JYU DISSERTATIONS 543

Ville Ruutiainen

Marketization and Privatization of Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland

Shifts within and from Universalism

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

JYU DISSERTATIONS 543

Ville Ruutiainen

Marketization and Privatization of Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland

Shifts within and from Universalism

Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston kasvatustieteiden ja psykologian tiedekunnan suostumuksella
julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston yliopiston vanhassa juhlasalissa S212
elokuun 19. päivänä 2022 kello 12.

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by permission of
the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the University of Jyväskylä,
in building Seminarium, Old Festival Hall S212, on August 19, 2022, at 12 o'clock.

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

JYVÄSKYLÄ 2022

Editors
Miika Marttunen
Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä
Päivi Vuorio
Open Science Centre, University of Jyväskylä

ISBN 978-951-39-9348-1 (PDF)
URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9348-1
ISSN 2489-9003

Permanent link to this publication: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-39-9348-1

ABSTRACT

Ruutiainen, Ville
Marketization and Privatization of Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland: Shifts within and from Universalism
Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2022, 127 p.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 543)
ISBN 978-951-39-9348-1 (PDF)

In Finland, the early childhood education and care (ECEC) system has been based on the idea of universalism. Universalism has meant, for example, families' universal entitlement to ECEC and public sector responsibility for ECEC provision. However, since the late 1990s, the Finnish ECEC system has seen increasing marketization and privatization. Many municipalities have started to support private, non-profit and for-profit ECEC provision. As a result, especially during the 2010s, the share of private provision has increased somewhat rapidly. At the same time, municipalities have started to provide demand-side subsidies for families to enable their ECEC selection. Thus, the ECEC system has become increasingly shaped by market logic. Earlier research indicates that the marketization and privatization of ECEC has a great risk of exacerbating social inequalities. However, most of this research considers national contexts that are very different from the Finnish one. The aim of this study is to increase understanding about the relationship between ideas of universalism and market logic in the context of Finnish ECEC. More specifically, it examines whether the marketization and privatization of ECEC indicate a shift *from* universalism or *within* universalism. To do so, this study draws on the theory of discursive institutionalism (DI) developed by Vivien Schmidt. DI takes a dynamic stance towards institutional change and emphasizes the explanatory power of ideas and discourse. Moreover, to create deeper understanding about the phenomenon of interest, a mixed-method approach is applied. The qualitative sections of the research draw on the interview data of municipal decision-makers (N = 47) and representatives of private providers (N = 12). The quantitative section employs survey data of parents of four-year-old children (N = 1,416). The results indicate that intertwinement of universalism and market logic in the institution of Finnish ECEC entails features that can be interpreted as shifts within universalism, but also from universalism. The study concludes by arguing that the marketization and privatization of ECEC change the core values of the ECEC institution by replacing some of universalism's values with neoliberal ideas about freedom of choice, individual responsibility and economic effectivity. Intensifying market logic in the field of ECEC has the potential to extend educational and social differentiation into early childhood as well.

Keywords: Eearly childhood education and care, universalism, marketization, privatization

TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)

Ruutiainen, Ville
Varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen Suomessa: siirtymiä universalismissa ja universalismista
Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2022, 127 s.
(JYU Dissertations
ISSN 2489-9003; 543)
ISBN 978-951-39-9348-1 (PDF)

Suomessa varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden järjestäminen on perustunut universalismin ajatukselle, mikä on tarkoittanut esimerkiksi subjektiivista päivähoito- ja varhaiskasvatusoikeutta sekä kuntien lakisääteistä velvollisuutta järjestää varhaiskasvatuspalvelut. Varhaiskasvatuspalveluita on kuitenkin 1990-luvun loppupuolelta saakka luonnehtinut myös voimistuva markkinoistumis- ja yksityistymiskehitys. Moni kunta on esimerkiksi alkanut myöntämään perheille taloudellisia tukia yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden valitsemiseksi. Samalla yksityisesti tuetettujen varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden osuus on kasvanut voimakkaasti. Erityisen vauhdikasta yksityisen sektorin kasvu oli 2010-luvulla. Palveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen viittaa siihen, että markkinalogiikka on tuotu universalismin rinnalle suomalaista varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmää muokkaavaksi periaatteeksi. Aiemman tutkimuksen perusteella varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumiseen ja yksityistymiseen liittyy usein lasten ja perheiden eriarvoisuutta lisääviä mekanismeja. Suurin osa tutkimuksesta on kuitenkin toteutettu ympäristöissä, jotka poikkeavat monilta osin merkittävästi suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus on lisätä ymmärrystä universalismin ja markkinalogiikan suhteesta suomalaisessa varhaiskasvatusinstituutiossa. Tutkimuksessa pohditaan, onko varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen tulkittavissa liukumaksi universalistisen järjestelmän sisällä vai siitä pois. Tutkimus perustuu Vivien Schmidtin diskursiivisen institutionalismin (DI) teorialle. DI korostaa ideoiden sekä diskurssin selitysvoimaa instituutioiden muutosprosesseissa. Metodologisesti tutkimus asemoituu monimenetelmäiseen tutkimustraditioon. Tutkimuksen laadullisissa osioissa hyödynnetään kuntapäättäjien (N = 47) yksityisten palveluntuottajien edustajien (N = 12) haastatteluita. Määrällisessä osuudessa analysoidaan puolestaan neljävuotiaiden lasten huoltajilta kerättyä kyselyaineistoa (N = 1 416).

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että Suomessa varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumiseen ja yksityistymiseen liittyy sekä piirteitä, jotka voidaan tulkita liukumiksi universalismin sisällä, että piirteitä, jotka voidaan ymmärtää liukumiksi pois universalismista. Tulosten perusteella näyttäsi siltä, että markkinoistumisen ja yksityistymisen myötä osa varhaiskasvatusinstituution perustana olleista universalistisista arvoista on osittain korvautunut uusliberaaleilla valinnan vapauteen, yksilön vastuuseen ja taloudelliseen tehokkuuteen liittyvillä ajatuksilla. Tulosten perusteella markkinalogiikan voimistuminen varhaiskasvatusinstituutiossa voi ulottaa koulutuksellisen ja sosiaalisen eriytymisen prosesseja myös varhaislapsuuteen.

Avainsanat: varhaiskasvatus, universalismi, markkinoistuminen, yksityistyminen

Author

Ville Ruutiainen
Department of Education
University of Jyväskylä
ville.i.ruutiainen@jyu.fi

Supervisors

Maarit Alasuutari
Faculty of Education and Psychology
University of Jyväskylä

Kirsti Karila
Department of Education and Culture
Tampere University

Eija Räikkönen
Faculty of Education and Psychology
University of Jyväskylä

Reviewers

Anna-Maija Puroila
Faculty of Education
University of Oulu

Eva Lloyd
Department of Early Childhood and Education
University of East London

Opponent

Eva Lloyd
Department of Early Childhood and Education
University of East London

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation process has been my biggest professional effort so far. I have learned numerous new skills and developed my thinking as a researcher. However, perhaps even more important has been my growth as a person. A deep reflection on things, phenomena and the world really change people, and it has indeed changed me. After writing my dissertation I think I am more ready and more skilled to make weighted decisions in my life than I was before, and I see the world around me in a different way than I did before. Even though this has been a personally meaningful process, it has not been a solo performance in any sense. Rather, there are many people and institutions who have supported and guided me during this process and who deserve my deepest thanks.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisors Professor Maarit Alasuutari, Professor Kirsti Karila and Adjunct professor Eija Räikkönen. Without you this dissertation would have never been completed. In fact, without you Maarit, it would have never even started. Therefore, in addition to your warm, gentle and insightful guidance and all inspiring conversations, I want to thank you for trusting in me so much that you offered a research subject and a place in the CHILDCARE-research team. Above all, it has been a great honor and a great joy to get to know you. Kirsti – I am really impressed by your deep wisdom, your critical skills, and your ability to see the forest for the trees. Additionally, you have taught me a lot about how to see the trees that constitute the forest, that is appreciation of the data at hand. Your sense of humor is special as well. With it, you have livened up our guidance meetings. Eija – It has been such an honor to work with someone as talented as you are. Especially, I appreciate your way to make me an active learner. I will always be grateful for those countless hours you spent guiding me to the world of quantitative methods. And also, for those countless emails in which you answered my endless flood of questions, hesitations and realizations.

Professor Eva Lloyd's and Professor Anna-Maija Puroila's insightful comments and wise suggestions have helped me a lot in writing the compilation article of this dissertation. I am grateful for the time, effort, and rigor that you have put in the review of this dissertation. Because of your help this work is much more solid than it would have been without.

I have been especially lucky in having wonderful people and colleagues around me who have supported and helped me. Conversations with you by a lunch table or in PhD seminars have been especially valuable. I am grateful to Jukka Utriainen, Noora Heiskanen, Jukka Virta, Kaisu Peltoperä, Mihaly Szerovay, Maiju Paananen, Olli Merjovaara, Olli Karsio, Tapio Räsänen and many others. A special thanks goes to all wonderful people in CHILDCARE research team. There have also been many altruistic people who have given me their precious time and kindly answered my questions in addition to their own work. Heikki Patomäki, Asko Tolvanen, Lassi Ruutiainen, Anna Ruutiainen, Panu Raatikainen, Tuomo Virtanen, Vivien Schmidt, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Kenneth

Eklund, Heljä Gröhn and Tuukka Kaidesoja, among others, deserve great thanks for helping me out.

I have written this dissertation mainly beside my main job as a university teacher. I want to thank the University of Jyväskylä's Department of Education for this opportunity and financial support for my dissertation. Also, CHILDCARE research project funded by Strategic Research Council of the Academy of Finland has provided me some time for research. I want to also thank the Emil Aaltonen Foundation and the Finnish Cultural Foundation for grants that have guaranteed me an opportunity to concentrate on finishing this dissertation.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My parents, siblings and my parents-in-law have supported me all the way during this process. Especially I want to thank my dear wife Anna and my children Martti and Salme. You give a meaning to my life and kept my feet on the ground during this process.

Jyväskylä 1.7.2022
Ville Ruutiainen

ORIGINAL PAPERS

The present doctoral study is based on three empirical sub-studies published or submitted for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals. Copies of the articles (sub-studies I-III) can be found as appendices of this compilation article.

SUB-STUDY I Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2020). Rationalising public support for private early childhood education and care: the case of Finland. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 41(1)*, 32-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1665497

SUB-STUDY II Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2021). Selectivity of clientele in Finnish private early childhood education and care. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 7(2*), 91-105. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2021.1911161

SUB-STUDY III Ruutiainen, V., Räikkönen, E., & Alasuutari, M. (submitted). Socioeconomic and attitudinal differences between service users of private and public early childhood education and care in the Finnish context. (submitted to *Journal of Childcare and Education Policy*).

The author of this doctoral dissertation is the first author of all three papers. He has significantly contributed to every sub-study's design, analysis, writing process and interpretation of the results. Moreover, as a member of CHILDCARE research group he has participated in data collection of every sub-study. More specifically, the author has planned and conducted the analysis of the two first sub-studies. In sub-study III the author was primarily responsible for planning and conducting the analysis. The supervisors of the dissertation have had an advisory role in all three sub-studies by commenting on the three manuscripts.

TABLES

TABLE 1 Structure of the research 28
TABLE 2 Shifts within universalism in Finnish ECEC institution.....73
TABLE 3 Shifts from universalism in Finnish ECEC institution.....78

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT
TIIVISTELMÄ (ABSTRACT IN FINNISH)
FOREWORD / PREFACE / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
ORGINAL PAPERS
FIGURES AND TABLES
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 13
1.1 Marketization and privatization of universal early childhood education and care 13
1.2 Institutional change: ideas and discourses 17
1.3 Formation of Finnish ECEC institution 21
1.4. Aim and research questions 26

2 THE IDEAS OF UNIVERSALISM AND MARKET LOGIC IN THE CONTEXT OF ECEC 29
2.1 Universalism in ECEC 29
2.1.1 Nordic universalism and its critics 29
2.1.2 Universalism in the Finnish ECEC system 33
2.2 Market logic in ECEC: Marketization and privatization 35
2.2.1 Defining marketization and privatization 36
2.2.2 The idea of market logic in the context of ECEC 37
2.2.3 Privatization and marketization of ECEC as policy development in the Nordic context 39
2.2.4 Main research lines related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC: Selectivity and functioning of markets 40

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS 51
3.1 Presumptions of institutions 51
3.2 Methodology 53
3.3 Research data and methods 56
3.3.1 Data and research methods of the first sub-study 57
3.3.2 Data and research methods of the second sub-study 58
3.3.3 Data and research methods of the third sub-study 59

4 MAIN RESULTS OF THE SUB-STUDIES 64
4.1 Sub-study I: Rationalizations of public support of private ECEC provision 64
4.2 Sub-study II: Selectivity of private ECEC provision 65
4.3 Sub-study 3: Differentiation of service users of public and private ECEC services 66

5 DISCUSSION 68
5.1 Marketization and privatization of ECEC as shifts within universalism 68
5.2 Marketization and privatization of ECEC as shifts from universalism 73
5.3 Ideational change of Finnish ECEC system 78
5.4 A critical appraisal of the dissertation: A mixed-method approach . 81
5.5 Ethical considerations 88
5.6 Concluding remarks and policy implications 89

YHTEENVETO 96

REFERENCES 101

ORIGINAL PAPERS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Marketization and privatization of universal early childhood education and care

Finland is seen as a part of the Nordic social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Anderssen, 1990) and the Nordic educational regime (West & Nikolai, 2013). As is typical of the Nordic regime, in Finland the provision of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services has been based on the idea of universalism (Karila, 2012; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Onnismaa & Kalliala, 2010). As an ideological principle of ECEC provision, universalism has promoted social rights, equality and equity (Anttonen, 2002; Kumpulainen, 2018; Lundkvist et al., 2017). In a practical and political context, the universalism has manifested as the rights of custodians – and, since 2016, also children – to have ECEC regardless of whether the parent works or not (Paananen, 2017), national policies promoting the affordability, availability and amenability of ECEC services (Fjällström et al., 2020) and the state's central role in service provision (Mahon et al., 2012). Consequently, in addition to the fact that municipalities have been required by law to organize ECEC services, they have also provided the services mainly by themselves (see Kumpulainen, 2018; Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare [FIFHAW], 2020). Therefore, ECEC systems in Nordic countries have differed significantly, especially from those in liberal Anglo-Saxon countries which have relied more on the markets and the private sector in ECEC provision (e.g., Brennan et al., 2012; Penn, 2011a, 2012; Lloyd & Penn, 2014; for more comprehensive definition of universalism see Section 2.1). However, in the past twenty years, ECEC systems (Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016; Haug, 2014; Laiho & Pihlaja, 2018, 2022; Westberg & Larsson, 2020) and education systems more generally (Dovemark et al., 2018) in Nordic countries have been under intense marketization and privatization development. The market rationality promoting freedom of choice and economic efficiency has become more salient in policy

discourses (Alila & Kinos, 2014; Mahon et al., 2012) and legislation (Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022) as well as in municipalities' practices. In this study, the marketization and privatization of ECEC is examined in the Finnish context.

In Finland, both privatization (namely, increasing involvement of private provision) and marketization (namely, promotion of competition and parental choice of ECEC) has taken place (see Anttonen & Meagher, 2013; Hansen & Lindholst, 2016; for more comprehensive definition of marketization and privatization of ECEC see Section 2.2). From 2000 to 2019, the share of private provision has increased from 11 percent to around 18–19 percent of children who participate in ECEC, depending on the calculation method. During the same period, the number of children attending privately provided ECEC has increased from around 24,000 to around 50,000 (FIFHAW, 2020; Finnish Education Evaluation Centre [FEEC], 2019). In addition to quantitative growth of private provision, there has been a qualitative change in private sector as well: the traditional small local entrepreneurs and third sector non-profit operators have been accompanied by larger growth-oriented for-profit companies (see Alila et al., 2014; Haug, 2014; Ruutiainen et al., 2018). In 2019, the three biggest ECEC companies owned 36 percent of all private kindergartens (FINEEC, 2019). Between 2015 and 2019, their combined revenue increased from around EUR 46 million to EUR 146 million and their staff increased from 1,033 to 3,566 employees (Asiakastieto, 2021).

In Finland, national and municipal ECEC policies have promoted parental choice and competition between service providers, namely marketization, by turning the focus of public subsidies from supply (purchase contracts) to demand (vouchers and private day care allowance) (see Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2003; van Der Werf et al., 2021). In addition, a series of other market-oriented policy reforms have taken place since the 1980s. In particular, allowing purchase contracts between the public and private sectors in the 1980s, removing the prohibition of profit seeking in the field of ECEC (1982), the increasing of municipalities' autonomy, changing the state subsidy for municipalities (1993) and the introduction of private day care allowance (PDA) (1997) and a voucher system (2009) have paved the way for the marketization and privatization of ECEC (see Laiho & Pihlaja, 2018, 2022; Ruutiainen et al., 2018).

Public and academic debate about the privatization and marketization of Finnish ECEC has been scarce until the mid-2010s. Only in recent years have the discussion and news coverage on the topic become more intense. For example, the previous Ombudsman for Children (Kurttila, 2017) and the Trade Union of Education in Finland (Misukka, 2018; Yle, 26.6.2018) have criticized profit seeking in the field of ECEC by invoking the potential inequalities related to it and the fact that profit seeking is prohibited in the field of basic education. Moreover, the Teacher Student Union of Finland (SOOL, 2018), the Ministry of Education and Culture (Riitakorpi et al., 2017) and the news coverage related to the so-called care crisis in 2019 (e.g., HS, 21.1.2019; IS, 7.2.2019) have turned attention to possible quality concerns related to private ECEC provision. The private providers have participated in the discussion as well, for example, by

seeking to debunk the "myths and images of private ECEC" (Martikainen et al., 2019) by taking a position on public support models (Ahto, 2020) and by criticizing some municipalities' decisions to restrict the amount of customer fees that private providers are allowed to charge (Finnish Association of Private Care Providers [HALI], 2020). In party politics, especially the Left Alliance (Malin & Honkasalo, 2020) and the Greens (Kari, 2019) have taken a critical stance towards privatization development. Moreover, the current Social Democrat-driven government, led by Sanna Marin, have investigated the possibilities to prohibit profit seeking in the field of ECEC (Finnish Government, 2019). The government's entry, in turn, has been criticized by the Finnish Association of Private Care Providers (HALI, 2019). The clearance report, published in spring 2021, indicated that the prohibition of profit seeking in the area of ECEC would be hard because it would contradict the freedom of trade inscribed in the Constitution of Finland (Tuori, 2021). Recently, there has been some activation in the academic discussion as well (e.g., Dovemark et al., 2018; Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022; Mahon et al., 2012; Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019; Ruutiainen et al., 2018; Räsänen & Österbacka, 2019; Valkonen et al., 2021).

However, regardless of the lack of research in the Finnish context, issues related to privatization and marketization of ECEC, childcare and education more generally have been widely studied in the fields of education, sociology, economics, and social policy, using different methodologies. One strand of studies often building on the understanding that participation in high-quality ECEC programs benefits children, especially those in a disadvantaged position, concentrates on the issues related to the accessibility, affordability and availability of (high-quality) ECEC in different, more or less marketized ECEC systems (e.g., Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Becker & Schober, 2017; Cloney et al., 2016; Japel & Frindly, 2018; Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Pennerstorfer & Pennerstorfer, 2021; Petitclerc et al., 2017; Stahl et al., 2018; Sibley et al., 2015; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; Van Lancker, 2013;). Another, closely related stream of studies is interested in families' care and early education decisions (demand side) and factors related to or shaping those in ECEC or education markets (e.g., Ghosh & Dey, 2020; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Grogan, 2012; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008) or ECEC service providers' strategies and reactions or enrolment policies (supply side) (e.g., Jones & Jones, 2021; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Van Der Werf et al., 2021). Some of these studies examine families' decisions as situational or systemic phenomena that are accommodated by numbers of contextual factors and in doing so challenge the concept of free choice in the context of ECEC (e.g., Archambault et al., 2021; Meyers & Jordan, 2006; Sylva et al., 2007). Moreover, often Bourdieu influenced, subcategory of this research strand scrutinizes ECEC and education markets as a field that reproduces cultural or social class-based differences of societies (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Ball & Vincent, 2005; Kampichler et al., 2018; Kosunen, 2014; Vincent et al., 2008). However, there is little research on the selectivity and parental decisions between public and private ECEC (e.g., Ghosh & Dey, 2020; Kampichler, et al., 2018; Vamstad, 2016). The final, more miscellaneous, research line studies functioning of market logic

in the context of ECEC. This research line includes, for example, studies about the quality differences between different ECEC settings (e.g., Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Prentice, 2012; White & Friendly, 2012) and studies examining issues related to applying market logic in the context of ECEC provision (e.g., Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Ball & Vincent, 2005; Knijn & Lewis, 2017; Land & Himmelweit, 2010; Newberry & Brennan, 2013; Penn, 2014).

In addition, there is literature studying national and transnational ECEC policies and policy discourses promoting the marketization and privatization of ECEC and their impact on ECEC systems (e.g., Brennan et al., 2012, 2013; Lloyd & Penn, 2012; Penn, 2014; Vandenbroeck, 2006; West, Blome & Lewis, 2020), families (Karlsson, Löfdahl & Perez Prieto, 2013; Woodrow & Press, 2018; Yuen & Grieshaber, 2009). The studies that could be categorized under the label of new institutionalism (see Schmidt, 2008), examine, in turn, the marketization and privatization of ECEC as historical processes or as path-dependent phenomena (e.g., Mahon et al., 2012; Naumann, 2011; Westberg & Larsson, 2020).

However, despite the vast body of research about the marketization and privatization of ECEC, there are some theoretical and empirical shortcomings or gaps that this doctoral dissertation aims to address. The theoretical shortcomings relate to the way how the institutions, such as ECEC systems, have been understood in the literature. Typically, studies have taken a rather undefined, for granted or descriptive stance regarding institutions; these can be considered as very sufficient approaches when, for example, the stratification, accessibility or affordability of ECEC is studied. Consequently, however, these studies, concentrate on explaining how institutions structure families' life and children's ECEC participation instead of offering an account about the (re-)constitution and nature of institutions in the marketization and privatization process. Moreover, despite the fact that there are some studies which apply ideas or theorization on new institutionalism and consider the constitution of ECEC as an institution (e.g., Brennan et al., 2012; Mahon et al., 2012; Nauman, 2011; Onnismaa et al., 2014; Westberg & Larsson, 2020), there is a lack of research that attends to the role of ideas and discourse when researching the marketization and the privatization of ECEC, especially at the national or even a more localized level. Therefore, this study adopts the discursive institutionalist approach (Schmidt, 2008), based on the premise that ideas and the discourse mediating them have explanatory power in policy change. Furthermore, while there is some research on the marketization and privatization of ECEC that describes or explains these processes at the level of politics and policy discourse (e.g., Mahon et al., 2012), this study adopts a more rare research line that turns its gaze to human agents (see Kampichler et al., 2018; Karlsson et al., 2013) – namely, municipal decision-makers as well as private ECEC providers and families – when examining the marketization and privatization development of Finnish ECEC.

Methodologically, both quantitative (e.g., Grogan, 2012; Van Lancker, 2017) and qualitative (e.g., Kampichler et al., 2018; Karlsson et al., 2013) approaches are used in the research related to the marketization and/or privatization of ECEC. However, there is much less research aiming to combine these research traditions.

Yet, combining qualitative and quantitative traditions has potential to create a deeper and more diverse understanding about the phenomena of interest than each of those traditions could provide separately (see Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Therefore, this study employs a mixed-method research design to provide an extensive understanding of the marketization and privatization of ECEC in Finland. Moreover, the study aims to argue how quantitative and qualitative approaches can be integrated in the same study regardless of alleged theoretical differences in the premises of different approaches (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The empirical gaps in the existing research relate to the context-specific nature of the marketization and privatization of ECEC (see Brennan et al., 2012; Mahon et al., 2012). In the context of market-based ECEC systems, the process and effects of the marketization and privatization of ECEC are widely studied. However, much less is known about how market rationality is domesticated (see Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2013) or translated (see Mahon et al., 2012) into universalistic ECEC systems, such as Finland, and what its effects are on the universal system (see, however, Naumann, 2011; Paananen et al., 2015; Westberg & Larsson, 2020). Addressing this shortfall is the empirical contribution of this study.

Next, the theoretical underpinnings of the research related to institutions and institutional change are presented. Then, the aim of the research and the research questions are set forth. After that, the ideas of universalism and market logic in the context of Finnish ECEC are presented and the previous research related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC is reviewed. Next, the philosophical and methodological premises and decisions of this study are described. Finally, the main results of three sub-studies are used to answer the research questions and general discussion.

1.2 Institutional change: ideas and discourses

The theoretical approach of this study draws on discursive institutionalism (e.g., Alasuutari, 2015; Schmidt, 2008). Discursive institutionalism argues that in the global world, nation-states are part of world culture and hence impressionable vis-à-vis travelling discourses and buzzwords (in the ECEC context, see Mahon, 2010; Paananen, 2017; Penn, 2011b). However, while these global ideas might not be diffused in states' policies and practices as such, they are rather translated or domesticated at the local level as a result of a field battle. Because of these battles, where local actors play a central role, the local manifestations of certain global ideas vary (Alasuutari, 2015; in the ECEC context, see Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2013; Paananen, 2017). For example, the marketization and privatization of ECEC comprise a global phenomenon. In Finland, however, the state's legislation that takes place as a result of political deliberations creates frames for them. How municipalities, private operators and families eventually act and interact within those frames determines the local translations of the marketization and privatization.

By adopting a discursive institutionalist approach, the focus of examination shifts from tight structuralism and individuals' rational choices to examine the practices through which the local contexts and global ideas intertwine. Moreover, the approach enables scrutiny of the global discourses that persuade national states to converge with each other (Alasuutari, 2015). This study draws in particular on the theory of discursive institutionalism (DI) introduced by Vivien Schmidt (2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2014, 2015; see also Carstensen & Schmidt; 2016) in the field of political sciences. As Schmidt (2011) summarizes, DI is an analytical framework that concerns the substantive content of ideas and the interactive processes of discourse in the institutional context.

According to Schmidt (2008, 2010; see also Alasuutari, 2015), DI differs from other forms of new institutionalism (rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalisms) as it takes ideas and discourse seriously and by doing so, it takes a dynamic view of change. In other words, DI explores the dynamics of institutional change. DI does not, however, claim that all institutional change can be explained by researching ideas and discourses. Instead, "stuff" often happens that DI cannot explain (Schmidt, 2014, p. 1838). While the other forms of new institutionalism understand institutions mainly as external structures that constrain actors through incentives, path-dependencies or cultural frames, DI understands institutions simultaneously as external structures and as internal constructs of sentient agents. In other words, institutions are at the same time given and contingent; they serve as the context of thinking, acting and speaking, and they are formed by agents' thought, words and actions. Thus, institutions both constrain agents and are created, maintained and changed by those agents (Schmidt, 2008, 2011). The institutions can be formalized or informal (Schmidt, 2011, p. 122; see also North 1990; Hodgson, 2006). According to Schmidt (2008), DI scholars can use the results produced through other new institutional approaches as background material. In this study, the background material consists of earlier research about the idea of universalism, and the marketization and privatization of ECEC.

