as Discourse Models of Knowledge Use.* The Institute for Research on Teaching, MSU, East Lansing, MI ED242493.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory.* (2nd edition.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Durlak, J. A., Mahoney, J. L., Bohnert, A. M., & Parente, M. E. (2010). Developing and improving afterschool programs to enhance youth's personal growth and adjustment: a special issue of AJCP. *American Journal of community psychology*, *45*(3–4), 285–293.

De Felice, D. (2017). The Right to Security of Online Childhood. International Journal of Children's Rights*, 25*(3–4), 573–598.

Everitt, J. G. (2012). Teacher Careers and Inhabited Institutions. Sense-Making and Arsenals of Teaching Practice in Educational Institutions. *Symbolic Interaction*, *35*(2), 203–220.

European Commission (2018) 24: *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning.* Retrieved 2021–06–02, from: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/XXVI/EU/00/83/EU_08336/imfname_10779422.pdf

European Schoolnet, (2012). Challenges and opportunities for schools and teachers in a digital world. *Lessons learned from the 2012 SMILE action research project.*

Feldman, A. (1999). The role of conversation in collaborative action research. *Educational Action Research, 7*(1), 125–147.

Ferrari, A. (2013). *DIGCOMP: A Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe.* European Commission.

Fullan, M. (2015), *The NEW meaning of educational change*, Teachers College Press, New York.

Haglund, B., & Peterson, L. (2018). Why use board games in leisure-time centres? Prominent staff discourses and described subject positions when playing with children. *IJREE–International Journal for Research on Extended Education*, *5*(2), 13–14.

Halldén, G. (2009). *Naturen som symbol för den goda barndomen.* Carlssons Bokförlag, Stockholm.

Hallett, T. & Meanwell, E. (2016). Accountability as an Inhabited Institution. Contested Meanings and the Symbolic. *Symbolic Interaction*, 39(3), 374–396.

Hallett, T. & Ventresca, M. (2006). Inhabited Institutions. Social Interactions and Organizational Forms in Gouldner's Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy. *Theory and Society*, 35(2), 213–36.

Harvard, Å. (2015). *Designing for peer learning: mathematics, games, and peer groups in leisure-time centres.* Diss. Lund: Lund University, 2015. Lund.

Huang, D., La Torre, M. & Leon, M. (2014). Seth: Identification of Key Indicators for Quality in Afterschool Programs*, International Journal for Research on Extended Education, 2*(1–2014), 20–44.

Jansson, M. (2018). *Vardagliga teknikaktiviteter i fritidshem. Organisation, didaktik, görande.* Lic. Diss. [Unpublished] Linköping University, 2018. Linköping.

Johnson, L., Adams Becker, S., Estrada, V. & Freeman, A. (2014). *NMC Horizon Report:* 2014 K-12 Edition. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium. Retrieved May 30, 2021, from: https://www.learntechlib.org/p/147472/.

Klerfelt, A. (2007). *Barns multimediala berättande. En länk mellan mediakultur och pedagogisk praktik.* Gothenburg Studies in Educational Sciences 256

Klerfelt, A. (2006), Cyberage narratives – creative computing in after school centres *Childhood, 13*(2), 175–203.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2008). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lager, K. (2020). Possibilities and Impossibilities for Everyday Life: Institutional Spaces in School-Age Educare, *IJREE – International Journal for Research on Extended Education, 8*(1), 22–35.

Lago, L. & Elvstrand, H. (2021). Children on the borders between institution, home and leisure: Space to fend for yourself when leaving the school-age educare centre, *Early Child Development and Care.* doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2021.1929200

Livingstone S (2016) Reframing media effects in terms of children's rights in the digital age. *Journal of Children and Media 10*(1), 4–12.

Lupton, D., & Williamson, B. (2017). The datafied child: The dataveillance of children and implications for their rights. *New Media & Society, 19*(5), 780–794.

Long, D. & Magerko, B. (2020). What is AI Literacy? Competencies and Design Considerations. *Proceedings of 2020, CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* 1–16

Martinez, C. (2019). Promoting critical digital literacy in the leisure-time centre: views and practices among Swedish leisure-time teachers, *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy, 14*, 134–146.

Martinez, C. (2021): Imagine the Person in Front of You: How Teachers Promote Responsible Online Communication in Swedish Leisure-Time Centers, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 65(6), 899–913.

Ministry of Education and Research. (2017). *Nationell digitaliseringsstrategi för skolväsendet* (National strategy for digitalization of the educational system, authors translation). Bilaga till regeringsbeslut I:1, 2017–10–19. Diarienummer: U2017/04119/S.

Mårtensson, F. & Jansson, M. (2014). *Skolgårdsförgröning på lekens villkor.* Eds. F. Mårtensson & M. Jansson. Alnarp: Movium.

Noam, G. G., Biancarosa, G. & Dechausay, N. (2003). *Afterschool Education: Approaches to an Emerging Field.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Rohlin, M. (2012). *Fritidshemmets historiska dilemman: En nutidshistoria om konstruktionen av fritidshemmet i samordning med skolan.* Stockholm: Stockholms universitets förlag

Sandberg, A. & Vuorinen, T. (2006). From hayloft to own room – girls play environments. In J. Brodin & P. Lindstrand (Eds.). *Interaction in Outdoor Play Environments – Gender, Culture and Learning.* Stockholm: Stockholm Institute of Education. Report no. 47, pp. 1–22.

Swedish Municipalities and Regions. (2019). *#skolDigiplan – Nationell handlingsplan för digitalisering av skolväsendet.* Retrieved 2021–08–20, from: https://skr.se/skr/tjanster/rapporterochskrifter/publikationer/nationellhandlingsplanfordigitaliseringavskolvasendet.28931.html

Swedish Media Council (2017). *Småungar och medier 2017.* Stockholm: Medierådet. Retrieved 2021–06–20, at: https://statensmedierad.se/

Swedish National Agency for Education (2011, rev. 2018 and 2019). *The Education Act.* Retrieved 2021–06–20, Retrieved 2022–03–15 from: https://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3813

Swedish Parliament. (2020). *Digitaliseringens möjligheter för att främja kunskapsutveckling och likvärdighet i skolväsendet.* Diarienummer: U2020/05525.

Swedish Research Council (2017). *God forskningssed.* Stockholm: Vetenskapsrådet.

United Nations. (2018). *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act,* (2018:1197).

United Nations. (2021). *General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment*, Retrieved 2021–06–20, from https://www.ohchr.org

UNESCO. (2019). *Artificial intelligence in education: challenges and opportunities for sustainable development.* Retrieved 2022–03–15 from: https://en.unesco.org/artificial-intelligence/education

UNICEF. (2020). *Policy guidance on AI for children.* Retrieved 2022–03–15: https://www.unicef.org

Viennet, R. & Pont, B. (2017). "Education policy implementation: A literature review and proposed framework", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/fc467a64-en.

Wilcox, K. C. & Lawson, H. A. (2018). Teachers' agency, efficacy, engagement, and emotional resilience during policy innovation implementation. *Journal of Educational Change, 19*(2), 181–204.