In line with Searle's (1995) and Smith's (2003) views, DI treats institutions as social constructs, and thus they are not real in a material sense like, for example, mountains are (Schmidt, 2015). Institutional facts, a sub-set of social facts, would not exist without intentional agents' collective agreement about them (Searle, 1995). However, even though institutions are socially constructed, they are real in the sense that they "constitute interests and cause things to happen" (Schmidt, 2008, p. 318).[1] Institutions also have "deontic power", the power to assign duties, rights and responsibilities to agents (Smith, 2003, p. 18). Moreover, DI understands agents' ideas, discourses and actions, which take place in a certain institutional context, also as responses to the material and not so material realities that affect them. These are, for example, material events and pressures and the unintended consequences of agents' actions (Schmidt, 2011, p. 122). Due to this

[1] In contrast to Searle (2016), it is also stated that the social reality emerges from the material one and therefore it has a material basis (e.g., Lawson, 2016; Patomäki, 2020).

collective nature, as Smith (2008, p. 41) states, institutional facts are always socially constructed.[2]

The epistemological stance of DI is social constructivist, which is to say that knowledge and certainty are collectively constructed in a given institutional context. DI, however, protects its stance from radical relativism by differentiating experiences from the pictures of the world. This distinction, together with the understanding that knowledge always comes with different degrees of certainty, enables the conception "that social agents in any given culture and time can generally understand other cultures and times based on common experiences through translation and interpretation, even if they may have greater difficulty with their pictures of the world" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 8). This epistemological stance guides researchers to pay attention to discursive practices through which sentient agents collectively construct knowledge and certainty (see Schmidt, 2008, 2015).

DI holds that ideas are substantive content of discourse. Ideas, either cognitive or normative ones, can exist at the level of policies, programs and philosophies. While cognitive ideas are constitutive of interests by considering what is and what to do, normative ideas appeal to values by indicating what is good or bad. The level of policy refers to the specific policy solutions suggested. The programmatic level, in turn, is a more general stage or paradigm that underpins the policy ideas. The worldview is a background philosophical stage underlying the two more foreground levels. While such worldviews, together with programmatic ideas, guide agents' actions, they are also used to legitimate and justify such actions. Therefore, ideas and action are tightly connected to each other (Schmidt, 2008, 2010a, 2010b). Policy ideas are more liable to change than programs and worldviews, which change more slowly. The change on all levels can be incremental or crisis-driven paradigm shifts (Schmidt, 2011). In the Finnish context, Lundkvist et al. (2017) and Nyby et al. (2018) have analysed different ECEC and welfare policy rationales by pinpointing the policy ideas, general ideas and worldviews pertaining to them. In line with the earlier research, this study scrutinizes how the idea of universalism and the idea of ECEC market logic intertwine and interact in the Finnish ECEC discourse. Moreover, both ideas are examined at the level of policy ideas (or practices) and on the levels of programs and worldviews (or ideologies).

The discourse, in turn, is the interactive process that conveys, generates and changes ideas. It is not, however, only about ideas (or what is said), but also about the context (where, when it is said), and not only about the structure (what and how is said) but also about agency (who said what to whom) (Schmidt, 2008, 2011). The discourse may include, for example, different frames, narratives, myths, collective memories, stories and scripts (Schmidt, 2010a). Therefore, in this study the focus is on both aspects, the ideational content and the interactional process. As Schmidt (2008) states, taking into account the ideational representations and the interactive process helps explain why certain ideas

[2] On the critics of the ontology of institutional facts, see, for example, Du Plessis and Ku Leuven (2011) and Lawson (2016).

succeed while others fail, and how some discourses maintain and reinforce the existing reality while others seek change (Schmidt, 2008, p. 309). The success of discourse depends, for example, on how it manages to be justifiable (makes sense on a cognitive level) and legitimate (being normatively appropriate), and how it succeeds in reaching the right audience (Schmidt, 2008, p. 313). The way how ideas are represented and conveyed by discourse is affected by historical institutions and cultural frames (Schmidt, 2010a, 2010b). In this study, the tools of discourse analysis are used to examine how ideas of universalism and market logic are represented as a part of ECEC institutions and how different policy ideas are legitimated by general and worldview-level ideas.

Discourse can take place between policy actors (coordinative discourse) or between policy actors and the public (communicative discourse). The ideas developed in the coordinative discourse are brought to public debate for deliberation and legitimation by the communicative discourse (Schmidt, 2008). However, in addition to top-down communication, discursive interaction can also flow bottom-up, being communicated, for example, by civil society. Moreover, the discourse can remain at the cooperative level or at the level of civil society, so that it is not communicated to the public or to the policy agents. Sometimes, the arguments used to legitimate ideas through communicative discourse differ from the arguments used in coordinative discourse (Schmidt, 2010b). The policy ideas discussed in coordinative discourse tend to be weighted towards cognitive justification. The normative legitimation, that ensures that the policy idea is in line with programmatic and worldview levels, is often added when the idea is communicated to general public by policy actors (Schmidt, 2011). This study concentrates especially on communicative discourse produced by central policy agents and ECEC legislation. However, because this study draws on interview data, the line between communicative and coordinative discourse might be somewhat vague.

According to DI, there exists three forms of ideational power: power through ideas, power over ideas and power in ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). Power through ideas refers to actors' capacity to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views, and to influence their normative and cognitive beliefs through the use of ideational elements (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, pp. 323–326). For example, different ECE policy actors can draw on ideas of market logic or universalism to promote or resist changes in ECEC institutions. Power over ideas means actors' capacity to control and dominate the meaning of ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, pp. 326–328). In the context of ECEC policy, this could mean reconceptualization of a certain central concept, such as equality (see Paananen et al., 2019). Thirdly, power in ideas takes place when certain ideas have power to structure thought, when certain ideas achieve hegemony or when some ideas, such as market logic or universalism, become institutionalized at the expense of other ideas (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, pp. 329–332). In the context of ECEC, these three forms of power might be possessed by agents and institutions who can affect practised policies. These agents may include, at least, politicians, public administrators, experts (such as researchers) and families (see

Schmidt, 2011). A powerful institution may include the legislation related to ECEC and its provision, as well as transnational, national and municipal institutions (see Paananen, 2017; Schmidt, 2011).

Agents attend to institutional action by using their *background ideational abilities* and *foreground discursive abilities*. With their background ideational abilities, the agents are able to create and maintain institutions in a certain meaning context by adjusting to its ideational rules of rationality.[3] The foreground discursive abilities enable agents to communicate critically about the institutions and deliberate about their rules, and thus generate, change or maintain them. (Schmidt, 2008, 2010b; see also Patomäki, 2020). DI states that policy change is carried out by sentient (thinking and communicating) agents, who generate and deliberate about their ideas through discursive interaction that may lead to collective action. Therefore, in DI, paying attention equally to thinking (ideas), communicating (discourse) and doing (action) is considered important if one aims to explain policy change (Schmidt, 2011). In this study, ideational aspect relates to how ideas of universalism and market logic manifest in key agents' talk. How those ideas are communicated, legitimated and represented in the talk, in turn, is the discursive side of policy change. The action that this study pays attention to is families' ECEC decisions and private ECEC providers' enrolment policies in the institutional reality produced by policy agents.

This dissertation is positioned in the field of interdisciplinary early childhood studies (see Raittila, et al., 2017). However, adopting the theoretical lens of DI from the field of political science together with the study's focus on the ECEC systems' institutional change locate this dissertation at the interface of early childhood studies, social sciences and political sciences.

1.3 Formation of Finnish ECEC institution

As Schmidt (2008) states, DI is especially a theory for explaining institutional change. However, to contextualize the change of Finnish ECEC it is necessary to present a brief historical description of the development of the Finnish ECEC system. Moreover, because institutionalized ideas have a tendency to sustain and limit institutionalization of other ideas through path-dependencies (Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013; in the context of ECEC, see Brennan et al., 2012; Mahon et al., 2012; Naumann, 2011; Scheiwe & Willekens, 2009; Westberg & Larsson, 2020), it is important to understand the institutional setting in the context of which the marketization and privatization of ECEC takes place.

As noted in Section 1.1, Finland is seen as a representative of the Nordic welfare model. Social benefits for families, such as universal ECEC services, form a central aspect of the model (Esping-Anderssen, 2009; Sipilä, 1997). Therefore,

[3] The idea of background ideational abilities resembles Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus (Schmidt, 2010b).

in Finland, as in the Nordic welfare model (Sipilä, 1997), the most intense phase of the building of the ECEC system dates to the 1970s when the Nordic welfare state projects were "set in motion" (Karila, 2012). In the context of ECEC, the Nordic model has meant, for example, a dominant role for the public sector in organizing and financing ECEC services, meeting the objective of gender equality in labour market participation, an integrated ECEC system that addresses children's need for care and education and the idea of universalism (Rauhala, 2009), which will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.1. Throughout its existence in Finland, ECEC has played a central role in social, labour, family, educational and equality policy. The emphases and relationships between the different roles related to ECEC have, however, changed over time (Alila et al., 2013; Paananen, 2017).

The roots of Finnish ECEC system are in the late 1800s, even though the concept of ECEC is much younger. The first kindergarten and small children's crèche were opened in 1863 (Eerola-Pennanen et al., 2017). Even though, in line with the Fröbelian kindergarten tradition, the ideational foundation of the Finnish "daycare facility", as it was called, emphasized social pedagogy and small children's education. During the first decades of the 1900s kindergartens' and crèches' were seen especially through their role as a source of social welfare for disadvantaged families and children (Salminen, 2017; Välimäki & Rauhala, 2000), which underlined ECEC's role in child protection and social policy (see Alila & Kinos, 2014; Välimäki & Rauhala, 2000).

After the post-World War II industrialization of Finnish society increased female participation in the labour market, the availability of ECEC became a labour political issue (Rauhala, 2009; Salminen, 2017). As a response, the Act on Children's Day Care was introduced in 1973. The act made day care (the previous name for the ECEC system) provision part of municipalities' obligatory responsibility (Kumpulainen, 2018). Moreover, kindergartens and crèches were unified as day care centres, or ECEC centres as they are called in this dissertation. Together with family-based day care and "open services", the ECEC centres became means of organizing day care for children under seven years (the age when children start compulsory school in Finland). During the first two decades of the institutionalized day care system, access to services was means-tested and income-related. However, in the mid-1980s the section on connecting income to access was removed from the law. Moreover, as part of the reform of the day care act in 1985 a universal right to day care was introduced (Act on Children's Day Care, 28/1985). However, it was only in the 1990s when the availability of ECEC had increased to the extent that enabled a gradual introduction of a universal right to ECEC services (see Section 2.1.2). The universal right to ECEC increased ECEC's political role in both educational and gender equality, in relation to its social and labor political objectives (see Alila, 2013; Rauhala, 2009). The universal right to day care stayed untouched until 2015, when the then center-right government limited the right to 20 hours per week (see Puroila & Kinnunen, 2017). In 2020, however, the then Social Democrat-led government returned the unrestricted right to ECEC.

In line with the Nordic model and wider welfare developments in Finland, ECEC system has been developed as a public service. Since the deployment of the Act on Children's Day Care in 1973, ECEC provision has been municipalities' obligatory responsibility (Kumpulainen, 2018). Even though municipalities were enabled to purchase ECEC from private service providers, they have, in practice, mainly provided services themselves (see FIFHAW, 2021). The institutional ECEC services include centre-based ECEC,[4] family-based ECEC and so-called open services (Kumpulainen, 2018; Act on ECEC, 2018). Of those, centre-based ECEC is currently the most used: up to 95 percent of children attending ECEC in 2020 participated in centre-based ECEC.[5] Around 77 percent of children aged one to six years attended ECEC in 2020. The older the children are, the higher participation rate is. Children under the age of one are cared for mainly at home (FIFHAW, 2021; Kumpulainen, 2018). One suggested factor behind the relatively low ECEC participation rate, especially for children under three years of age, is the Home Care Allowance.

The Homecare allowance was introduced in 1985 (The act on Children's Home Care Allowance, 24/1985). The Home Care Allowance includes a care allowance (fixed-sum) and a care supplement (income-related). On top of those, many municipalities pay a municipal supplement to support children's home care (Lahtinen & Selkee, 2016). The Home Care Allowance is granted to custodians who have a child under three years who does not attend municipal ECEC and custodians can have the Home Care Allowance given to older siblings of children under three if those children are not in public ECEC (Social Insurance Institution of Finland [SIIoF], 2022). Home care allowance has been supported especially by the agrarian Centre Party (see Sipilä et al., 2012).

Ever since the opening of the first kindergarten (see Karila, 2012; Salminen, 2017), ECEC's pedagogical dimension has been recognized. In practice, as is characteristic of the Nordic model, ECEC provision has been based on the so-called educare model, which means that ECEC's objectives related to care, education and teaching are combined under one institution (Rauhala, 2009; Salminen, 2017). Even though, both day care and early education have been present in the ECEC institution since the beginning, it can be stated that, in line with transnational trends, ECEC's educational role has been strengthened within the ECEC institution (see Karila, 2012; Paananen, 2017). For example, the administrative sector of early childhood education was changed from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2013 and the Act on ECEC, implemented in 2018, changed the universal entitlement to ECEC from custodians to children (Act on ECEC, 2018). Moreover, from the 1990s until 2010, the public sector's role in defining the pedagogical content of ECEC relied heavily on information governance and the professionalism highly trained ECEC staff's (see Alila, 2013; Karila, 2012;

[4] In Finnish language ECEC centres are called "päiväkoti", which directly translated means "dayhome".

[5] The estimate includes use of ECEC vouchers and Private day care allowance, which can be used to purchase family day-care or other private services as well. However, they are mainly used to purchase private center-based services.

Paananen, 2017). However, in 2010's first obligatory national ECEC curriculum framework was introduced, which increased state's role in ECEC's quality governance remarkably.

Even though the roots of the Nordic welfare model are in social democracy, the era of neoliberalism has influenced the Nordic model, including the ECEC sector (see Section 2.2). In the context of Finnish ECEC, the spread of ideas described as neoliberal has been somewhat analogical to what Alasuutari (2004) calls a shift from a planned economy to a competition economy. In Finland, the rise of the competition economy has meant, among other developments, the marketization and privatization (for definition see Section 2.2.1) of public services (Alasuutari, 2004). The emergence of the competition economy, or neoliberalization, has been a sum of many different changes and justifications. For example, global discourses disseminated by international organizations, such as the OECD, World Bank and IMF, have been influential in how they are both used to justify and legitimate different policy solutions in national contexts and how they function to create and reproduce a certain epistemic community which shares the same presumptions about the world (Alasuutari & Rasimus, 2009). While in Finland the neoliberal discourses were brought to public conversation especially by the liberal-conservative National Coalition Party, the political left had been suspicious of state-centeredness. This shared criticism by the political left and right of a strong state enabled changes in legislation and governance in the 1990s, which together have played a central role in the change towards a competition economy, but which as separate steps were rather small instead of being part of some great plan. The societal reforms were also justified with the same kind of developments in other Nordic and European countries and by the financial difficulties caused by the recession of the 1990s (Alasuutari, 2004).

In the context of ECEC, the path-dependencies related to the traditional Nordic ECEC model appear to stay strong, as described in Section 2.2. However, the change towards a competition economy and neoliberal societal governance have resulted in changes to the ECEC system, namely marketization and privatization (see Mahon et al., 2012; Naumann, 2011; Valkonen et al., 2021; Westberg & Larsson, 2020). As suggested in Section 1.1, this development was enabled by legislative changes that enabled and supported private service providers seeking profit in the field of ECEC and introduced new public subsidies targeted at families to enable their ECEC choice (Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022). Already before such subsidies were introduced, in addition to their own provision, municipalities were enabled to make purchase contracts with private service providers who, until the 2010s, were mainly third sector operators or small local entrepreneurs (see Kumpulainen, 2018; Ruutiainen et al., 2018). Of the new kind of demand-side subsidies, the private day care allowance (PDA), granted by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, was introduced in 1996 to enable parental choice between public and private ECEC settings and to increase the private provision (Paananen, 2017). The PDA consists of fixed and income-related parts which are together around €330 per month. In addition to that, many municipalities pay a municipal supplement (MS) for PDA. The MS can

contain income-related parts, but in general it is usually somewhat fixed. The value of MS varies remarkably in different municipalities, ranging from €100 to around €800 per child per month (Lahtinen & Svartsjö, 2020). In 2009, the voucher scheme of social and welfare services was extended to cover ECEC services (Act on Service vouchers, 2009/569). As PDA, the ECEC voucher, granted by municipalities, is also a demand-side subsidy system which functions to increase parental choice (Ruutiainen et al., 2018). Unlike PDA, the vouchers are usually income related and their value is set so that the customer fee that parents have to pay from their own pockets simulate fees in the public sector, albeit many private providers charge some extra. In voucher systems, municipalities also make local contracts with private service providers, which enable somewhat tight regulation of the private sector. The local contracts are used, for example, to set price caps for private services.

As noted in Section 1.1, especially after the launch of voucher scheme, the share of privately provided ECEC has increased somewhat rapidly, being around 18 percent in 2019 (FIFHAW, 2020; FEEC, 2019), which means around 45,000 children. The private sector growth has been driven mainly by for-profit service providers (see FEEC, 2019). Such marketization and privatization developments have not been, however, similar everywhere in Finland. While 46 percent of municipalities do not have private service provision at all (FEEC, 2019), in some municipalities the private sector's share is approximately 40 percent. Since the launch of the voucher system, the use of vouchers has increased (31,201 children in 2020) and the use of PDA has decreased (11,462 children in 2020; FIFHAW, 2021).

There is no research about the possible differences between public and private ECEC in Finland. On the one hand, that some of the private providers state on their websites that they are committed to, for example, a certain alternative pedagogical program (such as Steiner or Montessori pedagogy) or to some ideology (such as religion), or there may be different emphases in the content of ECEC (e.g., a certain language, sustainable life, music, sports; see Kumpulainen, 2018). On the other hand, the same legislation and curriculum framework regulate both public and private institutions.

In Finland, the marketization and privatization of ECEC are thus both national- and municipal-level phenomena. The legislative and regulatory frameworks are defined at the state level, but municipalities decide whether they subsidize private ECEC, whether they provide demand-side subsidies (ECEC vouchers or MS to PDA; a PDA alone is available everywhere in Finland) or supply-side subsidies (purchase contracts with private providers), and whether they support private ECEC provision in municipal policies (e.g., zoning policies; start-up money for new private providers). However, whether or not there is private provision in a particular municipality depends ultimately on the decisions of private providers and families. That is, if someone starts providing private services in the municipality and if families select such settings for their children.

The governance of private ECEC takes place at the national and municipal level. The legislative guidelines – such as legislation related to public subsidies, adult–child ratios, objectives of ECEC, frames for customer fee policies, staff eligibility requirements and curriculum framework – are set at the national level. At the municipal level, as noted above, the local politicians, in cooperation with local ECEC administration, eventually define "how much" a given municipality turns to markets and in what way. Municipal administration also supervises and cooperates with local private ECEC providers. Possible limits for customer fees in the private sector are also set at the municipal level. In addition to municipal ECEC administrations, Regional State Administrative Agencies and National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health also supervise private ECEC provision. New private ECEC service providers must make a written notification before starting operations.

1.4. Aim and research questions

The aim of this dissertation is to increase understanding about the relationship between ideas of universalism and the market logic in the context of Finnish ECEC. More specifically, it examines whether or not the marketization and privatization indicate a shift from and/or within universalism and, if they do, it investigates the features of those shifts.

As noted, institutions provide agents with frames of meaning that guide them and limit the range of options available to decision-makers within the institution (Alasuutari, 2015). While institutions structure agents' thoughts and actions, they are also contingent in a sense that agents' thoughts, discourse and action create them (Schmidt, 2008; Schmidt & Thatcher, 2012). Institutional action, in turn, is a process in which agents use their background ideational abilities to create and maintain institutions and which can be predicated on agents' foreground discursive abilities, by which they change or maintain the institutions (Schmidt, 2008, p. 314; see Section 1.2). The research questions of this dissertation address both dimensions of institutional action: how agents maintain and/or change the ECEC institution through their discursive abilities and acting within or in relation to the ECEC institution by applying their background ideational abilities. Even though both dimensions represent institutional action, for clarity, in this research, the following conceptual division is made: the first dimension (how agents make use of their foreground discursive abilities to change or maintain the ECEC institution) is referred as *discourse* and the second one (how agents use their ideational background abilities to act in the ECEC institution, either maintaining it or indicating its change) is referred to as action. Discourses, and the ideas they contain, constitute the institutional setting in which the action takes place. Therefore, action can be understood only in the institutional context and its ideational structure (see Biesta, 2010).

The earlier research (see sections 1.3 and 2.2) suggests that the discourses and ideas used to promote the marketization and privatization or

universalization of ECEC and welfare services more generally travel transnationally (see Mahon et al., 2012). Such discourses and ideas are, however, domesticated in different ways in the different national contexts depending on the institutional and cultural settings (Alasuutari & Rasimus, 2009; Lloyd, 2019; Naumann, 2011; Scheiwe & Willekens, 2009; Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013; Westberg & Larsson, 2020). The first research question of this dissertation explores the discourses that convey the ideas and construct them as a part of institutions in the context of the Finnish and Nordic welfare model. More specifically, the first question examines how the ideas of universalism and market logic (marketization and privatization) are negotiated in the discourses about the ECEC institution and constructed as a part of it.

> *Research question 1*: How are ideas of market logic constructed as part of the universal ECEC institution in the discourses of different agents?

The research in different national contexts indicates that the marketization and privatization of ECEC have a great possibility of reproducing or exacerbating already existing social inequalities (Lloyd, 2019; see also the literature review in Section 2.3.4). However, mainly due to contextual differences, most of the research has touched upon inequalities related to children's ECEC participation in general or in high-quality ECEC. There are also some studies examining the stratification of service users between public and private institutions. Those studies are rare, however, and they are conducted mainly in ECEC contexts that differ significantly from those of Nordic countries, such as UK, Australia, Netherlands or India (see Ghos & Dey, 2020; Lloyd, 2019; Van der Werf et al., 2020; for the Nordic context see e.g., Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Räsänen & Österbacka, 2019; Sulkanen et al., 2020; Vamstad, 2016). However, as Paananen (2017) suggests, universal access to ECEC, as in Finland, does not mean that the attendance is equally distributed. Therefore, research should turn its attention to families' ECEC decisions, for example, between public and private settings (Paananen, 2017). Therefore, in this study, the attention is turned especially to the selectivity of the ECEC system. It is noteworthy that selectivity in this context should not be confused with selectivism, which is often held as the antithesis of universalism (see Anttonen et al., 2012a). While selectivism refers to the targeting of a subsidy or a benefit to certain group, in this study *selectivity* refers to different mechanisms, practices or actions that lead to unequal distribution of public and private ECEC services. In that sense, selectivity is a broader concept than selectivism (or stratification), but, like selectivism, also selectivity of the system questions the universality of ECEC.

The second research question of this study is interested in the possible selectivity related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC. Whereas the first research question deals with discourse and ideas, the second question addresses the actions of the central agents in a given institutional setting by scrutinizing how the actions of municipal decision makers, private service providers and families constitute and reflect the universality and/or selectivity

of the ECEC institution. Moreover, according to earlier research (see Section 2.3.4), the possible selectivity related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC arises from many different actions in the ECEC institution. These include the public sectors' decisions related to regulation, incentives and subsidies of private provision; enrolment practices and locations of the private service providers; and families' ECEC decisions. In this study, *action* refers to both what sentient agents (people) in different institutional positions do (parents, decision makers, representatives of private service providers) and how the ECEC institution functions to steer their decisions. The second research question is as follows:

> *Research question 2*: How do actions of municipal decision-makers, private ECEC providers and parents represent the selectivity and universality of the Finnish ECEC system?

This doctoral dissertation consists of three sub-studies (see Chapters 3 and 4). Table 1 summarizes the relationship between the aim of the dissertation, the research questions of this compilation article and the sub-studies. In answering the research questions, a mixed-method approach is applied.

TABLE 1 Structure of the research

The aim of the research	**Research questions (RQ) of the compilation article**	**Related Sub-studies**
To increase understanding about the relationship between ideas of universalism and market logic in the context of Finnish ECEC. To examine the shifts *from* and/or *within* universalism related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC	**RQ1**: How are ideas of the market logic constructed as part of the universal ECEC institution in the discourses of different agents?	**Sub-study I**: Municipal decision makers' perspective (qualitative) **Sub-study II**: Accounts of the representatives of private ECEC providers (qualitative) **Sub-study III**: Parental attitudes related to ECEC provision (quantitative)
	RQ2: How do actions of municipal decision-makers, private ECEC providers and parents represent the selectivity and universality of the Finnish ECEC system?	**Sub-study I**: Reports of municipal decision-makers (qualitative) **Sub-study II**: Reports of the representatives of private ECEC providers (qualitative) **Sub-study III**: Socioeconomic differentiation of service users of public and private ECEC (quantitative)

2 THE IDEAS OF UNIVERSALISM AND MARKET LOGIC IN THE CONTEXT OF ECEC

2.1 Universalism in ECEC

Universalism is a complex and polysemic concept that is understood in various ways in different contexts and academic disciplines (Anttonen, 2002; Anttonen et al., 2012a, 2012b; Stefánsson, 2012). For example, the British and Nordic[6] interpretations of universalism differ from each other (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2012). Universalism can refer to a framework or a principle for the organization of services or to an ideal or ideology about desirable society and, thus, be a question of social philosophy (Anttonen et al., 2012a; Lundkvist et al., 2017; Stefánsson, 2012).

At the ideological level, universalism is related to numerous concepts, such as equality, social rights, autonomy and solidarity. Different ideological decontestations (see Freeden, 1996), such as liberalism and socialism, put different concepts in the centre of the universalism and interpret them in different ways. Some of these concepts or interpretations related to universalism can conflict with each other or pull it in different directions (Stefánsson, 2012). However, even though universalism can be interpreted or decontested in various ways or harnessed by different ideologies, it is possible to outline its core ideas in the Nordic context (see Anttonen & Sipilä, 2012).

2.1.1 Nordic universalism and its critics

In the Nordic context, the *ideological* foundation of universalism has been tightly related to ideas of equity and egalitarianism (Anttonen, 2002; Kildahl & Kuhnle,

[6] Anttonen and Sipilä (2012) use the term "Scandinavian". However, in this dissertation the word "Nordic" is used. The Nordic countries are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, whereas Scandinavian can refer to the aforementioned countries or geographical Scandinavia. Therefore, Nordic might be a more univocal term.

2005) and social inclusion (Anttonen et al., 2012a, 2012b). Its constitutive idea has been that certain services of benefits, such as ECEC, should be understood as citizenship-based social rights (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Naumann, 2011). Because of the collective nature of such services, the content and the provision of the service become a subject of public responsibility and public interest. In the context of ECEC, this can mean, for example, that the upbringing of children becomes recognized as a public responsibility (Naumann, 2011).

Nordic universalism is also associated with social cohesion and the solidarity of society (Anttonen et al., 2012a). It is stated that its redistributive manifestation reduces inequality and thus increases the effective use of the human resources of the community (Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005). Moreover, citizen-based rights to benefits underline equality and the equal worth of people. At the same time, they reinforce human dignity in society by removing a stigma from people using public services. The uniformity of public welfare services promotes equality and combats the social differentiation of citizens (Anttonen, 2002; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005). Therefore, universalism can be seen as a way to reduce social (for example, gender or class-based) differences of society (Anttonen, 2002) and promote the equality of status (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In the Nordic ECEC systems, this idea of social inclusion manifests as parents' universal right for ECEC but also as an idea that all children should be integrated within the same institution (see Korsvold, 2005; Storø, 2013).

At the level of *practices,* Nordic universalism could be understood as a principle of allocation or redistribution of resources (Anttonen, 2002; Anttonen et al., 2012a; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005). Unlike its opposing principles, such as selectivism (targeted benefits for some social group), particularism (distinct ways of treating people), subsidiarity (no equal access to public goods; social action at the lowest practical level, e.g., individual or family) or residualism (targeted benefits for the poor), universalism refers to the extending of basic social benefits and services for all citizens (Anttonen, 2002; Anttonen et al., 2012a; Anttonen & Sipilä, 2012). In other words, it underpins citizens' equal access to high-quality services irrespective of their socioeconomic status (Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Mahon et al.,, 2012). In the universal model, accessibility is secured by public funding collected by taxation (Anttonen, 2002; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005), by legislation that obligates the public sector to organize social benefits and services and by the equal availability of uniform services and benefits throughout the country (Anttonen, 2002). According to most strict definitions, the services should be free to the families that use them. If not completely free, income-related customer fees may in practice support the principle of universalism (Naumann, 2011).

Even though Nordic universalism's basic principle that "people in the same situation must be treated in the same way" appears somewhat clear, there are at least two diverging interpretations. The *procedural interpretation* of universalism underpins flat-rate benefits (i.e. benefits are independent of income) or the uniformity of services provided. It is also opposed to different kinds of targeting

and means-testing (Anttonen et al., 2012a; 2012b; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005). In the ECEC context, this would mean either free-of-charge services or flat-rate customer fees (see Nauman, 2011), but also a uniform ECEC system as such (Anttonen et al., 2012b). The *consequentialist interpretations* of universalism, in turn, focus on the outcomes of practised policies (Anttonen et al., 2012b). A consequential interpretation of universalism would allow positive discrimination (Anttonen et al., 2012a) or targeting within universalism (Jacques & Noël, 2021). In line with the universalist aim of equality and equity, positive discrimination extends benefits or services for all and recognizes the different needs of people in different positions. It may also include all people as the users of services, irrespective of their income (Anttonen et al., 2012a). In the context of ECEC, this could mean, for example, income-related customer fees (see Halmetoja, 2015; Naumann, 2011; Paananen, 2017). Targeting within universalism is a widely applied model in the Nordic systems and, for example, in Belgium. It refers to pro-poor targeting within universal systems (Jacques & Noël, 2021), and thus it comes very close to the concept of positive discrimination. When targeting takes place within a universal system, it has been argued to be an effective means of redistribution and poverty reduction. However, this effect applies only when the weight is more about universalism and less on targeting (Jacques & Noël, 2021).

Also, the consequential interpretation of universalism does not necessarily conflict with some possibilities to choose the services or benefits used (see Anttonen et al., 2012a). Halmetoja (2015) argues on the basis of Rawls's (1971), Dworkin's (2002) and Sen's (2009) theories of justice that the Finnish childcare policy that grants subsidies to allow families' choices between homecare, municipal ECEC and private ECEC actually increases equity of universalism. According to this view, the opportunity to choose enables decisions based on families' different views about how the care of young children should be organized.

As some conceptualizations of universalism emphasize collectivism and holism as opposed to individualism (see Stefánsson, 2012), the consequential interpretation of universalism may enable more individual solutions within universalism. More precisely, consequential universalism acknowledges that people have different needs and the fulfilling of such requires different means. The unmet needs, in turn, would form a barrier to full social inclusion. Therefore, different treatment of people with different needs would lead to an equal outcome, namely, equal membership in society (see Stefánsson, 2012). Moreover, the consequential interpretation of universalism has potential to alleviate the aforementioned tendencies of universalism to lead to uniformity, conformity and absolutism (Anttonen, 2002). However, in practice, the line between the consequential interpretation of universalism and selectivism is often vague (Halmetoja, 2015). Similarly, it may be hard to separate between targeting within universalism and just targeting (Jacques & Noël, 2021).

Universalism as an ideology and principle of redistribution has drawn criticism for several reasons. For example, the critics of universalism have

claimed that it has the potential to overshadow diversity, pluralism and relativism with uniformity, conformity and absolutism (Anttonen, 2002). Therefore, parents can perceive that universal, and especially uniform, services are not able to reflect their individual needs or preferences, which can cause welfare state "fatigue" (Vamstad, 2016; see also Giddens, 1999). Moreover, universal systems may not be automatically the most effective mechanisms of redistribution. In the context of ECEC, the recent studies suggest that ECEC especially benefits disadvantaged children, which questions the effectivity of universal programs in comparison to targeted ones (Blau, 2021).

It is important to note, as Naumann (2011) states, that there is no linear relationship between the market and universal logics of ECEC provision. Even though these are indeed competitive and different logics, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as both logics can shape ECEC systems at the same time. The competition of the logics can take place, for example, between parental preferences and citizenship, competitive markets and public planning, or individual and collective interests (Naumann, 2011). Rather than market logic as such, the antithesis of universalism is often understood as selectivism (Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Naumann, 2011). However, as the literature review in the next chapter suggests, the marketization and privatization of ECEC has a great tendency to intensify the selectivity of ECEC systems, which in turn conflicts with the principles of universalism (Lundkvist et al., 2017). Moreover, because the universal provision may require standardization of services, there is inherent tension between universalism and citizens' individual needs and preferences (Naumann, 2011) and universalism and diversity (Anttonen et al., 2012b). As will be argued in the section pertaining to market logic, the marketization and privatization of ECEC is often justified particularly with the market's ability to reflect families' individual needs and preferences. Thus, even though market logic and universalism may not be ideological counterparts, in practice there are many points where they may conflict with each other. This perception is supported by Halmetoja's (2016) notion that universalism is a way to secure peoples' basic necessities of life by decreasing their dependency on the markets. Therefore, the expansion of markets in the areas of society that produce these necessities can be seen as conflicting with one of the core ideas of universalism.

As noted above, discursive institutionalism separates policy, program and worldview-level ideas, and cognitive and normative ideas. At the level of policies, Nordic universalism manifests as the specific policy ideas through which the ECEC system is made universal, such as universal entitlement to ECEC (see Lunkvist et al., 2017). The programmatic and worldview-level ideas, in turn, are harder to distinguish and separate from each other (Schmidt, 2008). However, programmatic ideas relate to paradigm-level ideas or change, such as a shift from the neo-Keynesian paradigm to a neoliberal paradigm (Schmidt, 2009). In curriculum studies, in turn, the programmatic ideas relate to curriculum frameworks that function to deliver more abstract worldview-level ideas to local policies (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018). Using these examples as an analogy, at the programmatic level the universalism can be understood as a paradigm of

redistribution and an allocation of resources that competes with other paradigms, such as selectivism or residualism (see Anttonen et al., 2012a). At the level of worldviews are the ideological ideas, such as equality, solidarity and social cohesion, related to universalism (see Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018). Moreover, a more consequential interpretation of universalism might include individualism and the freedom to choose among such values. The ideas related to universalism can be cognitive (what is and what to do) or normative (what is good or bad, what should be done) at all levels of generality (Schmidt, 2008).

2.1.2 Universalism in the Finnish ECEC system

The Finnish ECEC system is seen as a representative of the "Nordic model" (Karila, 2012). While in reality there are remarkable differences between ECEC systems in Nordic countries (see Dovemark et al., 2018), they all can be characterized as integrated systems, which means that, unlike in many other countries, education, teaching and care are provided through the same institution (Karila, 2012). In the Nordic countries, ECEC systems have been developed as a part of the welfare sector, whose provision is based on the universalism in the Nordic model (e.g., Fjällström et al., 2020; Karila 2012), or in the words of Esping-Andersen (1990), in the Social-democratic welfare region. In the Nordic model, municipalities have a central role in ECEC service production. The state provides a legislative framework and subsidies for service provision but the organization of the services is usually the municipalities' obligation (Anttonen, 2002). This two-tier government, however, has the potential to endanger the realization of universalism. Even though the national policies in Finland have been developed on the principles of universalism and support the affordability, availability and amenability of ECEC services, the local enactment of these policies can construct barriers for the acceptability of use of ECEC services (Fjällström et al., 2020).

In Finland, the universalization of ECEC system took place mainly between the introduction of the Act on Children's Day Care in 1973 and the mid-1990s. Since the launching of the act, ECEC has been considered as the public good and its provision has taken place within the public ECEC (formerly day care) system (Onnismaa & Kalliala, 2010). Providing day care and ECEC was set as municipalities' statutory responsibility. In the first decade after the enforcement of the Act on Children's Day Care, parents' right to the services was means-tested (Kröger, 2011). However, in 1990 parents of younger than three-year-old children and in 1996 parents of all children under school age received the unconditional (universal) right to a day care place (Act on ECEC, 540/2018; Alila et al., 2014; Karila, 2012; Lundkvist et al., 2017; Onnismaa & Kalliala, 2010).

As opposed to those countries which have seen ECEC as an investment in human capital, which is made in hopes of beneficial child outcomes and economic growth, the Finnish ECEC provision has been based on the ideological foundation emphasizing social equality and gender equality (maternal employment) (Lundkvist et al., 2017; Paananen, 2017). Thus, until 2013 ECEC was governed and developed under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In 2013,

however, ECEC was transferred at the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Also internationally, ECEC has been increasingly institutionalized as a part of education systems, which suggests the growing conception of ECEC as children's right, not just an enabler of parental working (Neuman, 2005). A few years after the transfer, ECEC legislation was reformed in two phases in 2015 and 2016. These policy reforms build on universal tradition and child-focused ECEC, underpinning global ideas pertaining to lifelong learning, social mobility, children's rights and social equality, but also on austerity discourse, which frames economic cutbacks as a necessity (Lundkvist et al., 2017). As a result, the parents' entitlement to day care was redefined as the child's right to ECEC. Also, the child's universal entitlement to ECEC was limited to 20 hours per week. The extra hours were set as a matter of means-testing (Kumpulainen, 2018). However, the government elected in 2019 repealed the limitation of the unconditional right to ECEC. The 2016 reforms were seen as a shift in emphasis from universalism as an ideal of ECEC provision to an economic rationality of ECEC that manifests through austerity discourse and parental employment rationale (Lundkvist et al., 2017). Also, a study that examined the ideational change in Finnish family policy constructions observed that after the financial crises in 2008–2009, the discourses drawing from traditional redistributive ideas and a social investment paradigm were downplayed by ideas that can be connected to neoliberal austerity paradigm (Nygård et al., 2019).

Unlike basic education, in Finland ECEC is not free for parents. The customer fee in the public sector ranges from 0€ to 290€, and they depend on family size and income level (Vlasov, 2018; Paananen, 2017).[7] According to Sipilä (2020), ECEC is subject to a fee for most parents, because the ECEC system was developed separately from the basic education system and its development was based on different argumentation. Regardless of the charges for ECEC, parents pay only around 14 percent of the actual cost (Vlasov 2018; FNAfE 2018). This relative affordability (compared to other OECD countries) and means-testing of the fees have been seen as a manifestation of universalism (Paananen, 2017), especially the consequential interpretation of it.

In Finland, ECEC professionals have traditionally had relatively high autonomy in their work. The state has mainly used information governance, for example, in the form of a curriculum framework for developing local ECEC curricula (Paananen, 2017). The binding structural quality standards (for example, about child-staff ratios and staff qualification requirements), however, apply to all ECEC providers. In 2016, Finland took a step towards a more uniform system when it enacted the first mandatory ECEC curriculum framework.

The goals of ECEC, defined in the reformed Act on ECEC (540/2018), can been seen as reflecting the tradition and values of universalism. For example, ECEC's purpose to promote educational equality; to support every child's overall

[7] At the time of publication of the study, the maximum customer fee in the public sector was 288€ for the oldest child. For the younger sibling, the fee was lower due to a sibling discount.

growth, development and wellbeing; to offer every child an equal opportunities for ECEC; to promote equity and gender equality; to understand and respect all families' linguistic, cultural, religious and worldview background; to offer educational support needed; and to support children's agency, participation and growth into a member of society can be traced back to societal values of universalism, especially the consequential interpretation of it. Therefore, while the universal right to ECEC reflects the procedural interpretation of universalism, it can be stated that ECEC objectives, emphasizing diversity, individuality and agency, express its consequentialist interpretation. Earlier research has also noted the growing emphasis towards individualization and liberalization in Finnish ECEC discourses (Karila, 2012; Onnismaa et al., 2014), although some examinations question, for example, the actualization of the individuality of children (e.g., Layne & Dervin, 2016).

Even though ECEC legislation and curriculum function emphasize the aim towards equality, in reality there are various ways how equality is conceptualized in local contexts in Finland. These conceptualizations vary depending on whether the subject of equality is parents, children "at the border" of the ECEC institution or children in the ECEC system and whether the present or the future is considered. Equality is conceptualized, for example, as parents' equal freedom to choose the desired ECEC services, as access to services chosen by parents or as an equal customer fee for everyone. Moreover, when ECEC is seen as an investment in children's future, the equality can refer to equal access to ECEC. In the perspectives emphasizing the intrinsic value of childhood, the equality refers to equality between the children within the ECEC institution (Paananen et al., 2019).

Finally, the Finnish ECEC system reflects the consequentialist interpretation of universalism by subsidizing different forms of ECEC and childcare. Besides centre-based services, municipalities can provide home-based day care and "open services". Open services refer, for example, to different club activities for children. All of these can be provided by public, private or third-sector institutions (Kumpulainen, 2018). Moreover, homecare allowance is granted to families whose child does not participate in the publicly subsidized, centre-based ECEC or family day care (e.g., Paananen et al., 2019). Subsidizing different forms of childcare allows, at least in theory, families in different situations and with different worldviews to decide how they want to organize the childcare.

2.2 Market logic in ECEC: Marketization and privatization

Ever since the post-war period and intensifying during the current era of globalization, many societies have turned to markets in their service production (Djelic, 2006; van Egmond, 2017; Newberry & Brennan, 2013). This development has entailed market-based reforms and the promotion of market ideology (Djelic, 2006), its general rule being "markets whenever possible, the state whenever necessary" (van Egmond, 2017, p. 18). Consequently, many governments have

introduced market-oriented reforms in the welfare sectors, such as education (Ball, 2007), child- and eldercare (Brennan et al., 2012), and ECEC (Adamson & Brennan, 2014), which have been traditionally considered as non-market areas of society. The promotion of the markets can be seen as the manifestation of neoliberal ideas about competition and choice (Clarke et al., 2007; Moss, 2014) and the austerity measures related to neoliberal policies (Schwiter et al., 2015). Foucault-oriented analysis states that in neoliberal (especially ordoliberal) societies, markets tend to penetrate every aspect of the state and its institutions (Gane, 2012). Post-Marxist interpretations, in turn, see this expansion of the markets as natural logic of capitalism (Schimank & Volkmann, 2012). The expansion of markets can be analysed, for example, through concepts of marketization and privatization (e.g., Anttonen & Meagher, 2013).

2.2.1 Defining marketization and privatization

In addition to concepts of marketization and privatization, many other concepts are used in examination of societal developments and the manifestation of neoliberal ides. In this study, however, instead of such concepts as commercialization, liberalization (Anttonen & Meagher, 2013), commodification, corporatization (Press & Woodrow, 2005) and economization (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010), marketization and privatization are the main concepts through which the phenomenon at hand is approached. This decision is made mainly because marketization and privatization describe different aspects of market logic, the main subject of interest of this study. Concepts of commercialization, commodification and corporatization are closely related to marketization and privatization, but they are more specific and describe certain developments related to marketization and privatization. Liberalization, neoliberalization and economization, in turn, are concepts that relate to wide societal restructuring, which may include the marketization and privatization of ECEC.

In the contexts of education and child- and eldercare, marketization and privatization have been defined in many ways. Sometimes they are used interchangeably or without a specific definition. Some authors use the concepts separately to refer to different phenomena, while others include a wide variety of developments in one of the two concepts (see Anttonen et al., 2013; Ball & Youdell, 2007; Chitty, 2006; Whitty & Power, 2000; 2006). Moreover, marketization and privatization can take many different practical manifestations depending on, for example, regulation, subsidy systems (demand- or supply-led), introduction of competition and choice, involvement of not-for-profit and for-profit provision, and national policy frames (see Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Ball & Youdell, 2007; Brennan et al., 2012; Naumann, 2011: Urban & Rubiano, 2014;).

In general, marketization can be understood as two different types of processes. Firstly, it can refer to a shift in service provision from the public sector to private responsibility. Secondly, it can point to a process in which the public sector adopts practices and ways of organizing services that are familiar to the private sector (Anttonen & Meagher, 2013; Mahon et al., 2012). However, the concept of privatization is also used in the same kind of sense. In particular, the

concepts of exogenous and endogenous privatization introduced by Ball and Youdell (2007) have been applied by many scholars in the field of ECEC (e.g., Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016; Urban & Rubiano, 2014; Westberg & Larsson, 2020). Because exogenous privatization refers to the process by which public education services are opened to private for-profit provision, it resembles the first sense of marketization described above. Endogenous privatization, in turn, is somewhat similar to the second form of marketization described above, as it refers to the process by which the public sector is made more business-like by introducing techniques, ideas and practices familiar to the private sector.

While it is possible to separate marketization (the shift from supply-driven to demand-driven provision in a competitive market) and privatization (withdrawal of the state from the supply side) (Lloyd, 2019; van der Werf et al., 2021), marketization is often understood as an umbrella concept, which refers to many different types of government measures that promote the creation of a relationship between buyers and sellers and the introduction of a market mechanism (Brennan et al., 2012). Understood in that sense, marketization has different forms, depending on whether it includes private service provision (particularly for-profit) or market practices and logics (such as competition) or both (Anttonen & Meagher, 2013; see also Naumann, 2011).

Using the words of Ball and Youdell (2007), this study concentrates especially on exogenous privatization. Yet, to enable a more nuanced examination it is useful to separate marketization and privatization at the conceptual level when the development in Finland discussed. Thus, marketization in this study refers to different policy measures that promote market conditions, especially choice and competition. Privatization, in turn, refers to the increasing involvement of the private sector in ECEC service provision. In practice, marketization can promote privatization or there may be privatization without marketization (see Anttonen & Meagher, 2013; Lloyd, 2019; Naumann, 2011; van Der Werf et al., 2021). Moreover, market logic is used in this study as an umbrella term that includes both marketization and privatization developments.

2.2.2 The idea of market logic in the context of ECEC

In practice, the marketization and privatization of ECEC and childcare have been justified in different ways in different national and historical contexts. They have been promoted, for example, to challenge the public monopoly and to increase choice (Sweden), to meet the service demand (UK), to reduce public expenditures (Australia) (Brennan et al., 2012) and to increase effectiveness and efficiency in supply and by creating market conditions (Netherlands) (Akgündüz & Plantenga, 2014; Knijn & Lewis, 2017). Also, marketization and privatization can have notably diverse practical manifestations, such as quasi-markets, public-private partnerships, voucher schemes or tax-credits, different mixes of corporations, public and community-based provision, purchase contracts, etc. (e.g., Ball & Youdell, 2007; Brennan et al., 2012; Lloyd & Penn, 2012; Warner & Gradus, 2011).

Regardless of the various forms of marketization and privatization, it is possible to sketch the general market logic beyond the contextual manifestations. In the context of ECEC, functioning markets require individual purchasers (parents) who are empowered with purchase power (e.g., resources, abilities to choose). These purchasers choose between different competitive service providers. Both parties are expected to behave as rational self-interested agents. For parents this means making successful ECEC choices and for service providers maximizing their profit. The providers' competition about customers is expected to increase the quality of services and decrease prices. Markets should also be flexible and innovative reflecting different preferences and the available financial and cultural resources of service users, and thus produce diverse services. Finally, markets are expected to be self-regulatory so that the size of the markets adapts to demand and parental choice forces unsatisfactory services to enhance quality or shut down (e.g., Brennan et al., 2012; Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Lloyd; 2019; Moss, 2009; Naumann, 2011; Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014; see also Friedman, 1962/2002).

To function as they are supposed to, the markets should meet some critical conditions. The parents should be well informed about the quality and prices of the services, and willing and able to change the service if they are dissatisfied. The transaction costs should not restrain service providers' market entry and exit and markets should be competitive (Land & Himmelweit, 2010). Moreover, in practice, functioning ECEC markets may require subsidizing of lower-income consumers and a level-playing field to guarantee that all providers operate under the same conditions (Moss, 2009).

In reality, "pure" ECEC markets do not exist anywhere. Instead, most of the states represent some sort of mixed economy with different levels of public regulation (Lloyd, 2019; Naumann, 2011; Penn, 2009), including statutes about structural and process quality (van Der Werf et al., 2021). This is because ECEC and childcare are usually considered not just a private issue but also a matter of public interest (see Knijn & Lewis, 2017; Neuman, 2005). Therefore, while for most of the goods and services traded in the markets the amount and the quality of the goods consumed is not a public issue as long as markets are competitive, in the case of ECEC both the quality of services and the amount used are of public interest (Cleveland, 2008). Extensive public intervention are justified to guarantee both of them (see West et al., 2020).

The suitability of market logic in the ECEC context, even if regulated, and its ability to produce equitable services have been questioned by many scholars (e.g., Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Knijn & Lewis, 2017; Lloyd & Penn, 2012; Moss, 2009; Penn, 2009; Yuen, 2015). In reality, the ECEC markets tend to be highly selective and parents' choice in those is constrained by many factors (Naumann, 2011). Moreover, it is noteworthy that in ECEC markets parents serve as proxy consumers on behalf of their children, which can, for example, hinder parents' capability to assess the quality of ECEC and cause information asymmetries, and it can also make it difficult to switch a dissatisfying service based on the experiences of the real service user, the child (see Cleveland et al., 2007).

As stated in the Introduction section, in Finland the introduction of market logic within the field of ECEC has been an incremental process taking place in the interaction between transnational ECEC discourses and national and municipal ECEC policies. Until now, the rationalizations and policy discourses related to the process have not been studied comprehensively (see, however, Mahon et al., 2012; Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022; Valkonen et al., 2021).

Viewed through discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008), at the level of policies market logic takes place through different policy designs, by means of which the ECEC services are marketized or/and privatized in local contexts. In line with the notion that programmatic changes take place at a more general level than specific policies, for example as a shift from neo-Keynesian paradigm to neoliberal paradigm (Schmidt, 2009), at the programmatic level the general market logic sketched above is constructed as a guiding principle that informs the organization of ECEC services. Market logic can be represented, for example, as a necessary or rational (cognitive idea) or legitimate (normative idea) paradigm for ECEC provision (see Schmidt, 2008; Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018). In its core, market logic connects to a wider neoliberal worldview that emphasizes ideas about freedom of choice, individual responsibility instead of public responsibility, ECEC as an investment in a child's human capital, competition and self-regulating markets. Also, these ideas can include cognitive (e.g., descriptions, logics, necessities and causalities) and normative (e.g., what is good or bad, what should be done) representations (see Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018; Nygård et al., 2019; Schmidt, 2008).

2.2.3 Privatization and marketization of ECEC as policy development in the Nordic context

As noted, national ECEC systems differ from each other remarkably in terms of the markets' and private sector's involvement, regulative framework and how the form of provision (public or private) is rationalized (see Neuman, 2005). One research line, partly under the umbrella of new institutionalism (see Schmidt, 2008), have examined different national and transnational policy developments and political processes related to the marketization and/or privatization of ECEC. At the national level, these studies understand the marketization and privatization of ECEC mainly as a political process (Lloyd, 2008). From a transnational perspective, by drawing on Hay's (2004) contingent convergence theory, Mahon et al. (2012) show that the ideas used to legitimate the marketization and privatization of ECEC show convergence between states of Nordic and liberal care regimes. However, how such ideas translate into different policy contexts seems to vary (see also Onnismaa et al., 2014). As a result, Nordic countries' ECEC systems are edging towards a neoliberal free choice model (Mahon et al., 2012). Also, subsequent research conducted in Iceland (Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016), Sweden (Westberg & Larsson, 2020), Denmark (Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014), Finland (Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022; Vlasov, 2018) and Norway (Haug, 2014) shows that Nordic ECEC models have seen strong marketization and privatization development. Such developments are justified by similar discursive

strategies (Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016) underlining economic efficiency and choice (e.g., Mahon et al., 2012). In Nordic countries, these arguments for and against the marketization and privatization of ECEC have been, however, more ideological than evidence-based (Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014).

However, marketization and privatization do not usually indicate a complete paradigm shift in ECEC provision. For example, rather than being a shift from one paradigm or regime to another, the marketization of Swedish ECEC has meant the "maturation of old welfare-state promises alongside the exploration of new paths" (Naumann, 2011). The introduction of market logic has not abolished the already existing public system. Rather, private preschools have complemented the public preschool system, which, together with the incremental and layered nature of the change, has made the process politically possible. Therefore, the promotion of market ideology has not threatened the public ECEC system (Westberg & Larsson, 2020). In Finland, in turn, the traditional social democratic discourses and global liberal discourses intertwine in the ECEC policy deliberations (Onnismaa et al., 2014). Conversely, as Moss (2014) suggests, where markets form the base of ECEC provision it is not easy to change the path, but the shortcomings of markets are aimed to remove through market-based solutions. Thus, the existing literature suggests that the marketization of ECEC is strongly shaped by contextual factors, such as the existing system and its political legitimacy, and it cannot be reduced to a simple trade-off between the state and markets (see Naumann, 2012). Therefore, the impacts of marketization and privatization are path-dependent as well (Brennan et al., 2012). Overall, the research about the marketization and privatization of ECEC makes visible their political nature. It is allowed, steered and blocked by policies. However, the consequences of such developments are in many respects hard to control by means of policies.

2.2.4 Main research lines related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC: Selectivity and functioning of markets

Selectivity in children's ECEC participation. As noted in the introduction, the research that deals with ECEC or childcare markets or the marketization and privatization of ECEC has followed a few main lines. The first line examines ECEC participation of children with different socioeconomic positions (SES) and the accessibility, affordability and availability of services. This line of studies often builds on some form of the social investment paradigm, that is, on understandings about the benefits of high-quality ECEC for children, especially those in a disadvantaged position (e.g., Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Cloney, 2016; Stahl, Schober & Spiess, 2018; van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). The research indicates that ECEC services are most accessible in socio-democratic countries with substantial public provision, while in more marketized and privatized contexts in particular, access to services for disadvantaged children is often more limited (Gambaro et al., 2014; Mayers & Gornick, 2003; West, 2006; Wirth, 2013). Therefore, the research has questioned the fit of this social investment paradigm and the marketization and privatization of ECEC (Adamson & Brennan, 2014;

West et al., 2020). Almost everywhere in Europe, ECEC participation is socially stratified: the children in disadvantaged positions participate in ECEC more rarely than their better-off peers (e.g., Sibley et al., 2015; Van Lancker, 2013; Van Lancer & Ghysels, 2016). Moreover, the evidence from highly marketized and privatized contexts, such as the USA, Australia and Canada, indicate that children with lower socioeconomic status (SES) or children with immigrant background are less likely to attend ECEC than other children (Archambault et al., 2020; Japel & Friendly, 2018; Kulic et al., 2019; Levine Coley et al., 2014; Meyers & Gornick, 2003; Petitclerc et al., 2017; Wassmer, 2016;). Also, the children in more disadvantaged positions tend to attend high-quality services more rarely (Blossfeld, 2019; Cloney, 2016; Cloney et al., 2016; Japel & Friendly, 2018; Stahl et al., 2018). Even in universal ECEC systems, where the impact of family income is reduced, higher parental education is associated with higher ECEC participation (Krapf, 2014, Petitclerc et al., 2017; Sibley et al., 2015) and predicts participation in higher-quality ECEC (Alexandersen et al., 2021).

In Europe, this "Mathew effect" appears to be especially related to supply-side issues (affordability and availability of services) rather than the norms related to childrearing (Pavolini & van Lancker, 2018). In particular, customer fees for ECEC services may form a significant barrier for the accessibility of ECEC, especially for children with a disadvantaged background (Gambaro et al., 2014; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008; Vandenbroeck & Lazarri, 2014; West, 2006; Ünver et al., 2018). In addition to general affordability, progressivity of customer fees and, to a lesser extent, availability of services are also related to higher ECEC participation among children with lower SES (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015). Overall, it appears that the more governments are involved in ECEC provision, the more equally the ECEC participation is distributed. Especially, universal entitlement to ECEC, affordability of services and sufficient availability of public supply-side strategies in ECEC provision are related to more equal use of ECEC (Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016). At the same time, a descriptive meta-analysis in the school context indicates that the majority of public-private partnership configurations, especially those driving market-like dynamics (i.e. promotion of school choice and allowing of profit-making, tuition add-ons and student selection and screening) tend to exacerbate school segregation and educational inequalities. In some cases, public-private partnerships may enhance learning outcomes but at the cost of equity (Verger et al., 2020).

ECEC is also perceived to be more accessible in countries with limited private for-profit provision (e.g., Nordic countries) than in countries where private for-profit provision has a stronger foothold (Ünver et al., 2018). Overall, multilevel modelling of data from 22 European countries indicated that there is great parental support for public childcare or/and ECEC provision in Europe, being stronger in the countries with more extensive public provision and weaker in the countries with lesser public provision. Moreover, parents' SES appears to be related to their attitudes towards public and private ECEC provision. In particular, working mothers and parents with lower SES seem to show support for public provision (Chung & Meuleman, 2017).

However, it appears that private markets per se are not necessarily the main culprit of inequalities in ECEC participation. Instead, it appears that market strategy with demand-side subsidies and private provision can function to increase ECEC participation across the income distribution (Van Lancker, 2018). More specifically, evidence from school markets suggests that targeted voucher schemes may be more effective in terms of equity than universal vouchers, which, in turn, often functions to reproduce societal inequalities (Verger et al., 2020). Also, experiences from Hong Kong's completely privatized ECEC markets suggest that the affordability and accessibility of ECEC can be enhanced by public policies and carefully contemplated subsidy schemes (Li & Wang, 2018; see also Ming Sin Wong & Rao, 2020).

At a more micro level, in market-based systems the supply of ECEC services, especially high-quality ones, tends to be limited in disadvantaged areas (Cloney, 2016; Noially & Visser, 2009; Ofstead, 2008; Penn, 2011a; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Wassmer, 2016; cf. Press & Woodrow, 2018; Simon et al., 2021). In terms of economics, in low-income areas the markets appear to be thinner (Cleveland et al., 2007) and provision of ECEC tends to be mainly public responsibility (Brennan, 2016). The same phenomena may take place in the Nordic context as well. A study conducted in Stockholm (capital of Sweden) indicates that private preschools run by a for-profit provider or parent cooperative are overrepresented in better-off neighbourhoods, and vice versa (Alm Fjellborg & Forsberg, 2021). Regional differentiation may thus explain some of the ethnicity/race differences of ECEC or childcare selection (Tang et al., 2012; West, 2006). However, parents' SES and cultural differences are also often seen in the background of race, ethnicity and migration-based differences in parents' ECEC decisions (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Erhard et al., 2018; Schober & Spiess, 2013; Vandenbrock & Lazzari, 2014; van der Werf et al., 2020). Furthermore, privatization that includes only an increase of non-profit provision (without for-profits) can exacerbate district-related inequalities in the spatial availability of ECEC, as evidence from Vienna suggests (Pennerstorfer & Pennerstorfer, 2021).

Not only the prices and locations of services restrict their accessibility for certain families, however. Service providers' enrolment policies may matter as well (Levine Coley et al., 2014). Individual providers' practices can impede the access of ethnic minority children and children of lower-educated parents (Vandenbroeck et al., 2008). A qualitative study in the United States demonstrates how the leaders of private preschools may draw on cultural discourses to construct children as "able" to participate. When doing so, they exclude some not "able" children and families from their programs. Moreover, the legislative and regulatory fiats incentivize leaders' everyday enrolment decisions (Jones & Jones, 2021). Marketization may also courage commercial for-profit providers to serve highly priced and at least allegedly "enhanced" ECEC services, as examples from Germany (Ernst et al., 2014; Mierendorff et al., 2018) and Australia (Press & Woodrow, 2018) suggest. Even within the Norwegian highly regulated ECEC system, private service providers may practise cherry-picking (Drange & Telle, 2020). Also in Finland, some private providers may be

willing to select their customers and favour those families in need of whole-day ECEC at the cost of families who search for half-day ECEC (Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019). A cluster analysis has shown that in the completely privatized Dutch context, the "socially engaged professional organizations" (for-profit or non-profit, formerly public organizations) are the most inclusive in their enrolment policies, serving more low-SES children, children with a refugee background or language-support needs and non-Dutch children than market-orientated commercial organizations (for-profit) or traditional professional-bureaucratic organizations (non-profit, formerly public) (van der Werf et al., 2021).

Parents' differing decisions and preferences. One research line examines parents' ECEC decisions in different kinds of ECEC markets and the selectivity produced by those decisions. Such research observes different factors related to parental choices. Such choices reflect, for example, parents' cultural valuations, beliefs and attitudes; demographic characteristics; child-related factors; and the financial and other resources available (Archambault et al., 2020; Degotardi et al., 2018; Ghos & Dey, 2020; Sylva et al., 2007). However, a growing body of research notes that the choices do not reflect the pure preferences of parents, but they are constrained and shaped by multiple contextual factors (as presented above), such as the availability, affordability and accessibility of ECEC, local ECEC policies, employment opportunities and cultural norms (e.g., Archambault et al., 2020; Coley et al., 2014; Degotardi et al., 2018; Ghos & Dey, 2020; Sylva et al., 2007; Vandenbroeck & Lazarri, 2014). Therefore, instead of pure choices, parents' ECEC decisions may be best understood as accommodations to prevailing contextual conditions (Meyer & Jordan, 2006). Thus, in this dissertation the concept of the parental ECEC decision is used to better address the complexity and context specificity of parents' decisions and to differentiate them from the illusion of a free choice. The decisions presume at least somewhat the marketized context, but the level of private provision can vary.

One central reason for parents to decide about or to select a specific ECEC service is its convenient location (Naumann, 2011; Nisskaya, 2018; Sulkanen et al., 2020). In general, parents appear to include quality (structural and process) and practical (cost and open hours of ECEC) considerations in their decisions in ECEC markets (Degotardi et al., 2018; Glenn-Applegate et al., 2016; Grogan, 2012; Natsiopoulou & Vitoulis, 2015). However, some parents, typically with higher SES, more likely prefer other issues than the location (e.g., Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008). These parents are willing to make ECEC selection at the expense of a convenient location to ensure a rich pedagogical environment for their children (Nisskaya, 2018; Yuen, 2015). In the Swedish context, a sociological quantitative analysis indicated that parents in occupations with high cultural capital (or SES) are more inclined than working-class parents are to commute with their children to a preschool rather than take them to the closest one. The study also indicated that some highly educated parents with foreign background tend to commute with their children to preschools located in socio-economically more favourable neighbourhoods. Also, some native Swedish parents living in

ethnically mixed neighbourhoods show avoidance behaviour by selecting a preschool other than the closest one and with a lower number of non-native children (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021). In Finland, the location of the ECEC centre relates to parents' decisions between public and private settings, so that parents whose child is in a public ECEC centre appreciate a convenient location of the centre more than parents whose child is in private ECEC (Sulkanen et al., 2020).

The relation between family SES[8] or class position and childcare and school decisions have been examined with quantitative and qualitative designs. Some studies also use a family's migrant background or ethnicity as an independent variable. The research indicates that a family's SES in general and SES factors separately are associated with parents' ECEC decisions. Studies conducted in different contexts find that parental education level, and wealth to a lesser extent, is related to the form of ECEC selected in the ECEC markets (Peyton et al., 2001; Stahl et al., 2018). Furthermore, among low-income parents, the maternal education level is found to be associated with the type of childcare selected (Tang et al, 2012). One outcome of these decisions is that children of poorly educated parents and children with a non-native family language attend ECEC centres where the proportion of children with the same kind of background is high (Becker & Schober, 2017).

One possible explanation why SES or class position shapes parents' ECEC decisions, arising from the fields of sociology of education and education policy, is that such positions indicate families' values and preferences related to ECEC. In other words, middle- and working-class parents tend to see the role of ECEC in different ways (Vincent, Braun & Ball, 2008). For example, parents with higher SES and low-income parents who endorse children's individuality and child-directed learning put more weight on quality aspects in their ECEC decisions than parents with lower SES (Grogan, 2012). Low-income mothers with a lower education level, in turn, value affordable childcare solutions more and the warmness of the caregiver less than highly educated high-income mothers (Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008). By using latent class and multinomial logistic regression analysis Kim and Fram (2009), in turn, identified four different types of partly socioeconomically determined orientation to childcare choice. Parents in the "learning and quality-focused" or "something else" categories typically had educational, economic and family structural resources that enabled them to be selective in their childcare arrangements. "Practicality-focused" parents made valuations on the basis of location, cost and the available operation time of the care, and they were more likely working parents with lower SES. "Everything important" parents in turn appreciated quality and learning-focused aspects, but since they were typically in a disadvantaged position and their possibilities to choose such services may have been limited, they also valued practical elements, such as cost (Kim & Fram, 2009).

In school contexts, there is strong evidence that in market-based school systems, parents' school decisions drive school segregation based on the family's

[8] In such studies, SES is typically indicated by parental income and education level.

SES and migration background (Valenzuela et al., 2014; Yang Hansen & Gustafsson, 2016). One reason behind this is that those families making active school decisions are often those with more resources (Trumberg & Urban, 2020). Therefore, school segregation is exacerbated, as some of the socially strongest students, living in more disadvantaged districts, tend to exercise choice and thus drain some schools of their socially strongest students (Bunar, 2010). School markets may also exist within public education systems, indicating marketization without privatization. Even though theoretically the importance of family wealth is minimal in such public school markets, in practice, together with segregated housing, increased choice functions to exacerbate school segregation (Rønning Haugen, 2020).

Also, Bourdieu-influenced studies have observed class-based differences in parents' ECEC or school decisions. In their qualitative study, Kampichler and colleagues (2018) identified a group of middle-class parents with relatively high SES and a proportionally substantial level of cultural capital. These parents perceived the differences between different ECEC providers to be significant and were especially willing and able to make ECEC decisions. The decisions of other parents, typically with lower SES, were constrained by their available cultural or financial resources. In other words, they were less selective and more vulnerable to external constraints, such as prices. The authors concluded that since parents' opportunities to take advantage of the increasing opportunities to choose remain highly socially determined, the differentiation of ECEC services functions to exacerbate the existing social stratification (Kampichler et al., 2018). In addition to cultural and financial capital or resources, middle-class parents tend to possess higher amounts of social capital, or so-called hot knowledge, available to support their ECEC decisions (Vincent et al., 2008). In the school contexts as well, parents appear to use the available and unequally distributed types of capital (social, cultural and financial) required to make successful choices in education markets, even though the context of choices, and thus the consequences of such, can vary remarkably (e.g., Ball et al., 1996; Kosunen & Carrasco, 2016; Vincent et al., 2010). Already in the 1990s, Ball and his colleagues (1996) showed how school choice was related to parents' class position and that middle-class parents' tendency to be more skilled and privileged choosers than working-class parents reproduces and reinforces the existing social inequalities of society. Subsequent research on school markets has supported this notion (e.g., Benson et al., 2014; Bosetti, 2004; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Gustafson et al., 2016;) and also emphasized the role of the ethnicity in parental school choices (Benson et al., 2014; Prieto et al., 2019). In the Finnish context, Kosunen (2014) differentiates two spaces of school choice in the Finnish public school markets: the local space (school catchment area) and the selective space (city and neighbouring cities), where entering into the latter requires a different form of capital from parents and may thus reproduce educational and social distinctions. In contrast, the traditional egalitarian ethos of the Nordic welfare state manifests as some Finnish middle-class parents' tendency of choosing "ordinary" instead of "elite" or "best" schools (Ramos Lobato et al., 2018).

Research also indicates that parents with a higher SES or class position not only have different preferences and perceptions about the role of ECEC than parents with a lower SES or class position, but they also make more informed decisions. Parents with a higher education are more capable than parents with a lower education in estimating the quality of the services they select (Mocan, 2007). Even studies in Swedish (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021) and Norwegian (Drange & Telle, 2020) highly regulated and relatively affordable ECEC markets have observed that children from middle-class families (Sweden) and higher SES families (Norway) attended ECEC of better quality than children from working-class families (Sweden) and more disadvantaged backgrounds (Norway).

There is also academic discussion that relates to parents' ECEC decisions, but rather than their preferences it considers especially the special nature of the ECEC and childcare markets. Some scholars have argued that marketization constructs ECEC as a product purchased from the markets (Langford, 2011; Press & Woodrow, 2005, 2018). It is suggested that the privatization and marketization of ECEC have led to commodification of what was previously considered as the public good. For example, some Finnish municipal decision-makers drew a parallel between ECEC and markets of other kinds of goods (Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022). This kind of conceptualization of ECEC requires well-informed and rational consumers who are willing and able to act in the markets (e.g., Brennan et al., 2012; Yuen & Grieshaber, 2009). At the same time, parents' ECEC decisions become an act of good parenthood which, in turn, set moral demands on the parents (Karlsson et al., 2013; Vincent & Ball, 2001). Parents do not, however, automatically accept their role as consumers in the childcare of ECEC markets, and their agency in such markets may also be limited by many different factors (Vincent & Ball, 2001). Therefore, it is suggested that the childcare market is a peculiar one, because it does not work as markets are expected to work (Ball & Vincent, 2005). This is because childcare is very emotional by its nature, which make it hard to reduce it as a subject of economical transactions and causes uneasiness for parents to operate in such a market (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Vincent & Ball, 2001). For example, because children need continuity and stability, it may be hard for many parents to switch the service provider (Plantenga, 2012), even though to work properly market mechanisms would require that consumers be willing and able to switch.

On the whole, the literature suggests that parents with a higher SES or class position tend to appreciate more quality and learning-related aspects in ECEC and school education. They are also more inclined and have more resources to enter into "selective space". Therefore, it can be said that market conditions appear to offer an advantage to those with more available resources (Yuen, 2012; 2015). As Vincent and colleagues (2008) state, children's opportunities, who they are and what they might become, their agency and their individuality and their lives are shaped by the class-based practices and positions of their parents.

Selectivity between public and private programs. There is surprisingly little research about parental decisions between public and private ECEC or about selectivity between public and private settings. There is, however, some evidence from different contexts indicating that when public and private options are available, parents with high income and those who are educationally more aspirant prefer private ECEC over public (Ghosh & Dey, 2020). For example, Kampichler et al. (2018) observed substantial differences in how parents were able to freely choose between private and public ECEC facilities in diversifying ECEC markets (Kampichler et al., 2018; see also Yuen, 2015). More generally expressed, disadvantaged children are overrepresented in community-based centres and non-disadvantaged children in private centres (Woodrow & Press, 2018). In addition, when different kind of ECEC centres are compared in the Netherlands, it is found that non-profit organizations with a social emancipatory mission are more accessible to disadvantaged children than those with a commercial mission (van der Werf et al., 2020).

The few studies conducted in Nordic countries indicate that parents whose child is in a private preschool are more likely to have a higher education (Finland and Sweden) and higher incomes (Sweden) than those whose child attends public ECEC (Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Räsänen & Österbacka, 2019; Sulkanen et al., 2020; Vamstad, 2016). It should be noted, especially with those studies conducted in Finland, that these results are only indicative. As suggested above, selectivity can be explained by different factors, from the location of private centres and possibly higher customer fees in the private sector to the enrolment policies of private service providers and parents' socioeconomically mediated preferences. In Finland, the last of those is supported by the finding showing that parents whose child is enrolled in private ECEC find specialization and values of ECEC, diverse pedagogical activities, feeling of home and the size of the child group to be more important for their ECEC decision than those parents who have selected public ECEC. Parents who have chosen a public ECEC centre, in turn, more often value flexible opening hours and a suitable location of the ECEC centre (Sulkanen et al., 2020). In Sweden, in turn, Vamstad (2007; 2016) examined private preschools run by parent cooperatives and explained their existence with welfare state failure and welfare state fatigue. These cooperatives answered welfare state failure by filling shortages in ECEC supply, but also addressed welfare state fatigue by enabling more tailored and individual alternatives for highly educated and wealthy parents who are capable and have the resources to search for educational alternatives outside the ones offered in the public sector (Vamstad, 2016).

Functioning of market logic in the context of ECEC. This research line is more miscellaneous than the ones presented above. It consists of empirical findings and more theoretical considerations related to the functioning and consequences of applications of market logic in the context of ECEC. It also includes academic discussion that ponders whether ECEC should be organized as a public service or in markets.

As market logic suggests, marketization and privatization should increase the quality of ECEC. Private, commercial ECEC providers also market their services as allegedly being high quality (Press & Woodrow, 2018). However, there is relatively a lot of research indicating that the privatization and marketization of ECEC actually has negative implications on the quality of ECEC (e.g., Urban & Rubiano, 2014). The empirical evidence also indicates that public ECEC systems generate more positive child outcomes than market-based or mixed programs (van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). This might be because private provision is promoted in many countries without sufficient regulatory frameworks (White & Friendly, 2012; Penn, 2012). The example from the Netherlands indicates that when they are tightly regulated, privatization and marketization may help to expand supply and increase quality (Akgunduz & Plantenga, 2014). At the same time, other research suggests that even binding quality frameworks do not necessarily lead to high quality or inclusiveness of the services (van der Werf et al., 2021). Especially for-profit and commercial ECEC, provision appears to be lower quality in comparison to non-profit provision (Prentice, 2007; Penn, 2009). This "non-profit advantage" is reported in several studies (e.g., Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Cleveland et al., 2007; Prentice, 2005; Press & Woodrow, 2018; Sosinsky et al., 2009; van der Werf et al., 2020, 2021). In addition, when the quality of public and private services is compared, public services appear to succeed better, at least in the UK (Mathers et al., 2007; Mathers & Sylva, 2007). However, for British parents the sector (private, public) of the ECEC provider does not function as an a priori signal through which they construct trust in the ECEC provider (Roberts, 2011). In the context of free markets, in turn, quality seems to follow price: the higher the price, the higher the quality and the other way around (Penn & Maynard, 2009). However, even though in many cases quality issues relate especially to for-profit provision, non-profit (van der Werf et al., 2021) and universal public systems can also fail to deliver high-quality ECEC (Leseman & Slot, 2020).

When considering the Nordic countries, in the school context the privatization and marketization of Swedish education has led to grade inflation instead of their original purpose, to raise the quality of education (Wennström, 2020). Nor in the ECEC context is there evidence that marketization has improved the quality of services in Sweden or Denmark (Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014). In contrast, in Nordic countries, parents' perception about the quality of private ECEC does not necessary meet the image presented above. In Finland, parents whose child was in private ECEC were more satisfied with ECEC resources and practices that parents whose child was in public ECEC (Saranko et al., 2021). In Sweden, parents whose child was in a private preschool run by a parent cooperative estimated the quality of ECEC to be higher that users of public or other forms of private services. The parent may, however, perceive the quality to be higher because these services are selected by especially privileged parents, who are willing and able to invest time and effort in attending the activities and organization of cooperatives (Vamstad, 2016). However, since parents' ability to reliably assess the quality of ECEC has been questioned (Cleveland & Krashinsky,

2009; Sosinsky et al., 2009), it is possible that parents' satisfaction with private provision does not straightforwardly reflect the quality of ECEC.

In addition to quality of services, the research has pointed other challenges related to market based-ECEC provision. One observation relates to the unstable nature of ECEC markets. Even though children would need stability and durable social relationships, ECEC markets appear to be volatile (Langford, 2011; Penn, 2007; 2014) and staff turn-over in for-profit centres is high (Sosinsky et al., 2009). Markets are not always as competitive as market logic claims. In fact, corporatization and consolidation, the usual implications of market mechanisms, (Newberry & Brennan, 2013), may actually decrease competition (Knijn & Lewis, 2017; Penn, 2009; Sumsion, 2012). Also, as corporations grow larger, they gain political power which can be used to lobby relaxation of regulation and higher subsidies (Penn, 2007). In addition, the market model appears to be vulnerable to the prevailing economic situation. Especially austerity policies can deepen the risks related to market-based provision (Lloyd & Penn, 2014). Even when the public investment in ECEC is high, the market model has a great potential to serve poor value for the investment (Penn, 2014b; Newberry & Brennan, 2013). Land and Himmelweit (2010), in turn, claim that actually none of the requirements of functioning markets – namely, available and affordable information about suppliers, consumers who can assess the quality of services and who are aware of different options available, low switching costs and a competitive market – do not fully apply in childcare markets (see also Brennan et al., 2012).

For the reasons presented above, it is suggested that market logic in the context of ECEC has difficulties in meeting its own promises about increased choice, flexible provision or economical effectivity (Ball & Vincent, 2005; Newberry & Brennan, 2013; Penn, 2014). Therefore, there has been academic discussion that considers whether ECEC should be provided as a public service rather than by markets. These arguments base on the conception that in addition to individual benefits, ECEC provides external benefits to society, such as skill spillover, education's positive effects on peer relations, reduced crime, and less government welfare spending/greater government tax revenue (Wassmer, 2016). Available ECEC services also enable parental working, which reduces child poverty (e.g., Knijn & Lewis, 2017). In addition, it is stated that ECEC has the potential to strengthen social inclusion and drive social justice, but markets, especially for-profit provision, have difficulties in meeting such potentials (Penn, 2014). This is because marketization and privatization change the way how equity and social justice in education are understood (Urban & Rubiano, 2014). Moreover, examples from the UK and Australia suggest that high public spending alone is not enough to meet the potential of the social investment paradigm. If public spending is mediated by ECEC markets, equal access to high quality services may be endangered (Adamson & Brennan, 2014). Hence, as Cleveland (2008) states, the public interest related to ECEC fails to be fulfilled if families cannot afford or do not choose high-quality services, which appears to be the situation in many cases, as the literature presented above suggests.

Therefore, it is stated that due to market imperfections, public intervention is needed to guarantee equal access to high-quality services and to protect families from the fragility of markets (Knijn & Lewis, 2017).

In addition to the research lines reviewed in this section, there is a lot of research examining other issues related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC and education. For example, the impacts of marketization and privatization on the teacher profession (Connolly & Hughes-Stanton, 2020; Duhn, 2010; Kamenarac, 2021; Langford, 2011; Press & Woodrow, 2005; Robert-Holmes, 2013) and service providers (Forsberg, 2018) have been studied.

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

~~3.1~~ Presumptions of institutions

As mentioned previously, DI draws on Searle's (1995) theory of the construction of social reality. The theory argues that institutions are a sub-category of social facts, which differ qualitatively from "brute facts" in that they are socially constructed. Sentient agents create and maintain institutions with their background ideational abilities and generate and change them with their foreground discursive abilities (Schmidt, 2008; Searle, 1995). This ontological stance makes DI compatible with the scientific (critical) realist view in its more general, or "weaker", forms (Schmidt, 2008; Niiniluoto, 1999; Raatikainen, 2014). However, DI is more difficult to reconcile with some more specific stances to critical realism, such as Bhaskar-influenced thinking (see, Bhaskar, 2008; Lawson, 2016; Patomäki, 2020).

What connects DI and Searle's thinking to scientific realism is the conception that there exists a world external from the human mind (Raatikainen, 2014; Searle, 1995). Searle (2016) states that human societies are part of unified nature. Searle's theory is, however, especially interested about what makes human societies special compared to, for example, the realities of other animals. The answer is institutional facts (Searle, 2016). According to Searle (1995), brute facts – facts that exist without anyone knowing or perceiving them – are a precondition of social facts and institutional facts. In other words, there are no institutional facts without brute facts (1995, p. 56, 191). Institutional facts (and other social facts) differ from brute facts in that they are created and maintained by intentional agents, as they assign new functions to certain objects or phenomena and form constitutive rules that define the institution. In addition, institutions require collective intention (different from "I" intention), such as beliefs, aims and values, and collective action, which recognizes the institution, acts according to its rules and thus reinforces it (Searle, 1995, p. 57). Social facts

and institutions form a system in which its different components are connected and constructed in relation to each other (Searle, 1995). For example, to exist, an ECEC institution requires conscious minds, which in collective intention create it by assigning a function to it (e.g., allowing parents to work, education of children, strengthening societal equality) and by creating its constitutive rules (e.g., legislation that defines ECEC). When the ECEC institution is created, it is maintained as long as people collectively believe in its existence (see also Lundqvist et al., 2017; Paananen, 2017).

Social realities can also emerge without highly developed ways to communicate (e.g., in animal communities). However, because cultural knowledge and skills are transmitted by communication and learning instead of genetics and epigenetics, the role of language for human societies is essential (Patomäki, 2020; see also Searle, 1995). For example, the existence of an ECEC system with its different roles and cultural meanings would be almost impossible to conceive without a full-blown language that enables the transmission of knowledge and shaping of the institution (see Schmidt, 2008). Hence, language has a special role in social ontology. While language is, of course, an institution itself, it is also a precondition for other institutions: all other institutions presuppose language, but language does not presuppose other institutions. Therefore, language does not just describe facts, but it is also partly constitutive of them (Searle, 2016; see also Nikander, 2008).

While different (critical) realist stances often suppose ontological realism and epistemological relativism (see Blaikie, 2007; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010; Patomäki, 2020; 2019), Searle's theory of construction of social reality states that institutional facts are ontologically subjective (they require collective intentionality to exist) but epistemologically objective (they are true if people recognize, accept and acknowledge them) (Searle, 1995, p. 63). However, even though the institutions are facts, they are socially constructed (Schmidt, 2008; Searle, 1995). Therefore, at least implicitly the epistemological stance of Searle's theory, and explicitly Schmidt's theories, and thus the approach of this study's as well, are constructionist (see also Nikander, 2008). DI, however, protects itself from accusations of radical relativism by arguing that knowledge have always various degrees of certainty (Schmidt, 2014). DI thus separates matters of experiences from pictures of the world. This distinction helps comprehension that, even if social agents may have difficulties in understanding other cultures' pictures of the world, they can generally understand other cultures and times based on their common experiences through translation and interpretation. Therefore, depending on their objects of knowledge and explanation, explanations produced by social scientists come with varying degrees of certainty. DI also states that knowledge and certainty are collectively constructed, by sentient agents within given institutional contexts. Thus, DI researchers need to examine more closely the range of discursive actions in which sentient agents engage (Schmidt, 2015). Hence, if one aims to examine how institutions are constructed, maintained and changed, turning the attention to the processes of constructing them is necessary. In the context of ECEC, this means, for example,

how the ECEC institution is discursively constructed and how the parents', service providers' and different decision-makers' actions within that institution produce the ECEC institution. The historical trajectories and formation of the Finnish ECEC institution, which are understood as background information (Schmidt, 2008), are described in the Section 2.1.

Separating action from discourse (see Section 1.3) allows scrutinizing discourse – that is, what, how, in which context and to whom is said related ideas of universalism and market logic in the context of ECEC and peoples' behaviour, namely, families' ECEC decisions, within an institutional setting that, as noted above, is socially constructed itself (see Schmidt, 2008). In other words, the production of ECEC as marketized and/or universal service both in discourse and through action are in focus in this study.

3.2 Methodology

This study can be described as mixed-methods research (MMR). MMR is a practical and outcome-oriented approach that aims to reconcile insights provided by qualitative and quantitative research, regardless of the incompatibility of the "purist" stances behind them (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Because the phenomena related to social reality can be examined through different methodological approaches and research methods, there are also different ways of knowing. MMR is a way to combine these different ways of knowing to gain more comprehensive understanding about the investigated phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2007, pp. 119–120). At best, MMR has potential at the same time to combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative traditions and patch up their relative weaknesses with the other's strengths (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other words, MRR synergistically combines different techniques to more thoroughly investigate a phenomenon of interest (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

MMR is characterized by methodological eclecticism and ontological pluralism. In other words, it rejects the incompatibility thesis, according to which combining qualitative and quantitative research methods is impossible due to incommensurability of the underlying paradigms behind them (such as constructionism or post-positivism), and it maintains that combining such methods is appropriate in many research settings. MMR also believes that a variety of paradigms may serve as the underlying philosophy for the use of mixed methods. Moreover, MMR emphasizes diversity at different levels of research and sees continua instead of dichotomies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). However, even if the MMR approach allows combining different approaches in investigating the same phenomenon, it may be questionable how to combine the discussions based on contrasting worldviews (Bryman, 2007).

To overcome the incommensurability between philosophical premises beyond qualitative and quantitative methods, for example, a pragmatic approach (Biesta, 2010; Morgan, 2007) and dialectical pluralism (Johnson, 2017) have been

suggested (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study draws on both approaches. Different stances towards pragmatism can be located on a continuum, at one end of which pragmatism is seen as a new research paradigm and at the other end as a collection of philosophical tools that support MMR by addressing problems of different paradigms (Biesta, 2010). As Biesta (2010) recommends, this study is located at the latter end. The pragmatism, interpreted as a suggested way, helps to reduce epistemological hierarchies between methods and methodologies. Drawing on Dewey's thinking, it maintains that there is no knowledge that could provide deeper, more real, or a truer account of the world, but different knowledges are rather results of different ways of engaging with the world or consequences of different actions. This idea removes the asserted hierarchies between different approaches and serves thus as a philosophical tool that allows researchers to adopt a notion that different approaches generate different outcomes and different connections between doing and undergoing or between actions and consequences. This notion, therefore, suggests that knowledge claims should be judged pragmatically, that is, in relation to the processes through which the knowledge is generated, without stating any assertions that cannot be justified on the basis of the methods and methodologies used. Also, pragmatism maintains that the connection between the purposes of the research and the ontological assumptions is not as strong as some research paradigms assume. For example, even though social research can seek regularities and correlations, which may indicate causal relation, this does not automatically imply the researcher's engagement in mechanistic ontology, because many of the connections in the area of social reality actually take place through interpretative acts (Biesta, 2010). In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to examine the discourses and actions of the central agents. Parents' actions are studied with quantitative methods and municipal decision-makers' and private ECEC providers' actions with qualitative methods. In line with the pragmatic approach, such actions, however, take place in socially constructed institutional reality and they can thus be understood only by interpretative acts. The qualitative sections (discourses produced by municipal decision-makers and representatives of private ECEC providers) part of the quantitative section (parental attitudes) examine, in turn, how the institutional reality in which the actions take place is constructed.

The principle of pragmatism suggests that the researcher should consciously strive to create a research design suitable to answer their research question. (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In other words, it sets the research question (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010) or methodology (Morgan, 2007) at the centre of the investigation. Moreover, the pragmatic approach emphasizes abductivity, intersubjectivity and transferability of research, which allow moving back and forth between the inductivity, subjectivity and contextuality represented by qualitative research and the deductivity, objectivity and generalizability represented by quantitative research (Morgan, 2007). The mixing of inductive and deductive inference allows for the use of both confirmatory and exploratory approaches in the same study. In MMR, the research process often

goes iteratively and in cycles so that, for example, qualitative methods as more exploratory ones are used to form tentative hypotheses that are tested with quantitative methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). In this study, the iterative and cyclical approach took place as the results of sub-study I were used to form the research questions of sub-study II. The generalizability of the findings of exploratory sub-studies I and II were, in turn, investigated by quantitative methods in sub-study III. In this compilation, the results of each individual sub-study are examined separately and together in the context of the research questions of this study, as Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010) suggest.

It is stated that there is a risk that the pragmatist approach to MMR can downplay the conflict between different paradigms (such as constructivism and post-positivism) because the assumptions related to them inevitably influence the researcher's purposes and actions (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). Therefore, in addition to pragmatism, this study adopts dialectical pluralism and the dialectic stance towards MMR, which directs the researcher to search for a deeper, instead of broader, understanding about the phenomenon of interest by creating a dialogue between different perspectives produced by different approaches. Dialogue about paradigmatic boundaries has great potential to produce generative insight on the phenomenon of interest (Greene, 2007, pp. 79–80). Dialectical pluralism, in turn, includes levels of ontology (pluralism) and epistemology (dialectical) (Johnson, 2017). The dialectic stance towards MMR acknowledges the differences of different research paradigms, but states that the tension related to these differences can be useful and lead to new insight (Creswell, 2010). Moreover, the dialectical approach enables constant interaction with different ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies and methods to produce useful wholes. The ontological pluralism in the dialectical approach refers to the perception that there are many relevant ways of conceptualizing reality and that the dialectical combining of different approaches produces new emergent and holistic realities. Dialectical pluralism's epistemological principle, in turn, emphasizes the researcher's ability to consider multiple epistemologies when deciding what is relevant knowledge from the perspective of the phenomenon of interest and to produce knowledge that is holistic and multifaceted at the same time, and that is broader, deeper and more complex than could have been achieved with a single approach. Methodological principles of the dialectical approach guide researchers to listen to many methodological concepts, issues, inquiry logics and research methods to construct a suitable whole for the research in question (Johnson, 2017).

The insights of pragmatism and dialectical pluralism are supported by Ghiara (2020), who draws on case examples to show that at least in some cases, ontological and epistemological pluralism (or eclecticism) can help to expand understanding about the phenomenon of interest. For example, different premises can facilitate observation of some particular potential causal mechanisms, and then other premises allow the testing of the generalizability of such mechanisms. Thus, although qualitative and quantitative approaches are dissimilar, they are compatible and complementary parts of a complex and

diverse whole (see Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002, p. 9). Qualitative approaches, which examine particular and unique phenomena can also help to overcome some of the biases related to generalizing quantitative approaches, and quantitative approaches, in turn, enable achieving systematic evidence about the phenomenon under research (Maxwell, 2019; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010). In this research, qualitative and quantitative methods are used in the aforementioned way. Quantitative methods are used to examine the generalizability and effects of potential explanations informed by qualitative methods, and qualitative methods are used to deepen observations on potential mechanisms of selectivity and differentiation produced by quantitative methods.

More specifically, the design of this dissertation entails features of other MM designs (such as triangulation). It is, however, the most similar to sequential exploratory designs in which the qualitative component of the research is followed by the quantitative so that quantitative data collection (and analysis in this research) is informed by qualitative findings and the quantitative component is used to examine a generalization of the qualitative findings (O'Cathain, 2010)

3.3 Research data and methods

This dissertation is part of the CHILDCARE Research Consortium funded by the Strategic Research Council at the Academy of Finland (SA 293049 and SA 314317). The project was implemented in 2015–2021. Its aim was to examine the potential sources of inequality in Finnish childcare policies and consider how they could be overcome (Hietamäki et al., 2017).

This study consists of three sub-studies, each of which draw on a different dataset collected by the CHILDCARE project. The decision to use different datasets enabled the examination of the marketization and privatization of Finnish ECEC from different perspectives and allowed me to sketch a somewhat holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest (see Mason, 2011). The first sub-study was based on interviews with municipal decision-makers (N = 47), namely, politicians and ECEC administrators. The second sub-study drew on interviews with representatives of private ECEC providers (N = 12). The third sub-study employed survey data of parents of four-year-old children (N = 1,416). While the two first sub-studies analysed interview data with qualitative methods, the third sub-study's approach was quantitative. The interview data of this study was collected while the limitations of child's universal entitlement to ECEC of 20 hours per week was still enforced (see Section 2.2).

It is noteworthy that DI is a theory that seeks to explain institutional change (Schmidt, 2008). However, both the qualitative and the quantitative data used in this dissertation are cross-sections, thus they alone do not allow detecting change in the ECEC institution. Therefore, the findings are examined in the context of institutional development of the Finnish ECEC system described in sections 1.1, 1.3, 2.1. and 2.2. This contextualization makes it possible to compare these cross-

sectional findings to more general developments of Finnish ECEC and make tentative claims about how the institution has changed.

3.3.1 Data and research methods of the first sub-study

The aim of the first sub-study was to examine:

> How municipal decision-makers rationalize the public support for private ECEC provision and private ECEC provision in general?

The research data consisted of 47 interviews with municipal decision-makers, politicians (n = 18) and ECEC administrators (n = 29) of seven Finnish municipalities, which supported the use of private ECEC in their area.[9] Both the politicians and the administrators were interviewed to include perspectives of the two main parties in ECEC decision-making in the municipalities. The municipal decision-makers, for example, participate in defining the relationship between universalism and selectivism in Finnish education policy (Silvennoinen et al., 2018). The parties that the interviewed politicians represented were in major and minor roles in the research municipalities. Nine politicians and two administrators were men, and the rest of the interviewees were women.

The research municipalities were selected with the aim to maximise the variation between them and thus increase the transferability of the findings (Gobo, 2004). Their population ranged between 13,000 and 650,000 inhabitants. The municipalities were located in different parts of Finland and differed from each other in their demographical features and in their policies regarding the subsidies they provided for private ECEC. Two municipalities provided only the private day care allowance and its municipal supplement (PDAMS), three municipalities provided both vouchers and the PDAMS, and two municipalities provided only vouchers. There was a private ECEC centre in every municipality that participated in the sub-study I because the focus of the study was on public support for private ECEC provision.

The data of the first sub-study was collected in spring 2016. A team of nine researchers, including the author of this dissertation, conducted qualitative interviews. The author of this dissertation attended the development of the interview platform. The content ranged from the ECEC provision in the municipality in general to the system and service guidance in the given municipality. Each interview was conducted by one researcher and their average duration was about 90 minutes. All sections of the interviews that related to public support for private ECEC or private ECEC provision more broadly were selected for closer analysis.

[9] The CHILDCARE project interviewed municipal decision-makers in 10 discretionarily chosen municipalities. The first sub-study, however, concentrated only on those municipalities which subsidized private provision. This delimitation was made, because the initial objective of the sub-study was to understand how municipal decision-makers see the different subsidy systems.

The data analysis of the first sub-study applied interpretative discourse analysis (e.g., Heracleous, 2004; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). In the analysis, discourse was used as an analytical concept understood as a general system of meanings used to formulate and articulate ideas during a particular period of time (see Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). The interpretative discourse analysis examines the discursive process that constructs reality by examining multiple texts that "constitute bodies of discourse", and thus seeks to identify discursive patterns and structures (Heracleous, 2004). In addition, it scrutinizes social contexts and the discourse supporting them (see Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Discourse can be understood as action in the sense that it aims for something through communication. The discursive choices indicate actors' assumptions, beliefs and values and thereby construct frames of reference through which issues can be interpreted (Heracleous 2004, pp. 176–177). Moreover, discourses serve as resources on the basis of which people make sense of the world (Potter, 2012; Potter and Wetherell, 1995). Discourses can be understood as constructive in the sense that they build or produce versions of the world, society and events, but at the same time, they themselves are constructions (see Potter 2004, 2012).

Discourse analysis understands interview data as a form of accounting rather than as factual reports about reality (Nikander, 2012). Thus, the analysis examined how the social reality of Finnish ECEC institution was produced in the interviews and which available cultural resources were used in that process. The analysis focused on the accounts and discussion of the interviewees, even though actually the interviewer and the interviewee both act as agents and agenda setters in an interview situation and participate in the meaning-making process (see Nikander, 2012). Reading the data shows that private ECEC provision was mainly discussed through how municipalities support and subsidize private services. Therefore, the analysis focused on the talk that considered private ECEC's subsidy models and on the presumptions and interpretations repeated in such talk. Similarities and differences in the descriptions of the subsidy systems were identified. After that phase, the analysis was taken further to allow a more encompassing view of the connective and repetitive features of the descriptions and explanations related to subsidies for private ECEC. As a result of the analysis, the researchers were able to separate three different frames within which the public support for private ECEC provision was rationalized.

3.3.2 Data and research methods of the second sub-study

The second sub-study examined:

> How representatives (spokespersons) of private ECEC providers talk about the selection and selectivity of their clientele?

In addition, drawing on impression management theory, it studied how the interviewees aimed at managing the impression they conveyed through their descriptions. The data for the study was gathered in 2016 by four researchers, including the author of this dissertation; in each interview, one researcher was

present. Each researcher was trained and used the same interview template. The author of this dissertation participated in the planning of the data collection and developed the interview template used in the interviews. The questions concerned the background of the organization, the economy and operating environment, pedagogical and ideological orientations, clientele and possible future visions. The interviews included explicit questions about the selection of clientele, the selectivity of customers, possible inequalities caused by the marketization of ECEC, and interviewees' considerations of critiques that have been directed at private ECEC providers or provision. The interviewees were also asked to describe their clientele.

The data consists of interviews with 12 representatives of private ECEC providers, entrepreneurs or administrative employees. The interviewees represented the wide scale of the private ECEC sector, including small local providers (n = 5), non-profit organizations (n = 3) and ECEC chains (n = 4). All of the ECEC chains provided services in two or more municipalities. The size of their business varied from a few centres to dozens of them. The analysis focused on the talk that widely considered the organizations' present and potential clientele. First, by applying tools from thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) it was examined how the interviewees explicitly or implicitly included some families in their clientele and excluded others. After that, it was analysed what kind of assertive or defensive impression management (IM) (Goffman, 1959) the interviewees used when making these inclusions or exclusions. In a nutshell, assertive IM functions to foster and defensive IM to protect the organization's image or legitimacy (Bolino et al., 2008). At this point, the attention was turned to linguistic characteristics constitutive of IM. In that, the tools from discourse analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000) and Tannen's (1993) expectation frame were drawn on.

3.3.3 Data and research methods of the third sub-study

The aim of the third sub-study study was to investigate whether the service users of public and differently subsidized private ECEC services differ in their socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics. The research questions (RQs) were:

RQ1: How do service users of public ECEC and service users of private ECEC, provided with vouchers or private day care allowance, differ in their socioeconomic background?

RQ2: How do the attitudes of service users of public ECEC and service users of private ECEC, provided with vouchers or private day care allowance, differ?

RQ3: Does the linkage between the ECEC provider (public or private) and parental attitudes vary according to family SES?

The data for the study was gathered in 2019 as a part of the second phase of the follow-up-study of the CHILDCARE research project. The author of this

dissertation participated in the development of the follow-up survey. To increase the validity of sub-study III, the results of sub-studies I and II and existing research literature were drawn upon in the creation of the survey items utilized in the third sub-study. The survey was sent to 7,764 parents of 4,081 children living in 13 Finnish municipalities.[10] The parents had a child who was born between 1 October 2014 and 30 September 2015. At the time of the survey, the focal children were approximately four years old. Altogether 1,871 parents (response rate 24%) of 1,458 children (35.7%) participated in the survey (Sulkanen et al, 2020). In this research, only the responses of those parents whose four-year-old child was in a public or private ECEC centre were used, which meant 1,416 parents of 1,109 children. For 307 of these children, both parents had responded. The examination of representativeness of the data based on a Chi-square goodness-of-fit test[11] showed that mothers, highly educated parents, employed parents, white-collar employees and managers, lower-income households and families living in the capital area were overrepresented among the participants ($p < .001$). Moreover, families whose child was in public ECEC and families that received vouchers were slightly underrepresented, and families receiving PDA were slightly overrepresented in the data ($p < .001$) (see FEEC, 2019).

The dependent variable was the *Form of the child's ECEC*. It was investigated by asking "what childcare or early childhood education arrangements do you have in place for your 4-year-old?" The respondent was asked to choose from 13 options, including "municipal day care centre" and "private day care centre". Moreover, parents were asked to choose between nine options concerning which childcare subsidies they received. The options included service vouchers and private day care allowance. The form of ECEC was coded into three categories: 1 = public ECEC, 2 = private ECEC + voucher and 3 = private ECEC + PDA.

Of the independent variables, *Family socioeconomic status* was measured by *Parental education level* and *Household income level*. *Parental education level* was measured by asking the respondent's highest level of education (1 = no vocational education, 2 = vocational course or equivalent, 3 = vocational school or other vocational qualification, 4 = post-secondary, non-higher vocational qualification, 5 = lower university of applied sciences degree, 6 = higher university of applied sciences degree, 7 = lower university degree, 8 = higher university degree). The responses were categorized into a dummy variable: 0 = primary/ secondary education (options 1–4) and 1 = tertiary education (options 5–8).

Household income level was measured by asking for the household's net income per month using twelve response options: 1 = less than 500€, 2 = 500–1000€ to 11 = 7000–8000€, 12 = more than 8000€. To increase the families' comparability, the income level is reported as equivalent income, which takes

[10] The survey was a follow-up study for the majority of the parents. The first wave of data collection was conducted in 2016 in 10 of the 13 municipalities included in the present data collection (Hietamäki et al., 2017). Because many families had moved since the first data collection, there were respondents from 71 Finnish municipalities.

[11] Because there are no statistics available for Finnish parents whose child participates in ECEC, the research data is compared to Finnish parents who have a four-year-old child.

into account family composition (SF, 2021). The middle point of the income range was used in the calculation. Households were grouped into three income categories: low income, middle income and high income. A dummy variable was formed from each category (in each, 0 = no, 1 = yes). The high-income group served as a reference group. Following EUROSTAT (2021a), the low-income threshold was set at 60 percent of median equalized disposable income. For defining high-income households, there is no established threshold (Atkinson & Brandolini, 2013). However, EUROSTAT (2021b) has used thresholds of 130, 140, 150 and 160 percent of median equalized disposable income. Of those, the 140 percent threshold was used in the study.[12]

Parents' attitudes towards ECEC were investigated through 16 items. Eight of these assessed attitudes towards public and private service provision and the chargeability of ECEC, while eight concerned ECEC quality (see Table 2). The response scale for all items was 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The *control variables* included the parent's country of birth (0 = Finland, 1 = other), the amount of ECEC received (0 = 0–27h per week, 1 = over 27h per week), flexibly scheduled ECEC (i.e. a need for ECEC in evenings, overnight and/or on weekends, where 0 = no and 1 = yes).

Analyses related to RQ1 were conducted with Stata 17. Missing data was imputed using a multiple imputation procedure with 20 imputations (Schlomer, Bauman & Card, 2010). Analyses related to RQs 2–3 were conducted with Mplus software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). The Full-Information-Maximum-Likelihood (FIML) procedure was used to account for missing data (Enders, 2010). In all analyses, the hierarchical nature of the data (i.e. both parents had responded for 307 children) was considered by estimating unbiased standard errors.

Differences in the SES characteristics of service users of different ECEC forms (RQ1) were investigated via multinomial logistic regression analysis. The form of ECEC was used as a dependent variable. Each form was used as a reference category in turn. Parental education level and household income level were independent variables. The parent's country of birth, amount of ECEC received and flexibly scheduled ECEC were controlled for. To examine relative over- or underrepresentation of a certain service user group between different ECEC forms, the group comparisons were first conducted via relative risk ratios (RRR) and their 95% confidence intervals (CI) (StataCorp, 2021). The RRR allows for inducing the relative proportions of service users, but the measure of effect is misleading and difficult to interpret (see Breen et al., 2018; Niu, 2020). Therefore, as recommended (Niu, 2020), the effect sizes are presented as average marginal effects (AME) and their 95% CI. AMEs are presented as percentage points.

Analyses for RQs 2 and 3 were conducted within the exploratory structural equation (ESEM) framework (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009; Marsh et al., 2009), as it can integrate the EFA measurement model (here, the attitude dimensions) within the traditional confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)/structural equation

[12] The results' sensitivity to different threshold values (130% and 150%) is discussed in the conclusion.

modelling (SEM) framework. This increases the validity of the results, as the associations of the measurement-error-corrected latent variables of the parents' attitudes with the SES characteristics and ECEC form can be examined while controlling for the parent's country of birth, the amount of ECEC received and flexibly scheduled ECEC.

The overall goodness of fit of all models related to RQs 2–3 was evaluated with the χ^2 test, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). Due to the large number of parameters estimated, TLI and RMSEA, which correct for parsimony, may be particularly important in ESEM (Marsh et al., 2009). However, since research regarding the adequacy of the abovementioned criteria for ESEM is still lacking (Arens & Morin, 2016), in this study the criteria are used as a guide rather than as strict rules in model evaluation, as suggested in other ESEM studies as well (Arens & Morin, 2016; Marsh et al., 2009).

Prior to the main analyses related to RQ2, the structure of parents' attitudes was examined via exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Due to some skewness in the attitude variables, the robust MLR estimator was used. Moreover, oblique rotation was chosen because it allows the attitude dimensions to correlate. The dimensions of parents' attitudes were identified based on the eigenvalues-over-one criterion (Kaiser, 1960), the interpretability of the solution (Gorsuch, 1983), and goodness-of-fit indexes. Furthermore, items that cross-loaded on two or more factors were excluded from the final solution (see Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). Finally, the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for each dimension of the final factor structure was examined.

Then, differences in attitudes towards ECEC's provision and quality across users of different ECEC forms (RQ2) were examined by comparing the means of the attitude dimensions across the three service user groups. The fit of the constrained model was compared to that of the model in which the means of the attitude dimensions were estimated freely across the groups using the χ^2 difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2001). A statistically significant test result suggests that the free model fits the data better than the constrained model. Given that the χ^2 difference test is sensitive to large sample size (N = 1,416 in our study) and non-normality of the variables, and it does not accommodate the effects of model complexity, the free models always fit the data better than more constrained models. Therefore, we also inspected the changes in TLI (Marsh et al., 2009), CFI, and RMSEA (Chen 2007; Cheung and Rensvold 2002). Pairwise comparisons of the service user groups were conducted via Wald's χ^2 test (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Prior to the mean comparisons, the measurement invariance of the structure of parents' attitudes across the forms of ECEC was investigated and found to be satisfactory (Marsh et al., 2009).

Interaction between the SES characteristics (analysed separately) and the form of ECEC on parents' attitudes (RQ3) was examined by following a similar procedure as for the analysis in RQ2 for mean comparisons. In both analyses, the attitude factors served as dependent variables, and they were regressed on the

form of ECEC and the control variables. Differences in regression coefficients between the form of ECEC and the attitude factors were compared according to the SES characteristics. Furthermore, in the analysis including household income level, parental education was controlled for and vice versa.[13]

[13] the description of the data and data follows the description given in the sub-study III (see Ruutiainen, Räikkönen & Alasuutari, becoming)

4 MAIN RESULTS OF THE SUB-STUDIES

4.1 Sub-study I: Rationalizations of public support of private ECEC provision

In Finland, the marketization and privatization on ECEC is enabled in legislation. However, municipalities have the right to choose whether they want to provide ECEC themselves, grant public demand side-subsidies (vouchers or municipal supplement paid on the private day care allowance, PDAMS) to private providers or purchase private services straight from private providers (supply-side support). Therefore, the existence or absence of ECEC markets is largely determined at the municipal level. Sub-study I examined how municipal decision-makers, politicians and ECEC administrators rationalize municipal support for private ECEC provision. Even though ECEC administrators' and local politicians' roles differ in the municipal government, according to analysis no clear patterns that would have differentiated between administrators' or politicians' talk were not found. Therefore, the results presented here summarize the views of both kinds of municipal decision-makers.

According to the results, public support for private ECEC was rationalized within three different frames: (1) The *pragmatic frame* was constructed by representing public support for privatization of ECEC as economically rational, pragmatic or necessary. (2) The *government frame* included two ways of constructing the public–private relationship. First, private provision was positioned as part of or as an extension to the public service network. The municipal ECEC administration was presented in a power position and being in charge of the control, regulation and government of private provision, and also the creation and maintaining of markets. Second, private ECEC was positioned in a complementary role. The public and private ECEC were presented as separate sectors. On the one hand, the public sector's role as the main provider of ECEC was emphasized; on the other hand, more space for market mechanisms

was allowed at the expense of public involvement. (3) The *choice frame* was related to the government frame such that when private provision was positioned as a part of the public ECEC system, the affordability of private ECEC and thus every family's equal opportunity of choice was emphasized. When private provision was positioned in a complementary role, families were represented as active market agents, with the result that the selectivity related to private ECEC became implicitly accepted. The voucher system was linked to the first logic and PDAMS to the second.

The study demonstrates how the abovementioned frames function to facilitate the privatization and marketization of ECE. The neoliberal market rationality (e.g., freedom of choice and economic effectiveness, and competition, to lesser extent) serves as an important discursive resource for municipal decision-makers in legitimizing and accounting for municipal ECEC policies related to private provision. However, the way in which the equality and affordability of private ECEC for all families were emphasized can be understood as a heritage of the ideas of universalism, on which Finnish ECEC institutions have been based. Moreover, the study implies that the concept of equality in the context of ECEC may be shifting from a universal conception, which emphasizes families' universal right to public ECEC of uniform quality, towards families' equal opportunity to choose the services they want to use. At the same time, parents become conceptualized as well-informed consumers able to bear the responsibility and risk of successful decisions in the markets. Overall, the study supports the earlier view that rather than being a straightforward shift from one paradigm to another, the marketization and privatization of ECEC might be better understood as a maturation of old welfare promises along with searching for new paths (see Nauman, 2011).

4.2 Sub-study II: Selectivity of private ECEC provision

In the second sub-study, interviews with the representatives of private ECEC providers were drawn on to examine their talk about their clientele and the potential selectivity of their services. The study focused especially on how the interviewees implicitly or explicitly included certain kinds of families and children in their clientele and excluded others. In addition, it was examined what kind of impression management (Goffman, 1959) was used during these inclusions and exclusions.

While some of the accounts functioned to present services as inclusive and not exclusionary, the study found three different mechanisms of selectivity of service-users related to market-based ECEC: (1) Selectivity may originate from private providers' admission policy or decisions to limit their service selection. The interviewees could, for example, bring up that they do not provide special support that requires resourcing or that they select children in need of full-day ECEC rather than those who need part-day ECEC. (2) The interviewees brought forward that the prices of private ECEC can form a barrier to the accessibility of

such services for some families. Also, (3) regarding families' ECEC decisions, reflecting their preferences can be a mechanism of selectivity. The impression management used suggests that the first two forms of selectivity were interpreted as non-accepted, because the interviews used different discursive means to justify them. The third form of selectivity and the non-selectivity of service users, in turn, were discussed in an assertive sense, which implies that they were interpreted as generally accepted. Thus, the IM used indicates that the universally accessible non-selective ECEC system is still a norm to which interviewees had to adapt their accounts and descriptions.

The IM practised by the interviewees can be related to the two different types of logic that are used by municipal decision-makers to rationalize the marketization of Finnish ECEC (Ruutiainen et al., 2019) (see sub-study I). It also appears that on the micro level and national and municipal levels, ECEC policies serve as external authors which the private providers can use to legitimate their actions. Moreover, children's best interests, equal accessibility of ECEC and parents' opportunities to choose appear to be culturally acceptable discourses available to justify the selectivity.

Finnish ECEC policies implemented during the 2000s have increased families' opportunities to choose between private and public ECEC services. According to this study, the increasing choice discourse also includes providers' choices about their clientele and the selectivity related to the pricing and targeting of their services, which has potential to exacerbate the selectivity of the ECEC system. Also, the conceptualization of parents as active market-agents (Lee, 2018; Moss, 2009; Ruutiainen et al., 2019; Yuen & Grieshaber, 2009) is employed in defensive and assertive IM by representing parents as demanding subjects. Accordingly, private service providers appeared as though they were just reacting to the prevailing demand, offering different opportunities to choose.

Overall, the study suggests that the inconsistency between ECEC policy objectives and actualization is evident. Even though ECEC legislation and other regulations function to produce uniformity between public and private ECEC and to avoid stratification of their clientele, sub-study II suggests that the marketization of Finnish ECEC may be leading – at least somewhat – to a differentiated clientele between the two provisions.

4.3 Sub-study 3: Differentiation of service users of public and private ECEC services

The third sub-study quantitatively examined whether the service users of private and public ECEC services differed from each other on the basis of their socioeconomic status or attitudes towards ECEC provision and quality, as sub-studies I and II and existing research literature suggest. Private ECEC centres subsidized with vouchers (abbreviated as voucher ECEC) and private ECEC

centres subsidized with private day care allowance (abbreviated as PDA ECEC) were separated from each other to test whether or not the selectivity is different within the two systems, as sub-study I and II indicate (for the differences and similarities of two subsidy-systems see Section 2.1).

The sub-study indicates that children of highly educated parents were more likely in PDA ECEC or voucher ECEC than children of low-educated parents, who were, in turn, more likely in public ECEC centres. In addition, the children of highly educated parents were relatively overrepresented in the clientele of voucher ECEC and PDA ECEC, compared to the clientele of public ECEC centres, where parents with lower education were relatively overrepresented.

It was also noted that, when compared to clientele of public ECEC and to a lesser extent when compared to the clientele of private voucher ECEC, high-income households were relatively overrepresented in the clientele of PDA ECEC. Children from high-income households were also more likely than children from middle-income and low-income households to be enrolled in PDA ECEC, but not in voucher ECEC.

Of the control variables, children in need of flexibly scheduled ECEC were more likely to attend public and less likely to attend both kinds of private ECEC centres than other children. Children with a parent born in some other country than Finland were relatively overrepresented in the clientele of PDA ECEC compared to clientele of voucher ECEC, in which children with a parent is born in Finland were overrepresented.

The study found four different attitude dimensions towards ECEC provision and its quality. These were *Preference for municipal ECEC*, *Cost-free ECEC*, *Individual attention* and *Individual utility*. Parents whose child was in public ECEC had the most positive attitude towards public ECEC provision whereas the attitude of those parents whose child was in PDA ECEC was the least positive towards public ECEC. Moreover, the parents whose child was in PDA ECEC had more critical attitudes towards ECEC's ability to take every child individually in attention than those parents whose child was in public ECEC. Service user groups did not differ in their attitudes towards cost-free ECEC or individual utility. Moreover, the results suggested that the relationship between the form of ECEC and attitudes towards ECEC and its provision did not vary with the family's SES characteristics.

Based on sub-study III, the marketization and privatization of ECEC extends the process of educational and social distinctions, suggested by earlier research, to the field of early childhood as well. However, the subsidy system appears to be relevant to the extent of these distinctions.

5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this doctoral dissertation was to examine whether the marketization and privatization development of Finnish ECEC indicate a shift *within* or *from* universalism or both. This question is next discussed from the perspectives of ideas produced in discourses of municipal decision-makers and private ECEC providers (research question 1) and the institutional actions of central agents, especially families (research question 2). Moreover, the shifts at ideological and practical levels, or using terms of discursive institutionalism at the level of policy solutions, policy programs and worldviews (or philosophies), are discussed (Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018; Schmidt, 2008).

Whether the introduction of market logic can be seen as a shift within a universal ECEC system depends on how universalism is defined. As noted in the Section 2.1, the definition of universalism and its core concepts is, however, under constant deliberation, being ideological by its nature (Stefánsson, 2012). The shift from a certain interpretation of universalism can actually mean the strengthening of another. This study concentrates on the shifts within or from the "traditional Nordic" interpretations of universalism, sketched out in Section 2.1.

5.1 Marketization and privatization of ECEC as shifts within universalism

Sub-studies I and II suggest that equal accessibility and affordability (non-selectivity) of ECEC, also considered as the central values of universalism, appear to form a normative foundation against which policy agents (sub-studies I and II) set their words. Accessibility and equality are ideals that were represented as core values of municipal ECEC systems (sub-study I) and presenting services as non-selective and equally accessible for all families functioned to strengthen private ECEC providers' legitimacy (sub-study II). Even when the risk of selectivity was recognized or selective practices of private services were brought forward, the interviewees provided accounts that functioned to justify the selectivity or to

increase the image of equally accessible services by downsizing the risk of selectivity. Moreover, as suggested in Section 2.1.2, the national legislation framework constructs uniformity between public and private sectors and underlines educational equality, every child's equal opportunities for ECEC and child's growth into a member of society (Act on ECEC, 540/2018). Therefore, the legislation reflects the ideals of universalism. As noted in the introduction, DI (Schmidt, 2008) separates between different kind of ideas based on their generality. Policy-level ideas pertain to certain specific policy solutions, programmatic ideas are more general policy programs or paradigms and worldview-level ideas are the most basic level of public philosophies in the background of policies and programs. Ideas can be either normative or cognitive (Schmidt, 2008). Interpreted through DI (see Section 2.1), the equality-related aspect of universalism can be understood as slowly changing worldviews and views pertaining to accessibility or affordability in turn take place at the programmatic level. Therefore, the discourses produced by the central agents (sub-studies I and II) indicate that, even though the actual policy ideas related to ECEC provision have been shaped by market logic, universalism-related ideas – namely, the norm of equally accessible, affordable and nonselective ECEC at the programmatic level and the normative idea of equality underlying them at the level of worldview – still lay at the core of the ECEC system or, using the words of DI, in the policy agents' background. This, together with the universal ideas reflected in the ECEC legislation, such as the uniformity of the private and public sectors at the programmatic level and the norm of communality at the more general worldview level, indicate a shift within universalism.

Both the discourses produced by policy agents (sub-studies I and II) and families' ECEC decisions (sub-study III) show that at the level of policies (see Schmidt, 2008), market logic and universalism can intertwine in different ways. Such differences take place in the local contexts, and they are tightly related to different subsidy systems, vouchers or private day care allowance and its possible municipal supplement (PDAMS), by which municipalities support private ECEC provision. This observation is in line with the earlier research suggesting that subsidy designs matter in terms of the form that ECEC markets take (van Lancker, 2018). The municipal decision-makers and representatives of private providers represented vouchers as a subsidy system that makes private services affordable and thus accessible to families in different financial situations (sub-studies I and II). Municipal decision-makers also positioned private ECEC subsidized with vouchers as a part of the public ECEC system (sub-study I). The voucher system was presented as allowing accessibility of private ECEC to (practically) every family, indicating the idea of universalism at the programmatic level (see Schmidt, 2008). Thus, positioning private ECEC subsidized with vouchers as a part of the public ECEC system presented the whole system as universal. The PDAMS system was, in turn, presented as a system that potentially increases the selectivity of the ECEC system (sub-studies I and II). The universalism of the ECEC system was then maintained by positioning private ECEC subsidized with PDAMS in a complementary role and

thus as a separate sector from the public one, which, in turn, was positioned in the primary role as ECEC provider. The universalism was thereby produced in relation to public services, and private services were presented as an extra or special kind of addition to the service field (sub-study I).[14] The private providers, in turn, invoked the features of the subsidy systems to justify the selectivity related to their services, which made visible the norm of non-selective services (sub-study II).

The examination of action – namely, families' ECEC decisions – supported the picture produced in the discourse of policy agents. While the use of vouchers was not associated with the family's income level, high-income families were proportionally overrepresented among those using PDAMS (sub-study III). Therefore, among subsidy systems, only the voucher system appears to be a cognitive policy-level idea that is in line with more general-level normative universalism-related values. However, this conceptualization of universalism is somewhat narrow because it only takes families' financial situation into account and leaves other possible mechanisms of selectivity or inequality without attention (sub-studies I and II).

In this study, vouchers were represented as an economically effective way to provide ECEC services and increase the quality of the services and families' options to choose by means of competition. Municipal decision-makers and representatives of private ECEC providers also produced vouchers as a subsidy system that, by means of local voucher contracts and income-related voucher value, enables regulation and guidance of private providers as well as families' equal possibilities to choose services they prefer (sub-studies I and II). Therefore, it appears that in the voucher system, the market rationalities emphasizing freedom of choice, and to a lesser extent competition and economic efficiency (Brennan et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2007; Moss, 2014; Naumann, 2011; Schwiter et al., 2015), are tied to the underlying assumptions about universalism without questioning universalism's core premises about equal, accessible and nonselective ECEC.

It has been stated that the growing individualization of societies can form a challenge to uniform ECEC systems (see Karila, 2012; Onnismaa et al., 2014), because ECEC systems can be incapable of responding to families' differing preferences, which undermine the legitimacy of universalism (e.g., Anttonen, 2002; Naumann, 2011) and cause so-called welfare state fatigue (see Vamstad, 2016). One suggested solution to this problem between universalism and individualism is moving towards more consequential interpretations of universalism by providing public subsidies that enable families' different decisions related to childcare and ECEC (Anttonen et al., 2012b; Halmetoja, 2015). As noted in Section 2.1, instead of providing lump-sum benefits or uniform childcare solutions characteristic of the procedural interpretation of universalism, Finnish ECEC policies have aimed to secure equal accessibility and affordability of ECEC services and also supported different decisions between homecare and

[14] Typically, the share of the private sector is higher in municipalities providing vouchers than in the municipalities providing PDAMS.

public and private ECEC institutions. Equal access is supported by the child's universal right to ECEC, availability of services, and income-related as well as means-tested customer fees (see Paananen, 2017). Therefore, already before intense marketization and privatization development, the Finnish ECEC system represented a consequentialist rather than procedural interpretation of universalism. The discourses produced by central agents in ECEC provision (sub-studies I and II) and the action of families (sub-study III) suggest that especially the voucher system might fit in the consequential frame of universalism. Even though customer fees in the voucher system may somewhat exceed those in the public sector, it appears the private services subsidized by vouchers may be financially accessible to (almost) every child regardless of their parents' wealth (sub-study III). This increasing possibility to choose can be interpreted as a shift within universalism, namely, towards a consequential interpretation that enables more possibilities to choose without financial restrictions (see Halmetoja, 2015). Usually the financially more fixed PDAMS system, in turn, may be located at the more procedural side of the continuum. However, a strict procedural interpretation of universalism does not represent the way how universal service production has been traditionally understood in the Nordic countries (see Anttonen & Sipilä, 2012). Therefore, as suggested in Section 2.1, it appears that voucher provision adds values of individualism and freedom of choice to worldview that underlies the traditional Nordic universalism. A more procedural PDAMS system, in turn, may add features of selectivity to the core of Nordic universalism.

The interviews with private ECEC providers and an examination of families' ECEC decisions indicate that regardless of the subsidy system, highly educated parents are more likely to select private services than parents with lower education (sub-studies II and III). It was also found that positive attitudes towards public ECEC provision increase the probability of selecting public ECEC instead of private ECEC and vice versa (sub-study III). Moreover, there also appears to be a group of parents who are connected not by their income level but by a critical attitude towards the Finnish ECEC system's capability to take every child individually into attention, and who have perhaps, therefore, decided to put their child in a private PDAMS centre, which they believe possibly to lead to success better than ECEC in general. As noted, the consequentialist interpretation of universalism may allow at least some sort of differentiation based on families' preferences and different needs (see Anttonen et al., 2012b; Halmetoja, 2015). Therefore, it is possible to argue that the increased possibilities to choose as long as the financial barriers are removed would represent a shift within universalism.

It is possible that the relationship between parental ECEC decisions and their attitudes (sub-study III) can be at least partly explained by cognitive dissonance theory, according to which a contradiction between peoples' values, attitudes or beliefs, their actions or the institutional frame can create anxiety, anger or frustration (Festinger, 1957; see also Grinza et al., 2017; Vermeulen et al., 2016). These psychological discomforts can be eased, for example, by changing attitudes to better match one's actions (Grinza et al., 2017) or by resisting the

institutional pressures to act against one's own values. The latter example may explain why some people adapt their action to ECEC market conditions while others show resistance of institutional prescription or inaction (Vermeulen et al., 2016). In the context of sub-study III this could mean that there are parents who value traditional universal and public ECEC systems and therefore refuse to make active choices in the ECEC markets. Others, in turn, might see private and public services as equal (especially in voucher systems), and therefore there is not such strong cognitive dissonance between their attitudes and selecting the private option. Finally, there might be a group of parents who are critical of ECEC's quality in general and who therefore avoid cognitive dissonance by carefully selecting a pleasing private option (especially in the PDAMS system). This notion is supported by sub-studies I and II in which the interviewees present the voucher system as an extension of the public system and the PDAMS system as separate sector which may enable more individual solutions. Another option, closer to the accommodation model (Meyers & Jordan, 2006), might suggest that parents ease the cognitive dissonance related to their ECEC decision by adapting their attitudes to the ECEC setting they selected. In any case, this study cautiously supports the previous research that indicates that the marketization and privatization of ECEC may create cognitive dissonance at the individual level, which can manifest itself as inaction or resistance especially among those who value the welfare state (or universal) logic of service provision (Vermeulen, et al., 2016).

DI states that program- and worldview-level normative ideas can, for example, function to legitimize policy-level cognitive ideas (Lundkvist et al., 2017; Schmidt, 2008; see also Section 1.2). Sub-studies I and II together with the current legislation suggest that the cognitive policy ideas of the marketization and privatization of ECEC services in line with market logic are legitimized with normative programmatic and worldview-level ideas that draw on the universalistic legacy (see Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018). At the level of worldview, the norms of equality and at the programmatic level the norm of universal accessibility and affordability of ECEC services are used to legitimate the privatization and marketization of ECEC services. Moreover, both the voucher and PDAMS systems are rationalized in ways that differ from each other but make visible the norm of universalism and aim for a universal ECEC system. Also, examination of families' ECEC decisions indicates that the voucher system reflects equal financial opportunities to choose private services, which can be associated with the ideas of universalism, especially its consequential interpretation. The programmatic and worldview-level ideas related to market logic, such as freedom of choice, individual responsibility, competition and economical effectivity (see Nyby et al., 2018), can be discerned from the agents' discourses. They are, however, discursively interwoven with ideas that enable the actualization of some key ideas of universalism. Therefore, the sub-studies indicate that marketization and privatization entail elements that can be interpreted as a shift within universalism.

In the frame of DI, Table 2 summarizes those findings of the sub-studies idicating that marketization and privatization of ECEC in Finland can be interpret as a shift within universalism. It demonstrates that even though certain policy solutions (policy ideas) have promoted the idea of market logic, the programmatic and worlview-level ideas in the underlying Finnish ECEC institution indicate a shift within the universal system (RQ1 of this dissertation). Moreover, Table 2 also presents examples of institutional action that speak to the universality of the ECEC system (RQ2 of this dissertation).

TABLE 2 Shifts within universalism in Finnish ECEC institution

Policy solution	**Programmatic/ Worldview-level ideas**	**Actions/Examples**
Introduction of voucher system	A shift from more procedural interpretation of universalism towards more consequential interpretation	Families' ECEC decisions indicate that private and public services are affordable for every family
	Norms of equally accessible, affordable and non-selective ECEC	Parents are able to make ECEC decisions on the basis of their preferences
	Ideas related to market logic (freedom of choice, individual responsibility, competition and economical effectivity) discursively interwoven with some key ideas of universalism	Public sector governs private sector
Introduction of PDAMS system	Norms of equally accessible, affordable and non-selective ECEC	-
	Universalism in relation to public services, private services as extra	
ECEC legislation	Function to foster universal values, such as communality and equality, and guarantee the uniformity of private and public sectors	-

5.2 Marketization and privatization of ECEC as shifts from universalism

Regardless of the norm of universalism, the actions of private ECEC providers and families (sub-studies II and III) indicate that there exist different mechanisms or logics that increase the selectivity of private ECEC services. As argued in Section 2.1, the selectivity of ECEC services often indicates the decline of

universalism. Sub-study II suggests that private services may not always be available for children who need flexibly scheduled ECEC or part-time ECEC. They may not be accessible to children from a lower socioeconomic background or for children who have special educational needs (see also Heiskanen et al., 2021; Pihlaja & Neitola, 2017; Vainikainen et al., 2018). This finding is in line with earlier research indicating that private providers' enrolment policies and pricing may exclude certain children from services (Drange & Telle, 2020; Ernst et al., 2014; Jones & Jones, 2021; Mierendorff et al., 2018; Press & Woodrow, 2018; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; van der Werf et al., 2021). This, in turn, implies that the private sector does not automatically adapt a role in serving the common good that is characteristic of the public service sector (see Knijn & Lewis, 2017), but it is instead guided by economic incentives or the normative worldviews of the providers (sub-study II). Sub-study III, in turn, found that children with higher SES and children who did not need flexibly scheduled ECEC were proportionally overrepresented in private ECEC and proportionally underrepresented in public ECEC. The differentiation of service users of private and public ECEC was different, however, depending on the subsidy system used. Therefore, regardless of the norm of universalism produced in the discourses (sub-studies I and II) and the voucher system's design aiming for economic equality (sub-study I), the parents' ECEC decisions (actions) (sub-study III) together with selectivity related to private ECEC providers' enrolment and screening policies (sub-study II) suggest that introducing market logic in the field of ECEC entails features that can be interpreted as a shift from universalism, towards a more selective system (see also Anttonen et al., 2012a).

The selectivity is most apparent in the PDAMS system. Both municipal decision-makers' (sub-study I) and private ECEC providers' (sub-study II) discourses represented PDAMS (especially models with lesser income or means-testing) as a system that potentially leads to stratification of service users on the basis of their financial resources. In the PDAMS system, the private provision was also positioned in a complementary role and thus as a separate sector from the public one, which, in turn, was positioned as the primary ECEC provider. As a separate sector the private PDAMS provision was represented as somewhat free from municipal regulation, and therefore able to set prices and select clientele more freely than the providers subsidized by the voucher system. The examination of parent's ECEC decisions (sub-study III) supports the perception produced by the interviewees in sub-studies I and II. The sub-study III indicated that children of high-income households were somewhat more likely enrolled in private PDAMS centres than children of low- or middle-income families. Children of high-income families, compared to children of low- and- middle-income families, were also proportionally overrepresented in private PDAMS centres and proportionally underrepresented in the public ECEC centres. This indicates that the PDAMS system does not allow private ECEC services equally for every family but favours those with high income, which suggests a shift from universalism.

Regarding parental education, the result was similar in the PDAMS system in relation to the voucher system: children of highly educated parents were more likely to be in a private and less likely to be in a public ECEC centre than children whose parents had a lower education. Children of highly educated parents were also proportionally overrepresented in the private ECEC centres compared to children of low-educated parents, who were, in turn, overrepresented in the public ECEC centres. Also, some interviewed private ECEC providers described their typical clientele with utterances that indicated their high education and SES in general (sub-study II). In Section 5.1, it was suggested that this kind of differentiation of service users of private and public ECEC could be interpreted as a shift within universalism, namely, towards a consequentialist interpretation of it. However, the argument is posed from the parent's perspective, who are proxy consumers of ECEC on behalf of their children. From the children's perspective, the selectivity based on parents' preferences can be seen in a different light. The previous research suggests that parental education reflects their cultural resources (Jæger & Karlson, 2018; Kamplicher et al., 2018; Xi & Ma, 2020). The cultural resources (or capital, depending on the theoretical approach) – namely, different tastes, dispositions, perceptions of the role of ECEC and education, and conceptions of quality – shape parents' ECEC and education choices (e.g., Ball et al., 1996; Kamplicher et al., 2018; Kim & Fram, 2009; Kosunen, 2014; Vincent et al., 2008). Also, a Finnish study noted that parents whose child was in private ECEC valued different aspects of the service than those parents whose child was in public ECEC (Sulkanen et al., 2020), which can be held as an indication of differing valuations regarding ECEC and, thus, as the cultural resources of such parents. From the children's perspective, it might not be relevant whether their access to private ECEC is limited by their parent's economical or cultural resources, but rather the selectivity in itself. Therefore, this research supports previous research which has noted that increased possibilities to choose benefit more privileged groups in particular (e.g., Ball et al., 1996; Yuen, 2012, 2015). From the children's perspective, the turn towards more individual ECEC solutions appears to privilege those in an already advantaged position, and thus it implies a shift from universalism's core values related to equal access and equality.

The growing individualization not only shapes the actions of families, but it also changes the normative foundation of the ECEC institution. The increasing individualism and freedom of choice at the level of worldview (see Section 5.1, and sub-studies I and II) mean also the growth of individual responsibility (see Nyby et al., 2018). For example, Karlsson et al. (2013) showed how a successful ECEC decision becomes a norm of good parenthood in a marketized ECEC system. This, in turn, can be interpreted as a shift from universalism, since the growing individual responsibility indicates the deterioration of the universal value of communal responsibility (see Section 2.1).

One possible consequence of the observed differentiation of service users of public and private ECEC is that the quality of ECEC that children receive becomes determined by their socioeconomic background (Alm Fjällborg &

Forsberg, 2021; Drange & Telle, 2020; Mocan, 2007). In Finland, however, national policies aim at safeguarding uniformity between the public and private sectors. Also, especially in the voucher system, the private and public services are discursively produced as quite similar (sub-studies I and II). Moreover, on one hand, the earlier research indicates that marketization and privatization have not delivered their promises about enhancing the quality of ECEC (e.g., Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Press & Woodrow, 2018; van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). On the other hand, a recent Finnish study indicates that the users of private services are more satisfied with ECEC services than those using public services (Saranko et al., 2021). Sub-study III, in turn, showed that the clientele of private PDAMS centres show less preference for public ECEC provision and have more critical attitudes towards the individual attention the children get in ECEC in general than the clientele of public ECEC. One possible explanation of this observation is that there exist a group of parents who are critical of the quality of ECEC in general and who therefore turn to private services where they expect their child to receive more individual attention than in public ECEC. However, there is not empirical research comparing the quality of public and private ECEC in Finland and, therefore, whether or not there exist differences between public and private ECEC. How these possible differences can be affected by regulation is ultimately an empirical question that this study cannot answer.

However, regardless of possible differences or uniformity between the private and public sectors, the differentiation of the service users of public and private ECEC may have consequences that indicate a shift from universalism. The ideological aspects of universalism (i.e. programmatic and worldview-level ideas) have emphasized the inclusion and cohesion of society. Universalism has also aimed at reinforcing human dignity in society by removing a stigma from people using public services (Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Anttonen, 2002). If children's growth and living environments start to diverge at a very early age, the abovementioned objectives may become challenged. Moreover, if families' SES starts to determine the type of services they use, different SES-mediated social challenges, such as child poverty or challenges related to parents' ability to ensure a stable and safe environment, may also become unequally distributed between the public and private sectors. This development can be fostered by private providers' enrolment policies, as sub-study II suggests. In addition, as Vamstad (2016) argues, the average high SES of families using the services can be a factor that as such increases the parents' perception of the quality of services. This, in turn, has the potential to increase the symbolic capital of private services (see sub-study I; Woodrow & Press, 2018), which can also challenge the aim of social inclusion and cohesion inherent in universalism. From these points of view, the differentiation of service users related to market logic in the field of ECEC can be considered as a shift from universalism.

It appears that some private providers justify higher customer fees by the benefits of their service for children (sub-study II). In sum, it was seen that emphasis on early learning of a foreign language or some other pedagogical characteristics provided by private provision benefit children more than regular

ECEC. This study cannot conclude anything about the generality of this perception among private providers or parents. However, merely the existence of this kind of mindset demonstrates the intertwinement of market logic and the neoliberal view of ECEC, where ECEC is seen as an investment in the child's future and competitiveness (see Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018; Woodrow & Press, 2018). This notion conflicts with universalistic aims of promoting educational equality (Act on ECEC, 540/2018) by providing services of uniform quality to every child. Therefore, in such discourse, instead of compensating for differences in children's skills, ECEC functions to increase those differences. Even though this individual investment discourse may not be very powerful, it definitely indicates a shift from the universal worldview towards a neoliberal one (see Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018).

The earlier research about ECEC and school markets indicates that market conditions privilege children with a higher socioeconomic background in multiple ways outside SES's immediate effect on a family's purchase power (e.g., Forsberg, 2018; Yuen, 2012, 2015). SES, for example, shapes parents' taste, preferences and quality considerations (Ball et al., 1996; Grogan, 2012; Kamplicher et al., 2018; Vincent et al., 2008). Parents who possess high amounts of cultural resources may be more inclined to choose an ECEC centre within a wider area and commute with their children over longer distances than parents with lower amounts of cultural resources (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008; Sulkanen et al., 2020). They are also more willing to be selective about their children's education (Kamplicher et al., 2018; Kosunen, 2014). There is also evidence that even in the highly regulated Nordic context, children from higher SES families participate in higher-quality ECEC than children with lower SES (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Drange & Telle, 2020), and they are most inclined to exercise school choice (Trumberg & Urban, 2020). The existing research also indicates that families with higher SES in many cases are more likely to select private ECEC than those with lower SES (Garvis & Lulleblad, 2018; Ghosh & Dey, 2020; Vamstad, 2007). This study supports the pre-existing notion that market conditions favour families with higher SES, even if the services were affordable to every family. Families with higher SES tend to select a private ECEC centre more often than families with lower SES. Those families selecting private services are also more satisfied with the services they get (Saranko et al., 2021; Vamstad, 2016). Families' cultural and social resources might be harder to redistribute than financial resources, however. Therefore, this study indicates that market conditions probably favour children with a higher socioeconomic background at the cost of lower SES children. This in, turn, indicates a shift from universalism. Table 3 summarizes the changes in programmatic and worldview-level ideas related to certain policy solutions (policy ideas) that indicate a shift from universalism (RQ1 of this dissertation) in Finnish ECEC. Table 3 also presents examples of action taking place in the Finnish ECEC institution that questions the universality of the system (RQ2 of this dissertation).

TABLE 3 Shifts from universalism in Finnish ECEC institution

Policy solution	Programmatic/Worldview-level ideas	Actions/Examples
Privatization of ECEC services in general	Freedom of choice, economic effectivity or idea that public services are purchased from private providers A shift from universalism towards selectivity	Private providers' or municipalities' policies may exclude some children from private services
Introduction of PDAMS system	A shift from universalism towards selectivity Universalism pertains public services Private sector as a separate sector from the public sector	Families' ECEC decisions indicate that private services are financially more accessible to wealthier families
Marketization of ECEC services in general	Parental choice, market logic A shift from common responsibility towards individual responsibility Decline of universalist values about social inclusion and cohesion From universalist idea of educational equality towards neoliberal idea of ECEC as an investment in an individual child's future and competitiveness	Families' ECEC decisions indicate selectivity of children based on their parent's cultural resources Differentiation of service users of public and private ECEC on the basis of families' ECEC decisions in a given institutional context Families' ECEC decisions in a given institutional context indicate that market conditions favour children with higher SES

5.3 Ideational change of Finnish ECEC system

As stated in Section 5.1, the discourses of municipal decision-makers and private ECEC providers indicate that universal values related to equality and the accessibility of ECEC still form the ideational core of the ECEC institution. However, it appears that the way in which equality of access in ECEC is conceptualized is changing. While traditional Nordic universalism has underlined equal access to services of uniform high quality, it appears that equality may increasingly refer to parents' economically equal opportunities to

choose the ECEC service they prefer (sub-study I; see also Paananen et al., 2019). This shifting conceptualization produced in discourse indicates intertwinement of the central values of market logic, namely, freedom of choice and individual responsibility (see Nyby et al., 2018), and the traditional universal values at the programmatic and worldview level of the ECEC institution (see sub-study I). This intertwinement of universalism and market logic at the levels of worldview and programs function to legitimate policy-level solutions, privatization and marketization via the voucher system, which differs from the earlier public system suggested by the traditional Nordic conceptualization of universalism.

Moreover, the changing conceptualization of equality resonates with the earlier research that states that different contesting ideologies, such as liberalism or socialism, put different concepts in the centre of the universalism and interpret those concepts in different ways, so that some of these concepts or interpretations conflict with each other (Freeden, 1996; Stefánsson, 2012). The discourses differentiated in sub-studies I and II suggest that instead of universalism's values emphasizing equality, communality and social cohesion, market logic puts only the concept of equality at the centre (worldview) of universalism. Moreover, it replaces its traditional interpretation with the (neo)liberal conceptualization that emphasizes parents' equal financial opportunities to freely choose and individual responsibility about such choices. This, in turn, indicates a shift from the traditional Nordic interpretation of universalism.

However, the changing conceptualization of universalism and equality is tightly connected to the voucher system. In Finland, there are also many municipalities that have maintained ECEC as a completely publicly provided service. ECEC legislation also promotes educational equality and a sense of community, together with uniformity and the equal regulation of private and public services. Both policy ideas, the majority role of public provision and unifying legislation, can be seen as reflecting the traditional universal worldview. In addition, in rationalizations of PDAMS systems, the equal opportunities to choose appear to be less significant than in the voucher system (sub-studies I & II). Instead, it demonstrates the coexistence of market logic and universalism. This study thus suggests that in local contexts, market logic and universalism can intertwine (voucher system) or coexist (PDAMS system), or one of them may gain hegemony (public provision only). However, when the temporal dimension of marketization and privatization process is taken into account, it can be also stated that market logic takes over the field from the pre-existing universalism, where the voucher system represents a mid-ground between universalism and more pure market logic (PDAMS). A more dialectic interpretation (see Polanyi 1945; Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013), in turn, might suggest that the voucher system (introduced in 2009) is a synthesis of thesis (namely, universalism) and antithesis (namely, more pure market logic) manifested as PDAMS (introduced in 1997). This conception is supported by the fact that the use of vouchers has increased and use of PDAMS has decreased during the last decade (FIFHAW, 2020).

The developments related to different subsidy systems also supports the notion that as a worldview-level idea neoliberalism has proven to be a resilient

one. One of the key factors behind neoliberalism's success is it can take very different forms on the program or policy level and in different context. Instead of only displacing other competing ideas, it tends to put up hybrids with very different political ideas (Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013). It appears that in the case of Finnish ECEC, neoliberalism has taken the form of market logic, which has hybridized with the somewhat unlikely idea of universalism. Such a hybrid can have different kinds of manifestations at the level of policy ideas, such as marketization, privatization, a voucher and/or PDAMS system, which all differ from each other but can be traced back to a neoliberal worldview.

To sum up, the marketization and privatization of Finnish ECEC resemble the development in Sweden, where regardless of the discourse of the freedom to choose and increasing private provision, introducing market logic has not taken place at the cost of the public sector (Westberg & Larsson, 2020). Rather, as Naumann (2011) states, it has included maturation of the old welfare state promises along with seeking new paths. In Finland, according to this research, the maturation of old promises refers to high public responsibility of ECEC provision, equal regulation of public and private ECEC and values of universalism at the levels of worldviews and the programs of ECEC. At the levels of worldviews and programs, the new paths, in turn, refer to the way in which the traditional universal values are reinterpreted as they intertwine with values of market logic, such as freedom of choice and individual responsibility, competition and economical effectivity (see also Nyby et al., 2018). At the level of policies, new paths refer to new cognitive ideas, namely, marketization and privatization of services via public subsidies, which are legitimized by the abovementioned normative ideas at the level of worldview and the programmatic level. Moreover, families' and private providers' actions in the discursively constructed institutional reality indicate that the idea of market logic at the levels of worldviews, programs and policies have changed the ECEC institution in a way that endangers the actualization of universalism's values. Therefore, as suggested, from some perspectives the ideational changes in the ECEC institution and actions within it can be interpreted as shifts within universalism, and from other perspectives the discourses and actions indicate a shift from universalism. This observation supports the earlier findings suggesting that Finnish ECEC and family policies increasingly draw from neoliberal worldviews and thus restructure the "Nordic model" (Lundkvist et al., 2017; Nyby et al., 2018; see also Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018). From a global perspective, the Finnish ECEC system as a whole can be still located on the universal end of the continuum. The marketization and privatization of ECEC appear to be possible because the market logic (especially the voucher system) has been successfully presented as compatible with universalism and growing individualization. The market logic has shaped the system, however; indeed, it has the potential to undermine the universalism of the system.

5.4 A critical appraisal of the dissertation: A mixed-method approach

There has been an intensifying academic conversation about how mixed-method research (MMR) should be evaluated. Different frameworks for appraisals of MMR studies vary, from those suggesting that the quantitative and qualitative parts of the research should be assessed separately using quality criteria from both traditions to those arguing that the author should select either evaluation criteria of the qualitative or quantitative tradition, and those who suggest a completely new framework for assessing MMR studies (e.g., Bryman, 2006; Bryman et al., 2008; Creamer, 2018; O'Cathain, 2010). In this study, the first and the last perspectives are combined by applying evaluation criteria adopted from a validated Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Pace et al., 2012; Plueye et al., 2009). More specifically, the evaluation utilizes the criteria from MMAT, presented in Plueye and Hong (2014), which suggests that the quality of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method components of MMR should be assessed separately (for critics, see Creamer, 2018).

The appraisal of the *qualitative component* of the research pays attention to the relevance of the data sources to answer the research question, the relevance of the data analysis to answer the research question, how the context is taken into account in the data analysis (i.e. how the findings relate to context) and the reflexivity of the researchers (their influence on the findings) (Pluaye & Hong, 2014). The criteria resemble established concepts of credibility (the first, second and fourth criteria), dependability (the first two criteria), transferability (the third criterion) and confirmability (the fourth criterion), through which the trustworthiness of qualitative research is often evaluated (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). This research, however, mainly sticks to the conceptualization of Pluaye and Hong (2014) and Pluaye et al. (2009).

First, the suitability of the qualitative research data and data sources is reflected on from the perspective of the research question. Since this study is committed to premises of discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008), it is justified to study the perspectives of those "sentient" agents who create, maintain and change the ECEC institution and who are involved in the process of its marketization and privatization, namely, municipal decision-makers and the representatives of private ECEC providers (sub-studies I & II). The interview data with such stakeholders included rich descriptions that brought forward the balancing between the ideals of universalism and market logic in the context of the ECEC institution. Moreover, the sampling of the interviewees appeared to be successful, as the data contains a lot of variation related to different rationalizations of the subsidy systems, to different demographical contexts (e.g., urban-rural variance), to political views and to different logics of private ECEC provision (non-profit, small entrepreneur, for-profit chain), which make visible the complexity and the variety of the phenomenon (see Gobo, 2004). However, even though the data enabled answering the qualitative part of this dissertation.

some central agents, like custodians and children, were not represented in the qualitative studies (sub-studies I & II). This resulted from a practical decision based on the understanding that one study cannot touch on all perspectives related to the phenomenon of interest.

In addition, the nature of the qualitative data deserves critical examination. Many scholars have criticized the use of interview data in discourse analysis and recommended the use of naturally occurring data instead (Nikander, 2012). The critics have, for example, stated that interviews entail features of public performance, that the interviewer-interviewee setting skews the interview situation and that instead of looking at how categories are "naturally" deployed, interviews generate categories (see Silverman, 1998; Nikander, 2012; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Naturally occurring data – for example, municipal council conversations or government bills (see Lundkvist et al., 2017) – would have offered views on rhetoric used and logics related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC and institutional change, and they definitely deserve to be studied in the future. Naturally occurring talk, however, takes place in a certain context, where some of the discursive resources come into play while others do not. Therefore, there exists no "pure" data-gathering method. Moreover, many natural voices, such as voices of municipal administrators and representatives of private ECEC providers, would be difficult to reach in naturally occurring settings, and therefore the interviews were a reasonable option of data collection. In addition, especially in sub-study II, the interviewees' tendency to add features of public performance was turned into an advantage, as the study examined the impression management exercised by interviewees. Also, the nature of the data (cross-sectional sample) does not allow any conclusion to be made about the change in discourse around the universal and market logic of ECEC. Therefore, some of the opportunities offered by discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008) remained partly untapped. Yet, the results of the dissertation are discussed with the earlier research literature, which enables considering of the change in institutional logics.

Secondly, the suitability of the qualitative data analysis in answering the research question is assessed. The theoretical framework of this study (discursive institutionalism) is based on the premise that institutions are created, maintained and changed by "sentient" agents' background ideational and foreground discursive abilities. Therefore, when institutional change and the nature of the institutions are studied, discursively oriented analysis appears as suitable. Discourse analytical means allowed the deconstruction of universal and market logics related to ECEC provision and thus enabled answering of the first research question. Moreover, the analysis of impression management (sub-study II) allowed examining of the norms and cultural discourses related to private ECEC provision, which appeared to be a successful solution because it can be assumed that those discourses and norms have an impact on the formation of institutions and institutional change.

Thirdly, the context specificity of the findings (see Plueye & Hong 2014) is touched upon. The context and different phases of the research process (e.g., data

collection, data analysis) are described carefully to maximize the assessment of the transferability of the research for other contexts (see Korstjen & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Cuba, 1985). Also, as noted above, the transferability of the findings has been aimed at by attending to the variation between the municipalities, that is, the contexts of the data collection (see Gobo, 2004). The municipalities differed in their geographical locations, demography, economic structure, political power relations and sizes. Therefore, it is somewhat likely that the results describe the situation in Finland quite well, especially as the results themselves highlight the context-related variation between different logics related to a mix of universalism, privatization and marketization. However, the Finnish ECEC system, representing the Nordic welfare model, differs remarkably from many other contexts (e.g., Mahon et al., 2012). Therefore, the results may not be transferable to other national contexts as such. However, because the arguments promoting marketization and privatization in Finland resemble those detected in other contexts as well, the findings of this study describe the transnational travel of neoliberal ideas and their domestication in a specific national context (see Alasuutari & Alasuutari, 2012; Mahon et al., 2012; Paananen, 2017). Moreover, the development in Finland is somewhat similar to that in other Nordic countries (Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016; Haug, 2014; Naumann, 2011; Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014; Trætteberg et al., 2021; Westberg & Larsson, 2020), which indicates that the findings of this study illustrate the transformation of ECEC systems in Nordic countries more generally.

Fourthly, I appraise the influence of my preconceptions and predispositions and the research team's interaction with the participants on the findings of the research (see also Miles & Huberman, 2009). I have personal experience in working as an ECEC teacher in private and public ECEC centres and as a manager of two private (non-profit) ECEC centres. I also have ECEC teacher's education and I have worked as ECEC's university teacher. Moreover, as a parent, I have been a customer of a private ECEC centre. It may have also affected the way I interacted with the participants. Even though my former experiences could have in some cases guided the data analysis process, they also may have helped and supported the research process. For example, I was already familiar with the municipal subsidy systems. I also had some kind of perception about the logics related to private providers' enrolment practices. These insights, while they may have narrowed my thinking, helped me, for example, in forming the themes of thematic interviews and enabled me to ask clarifying questions. The possible influence of my predispositions on the interaction in the research interviews was diminished by the fact that the interview data was gathered by a team of nine researchers. The reading of transcribed data did not reveal any obvious biases in the interviews that I had conducted compared to the interviews conducted by other researchers. In addition, the preliminary findings of the sub-studies have been presented and discussed in international and national academic conferences, meetings of the CHILDCARE research team and in PhD research seminars. Moreover, during the analysis processes of every sub-study, I discussed with the co-authors (my PhD supervisors), and thereby the co-writers participated in the

evaluation of the analysis and the justification of the emerging results during the whole process. These triangulation protocols have likely decreased the risk of biased interpretations and increased their neutrality. My role as a responsible researcher in every sub-study is described on page 8 and in Chapter 4. Moreover, due to my background in ECEC sciences I am somewhat familiar with the theories, concepts and methods of the academic disciplines close to ECEC sciences, such as developmental psychology and childhood studies. However, the academic conversation about marketization and privatization of ECEC, presented in Section 2.3 includes studies from a wide range of social sciences, such as economics, social policy, sociology and political science (see Lloyd, 2019). These disciplines examine marketization and privatization through different conceptual, theoretical and methodological apparatuses with which I might not be thoroughly familiar. To decrease the risk of misunderstandings, during the research project, I have, however, studied the fundamentals of economics and attended social policy research conferences. Finally, it is worth mentioning that in research interviews, the interviewer necessarily sets agendas and his or her interaction with the interviewee is shaped by immeasurable factors that cannot be exhaustively reflected.

MMAT includes three different criteria for the appraisal of the *quantitative component* of the study. More specifically, this study employs this the criteria for a quantitative nonrandomized study with a comparison group that includes separate criteria for cross-sectional analytic studies like sub-study III. Hence, such criteria are applied. The criteria advise researchers to pay attention to the representativeness of the sample, appropriateness of measurement, similarity of participants in groups (or differences analysed) and the acceptability of the response rate (Plueye & Hong, 2014; Plueye et al., 2009).

The appraisal started by assessing the *representativeness of the sample* and the *response rate*. To guarantee the transparency of the sampling, the sampling *method is described in detail in the Section 3.3. To summarize, the sampling was* based on the contemplation of the CHILDCARE research team with the aim to reach the variation of families in different living environments. The CHILDCARE project conducted two surveys aimed at parents: the first in 2016 and follow-up survey in 2019. In the follow-up survey of the CHILDCARE project, used as data in this research, the sampling was adjusted from the basis of the knowledge gathered during the first phase of the research. The size of the sample (N = 1,416) allowed statistical inferencing. Still, the sample was somewhat skewed as mothers, highly educated parents, employed parents, upper-class white-collar employees and managers, lower-income households and families living in the capital area were overrepresented among the participants. Moreover, families whose child was in public ECEC and families that received vouchers were slightly underrepresented, and families receiving PDA were overrepresented in the data (see FEEC, 2019). It is also noteworthy that even though the sampling was made with a great level of consideration, a randomized sample would have possibly generated more generalizable results. Therefore, it is likely that the data is not a fully representative sample of parents of a four-year-old child and the results are thus

best generalized to higher SES families and native Finnish families, which can be understood as lowering the external validity of the results. In addition, the findings concern only four-year-old children; therefore, no conclusions about younger or older children's situations can be made on this basis. Moreover, the findings describe only the situation in Finland and they may not be transferrable to other contexts. One direction of future research is the use of register data to gain more generalizable knowledge. However, during this research project, such data was not available.

From the perspective of the research questions of sub-study III (see Plueye & Hong, 2014), the sample appears appropriate. The findings allowed answering the research questions of the third sub-study and this compilation article. The data used in this study described the behaviour and attitudes and beliefs of different kinds of families, which can be considered as a valid approach to gain information about service use and assess thereby whether the system can be still described as universal. However, different kinds of survey data would have also been interesting from the perspective of the research question. For example, a survey that would have explicitly assessed parents' views and attitudes related to universalism in ECEC might have allowed more straightforward information about the shifts within and from universalism. Moreover, if there would have been more information available about the differences between public and private ECEC in general (e.g., quality or price differences), the finding of this study would have been easier to interpret from the perspective of the universalism of the ECEC system. Now, the importance of selectivity observed remains speculative for some parts, such as possible quality differences between public and private provision.

MMAT defines an acceptable response rate as being as high as 60%. The response rate of this study was 24% (Sulkanen et al., 2020) being well below the limit set by MMAT. However, the number of responses allowed statistical inferencing and the comparison of service users of public ECEC, PDA ECEC and voucher ECEC. Also, the response rate was very similar to same kind of surveys for parents obtained in Finland in general (see Siippainen et al., 2019). In that sense, the response rate could be deemed acceptable.

According to MMAT, the *appropriateness of measurement* is evaluated, for example, by considering whether the variables are clearly defined and accurately measured, whether the measurements are justified and appropriate for answering the research question and whether the measurements reflect what they are supposed to measure (i.e. internal validity).

The definitions of the variables are described in the methods section and in the original sub-study III. The education variable was constructed as a binary one (low education/high education) due to a low number of respondents who did not have at least secondary education. It would have been possible to separate high education into two categories (lower/higher degree university/polytechnic degree) (see also Ruutiainen et al., 2022). However, there was no theoretical reason for such separation in the research literature. The threshold values of the income-level variable are partly derived from the research literature and were

partly in line with those used by Statistics Finland. However, there would have been other options available as well. Changing the thresholds would have affected the results of the study, as rough sensitivity testing in sub-study III indicates. The other decision related to the income-level variable was to calculate the household's equivalent income for each child, which describes more realistically the financial situation of the family. At least theoretically, this decision affects the findings of the study. Using the plain income level of households or individual respondents could have resulted in different findings. The parental attitudes and beliefs were studied by a measure that was not validated. Therefore, the attitude variables were constructed with explorative factor analysis. The reliability of the factors was examined. The results were theoretically justified, and reliability was good which support the validity of the measure.

The measures used were suitable for answering the research question. They reached the SES of the families and allowed for estimating of the interaction between the child's ECEC place, the child's socio-economic background and parental attitudes and beliefs. The measures used were justified with the literature review. It would have been possible to form one SES composite variable. However, separation of the household's income level and the parental education level allowed a more nuanced examination. Namely, it allowed investigation of theoretical assumption about the differentiation of service users related to different subsidy systems. Moreover, no multicollinearity between the SES or control variables was observed, which increases the validity of the results. To increase the construct validity of the attitude dimensions examined Exploratory factor analysis was used instead of simply using sum variables. Moreover, the attitude dimensions observed in sub-study III are consistent with the theory and are thus justified in terms of content. Moreover, careful process of factor construction, relatively high reliability coefficients and invariance examinations increase the validity and reliability of the results. Also, every attitude dimension is measured by two or more statements, which further confirms the reliability of the results.

In the context of a cross-sectional study like this one, the *similarity of participants in groups* refers especially to controlling for the most important background characteristics of the participants related to the phenomenon of interest, namely form of child's ECEC services (Plueye & Hong, 2014). In sub-study III, some important factors suggested by theory – namely, the parent's country of birth, need for flexible ECEC and hours of ECEC needed – were controlled for. However, the data did not allow for controlling of an important aspect, namely the child's special educational need (SEN) which has been shown to associated with selectivity between the clientele of public and private ECEC services (e.g., Heiskanen et al., 2021; Vainikainen et al., 2018). Other factors potentially increasing the selectivity of private services, namely, customer fees and the location of ECEC centres, could not be considered in sub-study III. Thus, their relationship to selectivity deserves to be examined in the future.

MMAT suggests that the appraisal of the *mixed-method* (MM) component of the study should include evaluations of the relevance of MM design to answer the research questions, assessment of the integration of qualitative and quantitative data and/or results, and consideration of limitations associated with this integration (Plueye & Hong, 2014; Plueye et al., 2009). Although the design of this study entails features of other MM designs (such as triangulation), it is the most similar to sequential exploratory designs (see section 3.2). In sequential exploratory design, the qualitative component of the research is followed by the quantitative so that quantitative data collection (and analysis in this research) is informed by qualitative findings and the quantitative component is used to examine a generalization of the qualitative findings (e.g., O'Cathain, 2010). In practice, sub-study III studied to what extent the different logics by which municipal decision-makers described voucher and PDA models in sub-study I are reflected in families' ECEC decisions. Moreover, the generalizability of different forms of selectivity observed in sub-study II were estimated in sub-study III (i.e. used either as independent or control variables). Moreover, in addition to synergies, each sub-study brought its own unique contribution to the examination of the topic. In other words, the MM design allowed scrutiny of cultural discourses and their employment in different contexts, and also examination of different factors and their possible interaction explaining families' ECEC decisions between public and private ECEC. Thus, the MM design allowed the complexities of the research phenomenon to be addressed better than only a qualitative or quantitative design would have enabled.

The *integration of qualitative and quantitative data and/or results* appears successful as well. First of all, discursive institutionalism allows examining both discourses (qualitative) and actions (quantitative) (Schmidt, 2008). The discourses and actions relate to each other, so that the actions get their meaning in a certain institutional reality constructed discursively (see Schmidt, 2008; Searle, 1995). The results of sub-studies are brought together in the discussion section of this research. The integration takes place, for example, when quantitative findings are used to affirm (or question) qualitative ones (e.g., the logics related to the different subsidy systems, families' SES association with the form of ECEC used). Even though discursive institutionalism is a theory for explaining institutional change, the cross-sectional design of this study did not allow examination of change as such. Rather, it described the cultural discourses and families' decisions during the period of data collection (2016 and 2019). When the findings of qualitative and quantitative research components are brought into the context of earlier literature, the shifts within and from universalism could be detected. Combining qualitative and quantitative data and findings enabled the formation of a more reliable and comprehensive picture of the shifts.

The *limitations related to integration* of qualitative and quantitative findings include, for example, assessment of possible divergence between findings generated with different methods (Plueye et al., 2009). In this research, the quantitative findings support the statistical generalizability of some mechanisms

of selectivity suggested by qualitative studies and rejected others. This may not, however, be interpreted as divergence, but rather as complementary results, where qualitative research shows the mechanism of selectivity and quantitative its generalizability. Thus, in cases where the quantitative results do not confirm qualitative findings, the divergence between findings instead indicates that the mechanism of selectivity in question may not be very common.

Moreover, there is some "real divergence" in the results as well. In particular, municipal decision-makers presented vouchers as a subsidy system that enables the use of private services for every family, regardless of their societal position. However, the quantitative analysis showed that the image produced by the decision-makers seems not to be valid in reality: children of highly educated parents are overrepresented in private settings subsidized with vouchers. In this case, the MM design helped to create a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon.

5.5 Ethical considerations

The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) has published the ethical principles of research with human participants in the human sciences in Finland (TENK, 2019). The Finnish university community, including the CHILDCARE research project, has committed to comply with these guidelines. The guidelines separate three different general ethical principles: (1) the researcher respects the dignity and autonomy of human research participants, (2) the researcher respects material and immaterial cultural heritage and biodiversity and (3) the researcher conducts their research so that the research does not cause significant risks, damage or harm to research participants, communities or other subjects of research (TENK, 2019). Next, the current study is assessed in the light of these principles.

To ensure the dignity and autonomy of the participants, this research followed the principle of informed consent, according to which the participants of the research are provided with comprehensive information, on the basis of which they are able to assess the possible consequences of participating in the research and the nature of research (Bussu et al., 2020; Lincoln & Cuba, 1989; Walliman, 2006). In line with the principle of informed consent, the participation in this research was voluntary. Each interviewee signed a contract in which they gave their consent to participate in the research. The interviewees were informed about their right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any moment. The participants were also informed about the research process and its aims. Also, those participants responding to the survey were able to stop answering at any point when filling out the form, so that the answers already completed would not be saved. The participants had also the right to not answer every question in the survey. All participants in this research were adults.

There are no signs of any harm caused to material cultural heritage or biodiversity by this research. Also, no minority culture was harmed. The subject

of this research is somewhat sensitive and politically tense. Therefore, it is especially important that the study gives as truthful and comprehensive a picture about the phenomenon of interest as possible. However, one study cannot look at a phenomenon from every perspective; the results could have been very different if one looked, for example, from the perspective of children's experiences or business opportunities.

To avoid any harm risks or damages caused to participants of the research (TENK, 2019), the issues related to anonymity and confidentiality are central (Lincoln & Cuba, 1989). The difference between those is that whereas anonymity means that a participant cannot be identified from the data, confidentiality relates to how the researcher deals with, discloses or protects the information in his or her possession (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). In this research, in order to avoid any personal harm that the research could cause to participants, it was important to protect their anonymity. Because the interviewees represented experts in a somewhat small area and the municipalities attending the research were public, the risk of recognizability of the interviewees was real. Therefore, every interview was pseudonymized so that no information enabling the identification of the participants was left in the transcripts. The results of every sub-study are presented so that the identification of individual participant is impossible. To ensure the confidentiality, the researchers of the CHILDCARE team was bound by the obligation of confidentiality. However, it is possible that some issues related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC may be perceived so confidential that interviewees did not want to disclose them (see Sim & Waterfield, 2019). Moreover, the research data is kept in a protected folder. All the data is managed by the CHILDCARE research group (see Walliman, 2006).

Personal feedback was not provided to the interviewees of sub-studies I and II. However, the results of the sub-studies have been presented to and discussed with the representatives of municipalities that attended the CHILDCARE project's seminars. The findings have also been disseminated and discussed at events of the Trade Union of Education in Finland and the Association of Finnish Municipalities targeted at municipal and national level decision-makers and private ECEC service providers.

In addition to issues related to the anonymity of participants, to my knowledge there are no other things that could harm the people involved in the research. The ethical committee of the University of Jyväskylä has assessed and approved the different data collections conducted by CHILDCARE project.

To maximize the openness and transparency of this study, the positionality of the author of this dissertation is described in the Section 5.4.

5.6 Concluding remarks and policy implications

In this doctoral dissertation, I have examined whether the current marketization and privatization development of the Finnish ECEC institution indicate a shift within or from universalism. The findings of the research suggest that this is not

an either/or question but a both/and one, and that the answer depends on whose point of view the matter is viewed from. It appears obvious that the current development regarding the marketization and privatization of ECEC has increased regional differences of the ECEC system. These differences are not completely determined by the share of private provision in different municipalities, but they are mediated by the subsidy model used in the municipality (see also Repo et al., 2020). Therefore, if the ECEC system as such is examined, it can be stated that the marketization and privatization of the ECEC institution has decreased its uniformity, which indicates a shift from universalism. On the municipal level and from the perspective of families, the situation is more complicated. In many municipalities, all ECEC services are provided by the public sector. In such municipalities, the services may appear as universal as ever. In other municipalities, a varying share of ECEC services are provided by the private sector. Then, the central difference appears to be whether or not such services are economically accessible, that is affordable, to all families. When the services are affordable, usually in voucher systems, the current development can be understood as a shift within universalism, namely, from a procedural interpretation towards consequential interpretation of it (Anttonen et al., 2012b). In such an interpretation, families' equal opportunities to choose amongst different options are stressed (see Paananen et al., 2019). When private services are not affordable, at a higher extent but not definitively in PDAMS systems, it is more appropriate to talk about a shift from universalism. That is, some families have more realistic options available than others. Finally, when the scope is turned purely to children, it seems obvious that marketization and privatization indicate a shift from universalism. Even though national ECEC policies stress the educational equality of children and the uniformity of public and private ECEC, it appears that children's possibilities to participate in different kinds of ECEC services are shaped by their geographical location, the ECEC policies of their home municipalities, their families' SES (especially their parent's education level) and private ECEC providers' enrolment policies.

Interpreted though the concepts of discursive institutionalism, the results indicate a shift at the level of policy and a struggle of power at the level of policy programs and worldviews (Schmidt, 2008). At the policy level, the means of redistribution traditionally related to a universal ECEC system have been partly replaced (see Räsänen & Österbacka, 2019) and accompanied by new kinds of demand-side subsidies, which, as this study indicates, work with different logic than the traditional instruments. At the level of programs and/or worldviews, marketization and privatization reflect both the march of neoliberal (austerity) policy and the individualization of society. In such frames, the traditional universalism may appear as inflexible, ineffective and incapable to answer to families' different preferences (see Anttonen, 2002; Naumann, 2011; Vamstad, 2016). Therefore, the ongoing development impacts the way in which the universalism is interpreted (see Stefánsson, 2012). Accordingly, the consequentialist interpretation of universalism has been strengthened at the cost of the procedural interpretation (see Anttonen et al., 2012b). The logics related to

different subsidy systems represent different outcomes of negotiation between traditional universal and pure market logics of ECEC provision (see also Westberg & Larsson, 2020). As this study has shown, the ridge between the consequential interpretation of universalism and its antithesis is narrow and deceptive (see also Halmetoja, 2015; Jacques & Noël, 2021).

Discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008; Alasuutari, 2015) would seem to have been an appropriate theoretical framework for combining the results of the three sub-studies. It emphasizes ideas and discourse as a source of institutional change or stability as well as the notion that institutional action both gets its meaning in a given institutional context and can also change that context. Due to this emphasis, the framework has been demonstrated to enable the use of a mixed-methods approach. DI is therefore recommended as a framework for future research that seeks to explain institutional change in the field of ECEC as well.

The mixed-method approach of this dissertation appeared successful in describing and explaining the diversity related to dialogue between universalism and the market logic of ECEC. The mixed-method approach has thus, at least to some extent, delivered its promises about its usefulness in generating holistic and comprehensive knowledge about the phenomenon of interest (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). However, there are many issues that this research could not address and many ideas that were evoked during the process. Therefore, more research is needed. For example, the role of households' income level and private providers' customer fees deserve to be examined with more encompassing (perhaps register) data. Secondly, the earlier research in other contexts has observed that one selective mechanism related to marketization and privatization of ECEC is mediated through private providers' geographical location (e.g., Brennan, 2016; Noially & Visser, 2009). In Finland, however, little is known about what kinds of neighbourhoods attract private provision. This is an issue that future research should address. Thirdly, this study, in line with earlier research (e.g., Gambaro et al., 2014; Mayers & Gornick, 2003; West, 2006; Verger et al., 2020; Wirth, 2013), has shown that the marketization and privatization of early childhood education services increases selectivity of the ECEC systems and may involve differentiation of service users. The meaning and importance of this socio-economic stratification should be examined in the context of the whole education system and the inequalities it produces and reproduces (see Forsberg, 2018). Fourthly, the research has mainly focused on addressing different problems related to privatization and marketization. Future research should also study the promises and possibilities related to market-based or the third sector's ECEC (see Verger et al., 2020). Finally, this study has mainly employed interview and survey data. In the future, naturally occurring data, such as public and policy discourse, bills and ECEC documents, could also offer interesting and valuable data sources for researchers.

The empirical findings from many national contexts suggest that the marketization and privatization of ECEC is often related to social stratification and elite formation (Lloyd, 2019). In line with this observation, this study

suggests that the marketization and privatization of ECEC is hard to implement without increasing the selectivity of the ECEC system. The findings are mainly consistent with the earlier research underlining the importance of affordability of services for the accessibility of ECEC (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Gambaro et al., 2014; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008; Vandenbroeck & Lazarri, 2014; West, 2006; Ünver et al., 2018). The price of the services has potential to restrict them out of reach of lower-income families. However, the form of subsidies appears to matter (e.g., Akgündüz & Plantenga, 2014; Van Lancker, 2018). According to the findings of this research, the voucher system has managed to deliver its promises about economically accessible services better than the PDAMS system. The crucial point appears to be the income-relatedness of the value of the subsidy (see Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015). In addition, some Finnish municipalities that provide vouchers have set a cap on customer fees of private ECEC services. This study cannot say anything definitive about the effects of the customer fee caps, but it is possible that customer fee add-ons have the same kind of exclusionary impact as fixed-sum subsidies. Therefore, this study suggests that if private services are to be made economically accessible to all, the income-related value of subsidies, possibly together with limitations in the amount of customer fees, might be an effective way.

However, as earlier research has suggested, district segregation overlaps with socio-economic stratification in ECEC markets (Cloney, 2016; Noially & Visser, 2009; Ofstead, 2008; Penn, 2011a; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Wassmer, 2016). The research evidence suggests that private enterprises are more likely to start business in better-off areas (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021), and thus ECEC provision in more deprived areas is left as a communal task (Brennan, 2016). This study did not consider the location of ECEC centres; hence, it is not possible to say to what extent the socioeconomic stratification between private and public ECEC can be explained with segregation in housing. There is only one Finnish examination that has scrutinized the locations of private ECEC centres. According to this study, private centres (in Finland's capital, Helsinki) are located in the same kind of areas as public centres, based on the households' income levels (Ruutiainen, 2018). However, if public and private services aim to be available for every child, the municipal zoning policy should take the international evidence into account (Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Brennan, 2016; Cloney, 2016; Noially & Visser, 2009; Ofstead, 2008; Penn, 2011a; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Wassmer, 2016; cf. Simon et al., 2021).

The research has varying findings about the quality differences between public, non-profit and for-profit ECEC (e.g., Akgunduz & Plantenga, 2014; Cleveland et al., 2007; Leseman & Slot, 2020; Mathers et al., 2007; Penn & Maynard, 2009; Press & Woodrow, 2018; Sosinsky et al., 2009; van der Werf et al., 2021). In Finland, ECEC policies have actively strived to enhance the uniformity between public and private ECEC and increase the quality of both sectors. However, to date it is not known whether or not the sector or the form of ECEC is related to quality of services.[15] Parents' evaluations in Finland (Saranko et al.,

[15] I am aware that the defining and measuring of quality relate to issues of normativity.

2021) and Sweden (Vamstad, 2016) imply that parents may perceive the services' quality to be higher in the private sector than in public sector, albeit this perception may at least partly be explained with the high SES of other customer families of such centres (Vamstad, 2016). Moreover, the private sector may provide different pedagogical or philosophical alternatives (e.g., Kamplicher et al., 2018; Karlsson et al., 2013; sub-study II) that may be inviting to families which are willing and able to be selective (see Kosunen 2014; Vamstad, 2016). Taking into account, on one hand, the private sector's tendency to provide varying quality (e.g., Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Cleveland et al., 2007; Sosinsky et al., 2009; van der Werf et al., 2020; van der Werf et al., 2021) and, on the other hand, higher SES families' striving to choose higher quality for their children (e.g., Alexandersen et al., 2021; Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Drange & Telle, 2020), it is important that public policy actively functions to level the quality between the sectors if educational equality, the explicit aim of ECEC, is pursued. The varying quality between services might be easily converted into symbolic capital of those services that manage to represent themselves as having the highest quality (see Forsberg, 2018). This, in turn, would have the potential to challenge the universalism of the system, being a step towards a two-tier system with regular and elite education (see Lloyd, 2019; Press & Woodrow, 2018). Therefore, guaranteeing high quality of publicly provided ECEC should be a central objective of ECEC policy. Due to the private sector's tendency to provide lower quality, strict regulation of private ECEC's quality may be justified.

The previous literature has suggested that in ECEC markets, families are not the only ones making decisions. Service providers also screen their clientele or direct their services to certain customer groups. Private providers' tendency to start a business in wealthier neighbourhoods, described above, is one example of this. Also, private providers' enrolment policies and practices can exclude certain kinds of families or children from their potential clientele (Drange & Telle, 2020; Ernst et al., 2014; Jones & Jones, 2021; Mierendorf et al., 2018; Press & Woodrow, 2018; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; van der Werf, 2021). The results of this study (sub-studies II and III), together with an earlier examination (Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019), suggest that also in Finland there may be exclusionary enrolment practices among private ECEC providers. According to sub-study II and earlier examinations (Heiskanen et al., 2021; Pihlaja & Neitola, 2017; Vainikainen et al., 2018), especially inclusion of children with special educational needs is inadequate, which private providers may justify, for example, by inadequate public subsidies (sub-study II). Also, the prices of services, children's age, part-time ECEC or the need for flexibly scheduled ECEC are presented as a reason for exclusion (sub-study II). Hence, it appears that if the inclusiveness of private services is pursued, the decisions about the inclusiveness cannot depend on the services providers' decisions alone. Public regulation and intervention, possibly through increasing the conditionality of public subsidies, are also needed (see Simon et al., 2021). It may also be justified to make private providers' enrolment policies and practices more transparent by means of public action.

In Finland, the private ECEC sector includes non-profit operators, small for-profit businesses and larger for-profit ECEC chains (FEEC, 2019; Ruutiainen et al., 2018). The growth of the private sector has been, however, mainly driven by for-profit chains, which have grown their business organically and by acquisitions and mergers (see sub-study II). This development is somewhat similar to developments in other somewhat different national contexts (e.g., Lloyd & Penn, 2012; Lloyd, 2019; Mahon et al., 2012). For example, in England, researchers found that the for-profit-sector has grown in a way that resembles the developments in Finland. The researchers found differences between for-profit and non-profit operators regarding their financial situation, structures and practices and indebtedness, suggesting that non-profit operators have a more secure and solid financial situation than medium size and larger for-profit operators. The researchers concluded that a growth-oriented for-profit sector has the potential to form a threat to sustainability of the ECEC sector in England (Simon et al., 2021). Even though the Finnish context diverges from the English one in many respects, the notion proposed by Simon et al. might be something that Finnish decision-makers should take into account when they make decisions related to private ECEC. During the writing of this dissertation, the most rapidly growing for-profit company in Finland ran into financial problems which led to the closure or reorganization of ownership of several ECEC centres.

On the basis of existing literature, Lloyd (2019) and Penn and Lloyd (2014) suggest different policy measures to mitigate social stratification and elite formation related to the marketization and privatization of ECEC. The measures include controlling private providers' market entries and exits; generous public funding to improve access, affordability and quality; subsidizing supply rather than demand combined with income-related fees and fee-capping that prevents the top-up fees; regulation and sufficient funding to guarantee highly educated staff, high staff–child ratios and small group sizes; and improved monitoring systems. In addition, the stratifying impacts of marketization and privatization might be milder in contexts with well-established public ECEC provision (see also Naumann, 2011). As explained in sections 1.1, 1.3 and 2, the ECEC development in Finland fulfils almost every point of the suggested policy measures and conditions. Only income-relatedness, supply-side subsidies instead of demand-side ones, and customer fee caps do not explicitly take place in every subsidy model: PDAMS, and in some cases vouchers, are not usually income related and they allow the topping-up of customer fees. Vouchers and PDAMS are also demand-side subsidies, while the only form of subsidy that can be understood as supply side is purchase contracts between the public and private sectors. As this dissertation has shown, these 2shortcomings" in the policy measures suggested by Lloyd (2019) and Penn and Lloyd (2014) appear to be enough to increase the selectivity and decrease the universality of the ECEC system. Hence, it appears that when the marketization and privatization of ECEC are being considered, especially the former process is difficult to enact without socially stratifying consequences (see also Lloyd, 2019).

Finally, as noted in sub-studies I and II, the relationship between private and public sectors is constructed in different ways in voucher and PDAMS systems. Briefly, in the voucher system, private service provision is positioned as a part of public service and thus somewhat tightly in control of the public sector. In the PDAMS system, in turn, the private provision is positioned as a separate sector and thus more freedom from public regulation is allowed to it. The sub-studies have also pointed out some implications for families, children, municipalities and private providers related to different subsidy systems. Therefore, the decision-makers should carefully pay attention to the features of the subsidy models when they make decisions regarding ECEC provision, because such decisions may have a significant impact on the ECEC system and its universality.

YHTEENVETO

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumista ja yksityistymistä Suomessa. Suomalainen varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmä on perustunut universalismin ajatukselle (Karila, 2012; Kildahl & Kuhnle, 2005; Onnismaa & Kalliala, 2010;). Suomessa universalistinen varhaiskasvatuspolitiikka on tarkoittanut muun muassa huoltajan ja lapsen subjektiivista varhaiskasvatusoikeutta, kuntien velvollisuutta järjestää varhaiskasvatuspalvelut, tarveharkintaisia ja tulosidonnaisia asiakasmaksuja sekä sitä, että kunnat ovat itse tuottaneet lähes kaikki varhaiskasvatuspalvelut (ks. Paananen, 2019; Kumpulainen, 2018). Lisäksi varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteista on luettavissa universalismin mukaisia arvoja, kuten yhteisöllisyys ja tasa-arvo.

2000-luvun alusta, ja kiihtyvästi 2010-luvulla, yksityisesti tuotetun varhaiskasvatuksen osuus on kuitenkin noussut merkittävästi (ks. THL, 2020). Samalla yksityisten palveluntuottajien kirjo on muuttunut moninaisemmaksi. Perinteiset kolmannen sektorin toimijat ja pienet paikalliset yritykset ovat saaneet seurakseen suuria kasvuhakuisia, voittoa tavoittelevia päiväkotiketjuja (ks. Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019; Ruutiainen ym., 2018; Valkonen ym., 2021). Tämän yksityistymiskehityksen lisäksi varhaiskasvatuspalveluita on myös markkinoistettu (ks. Anttonen & Meagher, 2013; Der Werf ym., 2021). Markkinoistaminen on tarkoittanut muun muassa perheiden valinnan mahdollisuuksien ja palveluntuottajien välisen kilpailun lisäämistä uudenlaisten, kuntien perheille myöntämien yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden hankintaan tarkoitettujen tukien avulla (ks. Laiho & Pihlaja, 2022; Ruutiainen ym., 2018).

Varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumista ja yksityistymistä on tutkittu suhteellisen paljon erilaisissa paikallisissa konteksteissa. Tutkimuksen keskeinen havainto on, että palveluiden markkinoistumiseen ja yksityistymiseen liittyy usein erilaista palvelunkäyttäjien eriytymistä. Tutkimus on havainnut muun muassa, että markkinoistuneissa järjestelmissä korkeamman sosioekonomisen taustan omaavat lapset osallistuvat varhaiskasvatukseen useammin kuin matalamman sosioekonomisen taustan omaavat lapset. Universalistissa järjestelmissä ero eri taustoista tulevien lasten osallistumisasteissa on usein pienempi (esim. Gambaro ym., 2014; Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Wirth, 2013). Maissa, joissa on tarjolla sekä julkisia että yksityisiä palveluita, korkeammassa sosioekonomisessa asemassa olevat perheet valitsevat usein yksityisen palveluntuottajan matalammassa sosioekonomisessa asemassa olevia perheitä todennäköisemmin (esim. Garvis & Lunneblad; 2018; Ghosh & Dey, 2020; van der Werf ym., 2020). Palvelun käyttäjien eriytymistä on selitetty muun muassa yksityisten palveluiden korkealla hinnalla (esim. Vandenbrock & Lazzari, 2014), yksityisten palveluntuottajien ulossulkevilla asiakkaaksi ottoa koskevilla politiikoilla (Jones & Jones, 2021; Levine Coley ym., 2014) sekä sillä, että yksityiset palveluntuottajat ovat yliedustettuja hyväosaisemmilla asuinalueilla (esim. Brennan, 2016; Noially & Visser, 2009). Lisäksi perheiden varhaiskasvatusratkaisut, myös yksityisten ja julkisten toimijoiden välillä, näyttäisivät liittyvän vanhempien sosiaalisiin ja erityisesti kulttuurisiin resursseihin kuten koulutustasoon. Tiivistettynä voidaan

sanoa, että korkeasti koulutetut vanhemmat, joilla on paljon kulttuurista ja sosiaalista pääomaa, arvostavat erilaisia asioita varhaiskasvatuksessa kuin ne vanhemmat, joilla näitä resursseja on vähemmän. He myös ovat usein kyvykkäitä tunnistamaan hyvälaatuisia palveluita sekä ovat valmiita näkemään vaivaa valinnan eteen (esim. Alm Fjällborg & Forsberg, 2021; Kampichler ym., 2018; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008; Kim & Fram, 2009; Kosunen, 2014; Nisskaya, 2018).

Toinen aiemman tutkimuksen keskeisistä havainnoista on, että vaikka varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistäminen ovat monilta osin kontekstispesifejä prosesseja, niitä perustellaan yleensä samoilla yleisestä markkinalogiikasta johdetuilla argumenteilla (esim. Brennan ym., 2012; Mahon ym., 2012). Markkinalogiikan mukaan markkinoiden toimivuus edellyttävää, että vanhemmilla on ostovoimaa ja heillä on mahdollista valita erilaisten keskenään kilpailevien toimijoiden väliltä omien preferenssiensä perusteella. Palveluntuottajien kilpailun uskotaan laskevan hintoja ja nostavan palveluiden laatua. Toimivien markkinoiden oletetaan myös heijastelevan perheiden preferenssejä ja palveluiden tarjonnan oletetaan sopeutuvan kysynnän määrään (esim. Brennan ym., 2012; Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004; Moss, 2009; Naumann, 2011; Petersen & Hjelmar, 2014). Varhaiskasvatusmarkkinoita tarkasteleva tutkimus on kuitenkin kyseenalauistanut monilta osin markkinalogiikan toimimisen varhaiskasvatuksen kontekstissa (esim. Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2009; Knijn & Lewis, 2017; Moss, 2009; Sosinsky ym., 2009; Urban & Rubiano, 2014; van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018).

Tässä tutkimuksessa varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumista ja yksityistymistä, eli markkinalogiikan tuomista osaksi varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden järjestämisen viitekehystä, tarkastellaan Vivien Schmidtin diskursiivisen institutionalismin (DI) avulla (Schmidt, 2008). DI ymmärtää instituutiot yhtä aikaa toimijoita rajoittaviksi ja ohjaaviksi rakenteiksi sekä toimijoiden konstruktioiksi, joita on mahdollista muuttaa diskursiivisesti. DI korostaa myös ideoiden merkitystä diskurssin keskeisenä sisältönä. Ideoita on sekä kognitiivisia (esim. mitä on ja miksi on) sekä normatiivisia (esim. mikä on hyvää tai huonoa tai kuinka tulisi olla). Lisäksi ideat voidaan jakaa kolmeen luokkaan. Politiikkakäytäntöjen taso viittaa tiettyihin politiikkatoimiin, kuten julkiseen palveluntuotantoon tai palveluiden yksityistämiseen. Politiikkakäytännöt kytkeytyvät laajempiin politiikkaohjelmiin, kuten universalismiin tai markkinalogiikkaan paradigmaattisina toiminnan järjestämisen tapoina, sekä niiden taustalla vaikuttaviin maailmankatsomuksiin, kuten kilpailua, yksilönvastuuta ja valinnan vapautta korostavaan uusliberalismiin tai tasa-arvoa, yhteenkuuluvuutta ja yhteisöllisyyttä korostavaan universalismiin. Lisäksi DI mahdollistaa diskurssien ja toiminnan erottamisen analyyttisessä tarkoituksessa.

Tämän tutkimuksen tehtävänä on pohtia, onko varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen ymmärrettävissä liukumaksi universalistisen järjestelmän sisällä vai siitä pois. Liukumia tarkastellaan sekä diskurssien että toiminnan näkökulmasta. Kuten Ingela Naumann (2011) toteaa, universalismi ja markkinalogiikka eivät välttämättä ole suoraan toistensa antiteesejä.

Aiempi tutkimus kuitenkin osoittaa, että varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen lisäävät usein järjestelmän selektiivisyyttä, minkä puolestaan voidaan katsoa olevan ristiriidassa universalismin ajatuksen kanssa. Tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat:

1. Kuinka eri toimijoiden tuottamissa diskursseissa markkinalogiikkaan liittyviä ideoita konstruoidaan osaksi universalistista varhaiskasvatusinstituutiota?

2. Miltä varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden selektiivisyys ja universaalius näyttävät kuntapäättäjien, yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalvelujen tuottajien ja vanhempien toiminnan perusteella?

Tämä tutkimus perustuu monimenetelmäiseen tutkimusotteeseen, jossa erilaisia tutkimusmenetelmiä ja -tekniikoita hyödyntämällä kiinnostuksen kohteena olevasta ilmiöstä pyritään tuottamaan kattava kuva (ks. Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Tämän tutkimuksen kohdalla tämä tarkoittaa laadullisten ja määrällisten menetelmien yhdistämistä. Tutkimusaineistona käytetään Strategisen tutkimuksen neuvoston rahoittamassa CHILDCARE-tutkimushankkeessa kerättyjä kuntapäättäjien (N = 47) ja yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalvelun tuottajien (N = 12) haastatteluja sekä neljävuotiaiden lasten huoltajien (N = 1 416) kyselyä. Haastatteluaineostot analysoitiin diskurssianalyyttisin menetelmin. Kuntapäättäjien haastatteluiden avulla tutkittiin, kuinka varhaiskasvatuksen viranhaltijat ja kunnallispoliitikot järkeistävät yksityisen varhaiskasvatuksen tukimalleja. Myös yksityisten palveluntuottajien haastattelut analysoitiin diskurssianalyyttisesti. Analyysissä tarkasteltiin, kuinka haastatellut puhuivat asiakaskunnastaan ja mahdollisesta palveluihin liittyvästä selektiivisyydestä. Erityistä huomiota kiinnitettiin siihen, kuinka haastatellut kuvauksissaan sisällyttivät tiettyjä perheitä ja lapsia palveluidensa piiriin ja sulkivat ulos toisia. Kyselyaineistoa analysoitaessa haettiin määrällisin tutkimusmenetelmin vastausta siihen, valikoituuko yksityisten ja julkisten päiväkotien asiakunta perheiden sosioekonomisen aseman tai huoltajien asenteiden perusteella.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että Suomessa varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistumiseen ja yksityistymiseen liittyy sekä piirteitä, jotka voidaan tulkita liukumiksi universalismin sisällä, että piirteitä, jotka voidaan ymmärtää liukumiksi pois universalismista. Tulosten perusteella näyttäisi siltä, että vaikka politiikkakäytäntöjen tasolla varhaiskasvatuspalveluita on markkinoistettu ja yksityistetty, politiikkaohjelmien ja maailmankatsomusten tasolla palveluiden yhtäläisen saatavuuden ja tasa-arvon sekä asiakaskuntaa valikoimattoman varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmän ihanteet muodostavat edelleen varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmän normatiivisen perustan. Tämä viittaa liukumaan universalismin sisällä. Myös varhaiskasvatusta koskeva lainsäädäntö korostaa tasa-arvoa ja yhteisöllisyyttä sekä vahvistaa julkisen ja yksityisen palveluntuotannon yhdenmukaisuutta, mikä voidaan yhdistää universalismin taustalla olevaan maailmankatsomukseen sekä politiikkaohjemaan. Yksityisen varhaiskasvatuksen tukimalleilla

näyttäisi olevan hieman erilainen suhde universalismiin. Tulosten perusteella palveluseteli näyttäisi mahdollistavan yksityisten palveluiden valinnan kaikille perheille tulotasosta riippumatta. Haastatteluissa palvelusetelin tuottama yhtäläinen mahdollisuus valita nähtiin sen keskeisenä ominaisuutena. Näyttäsi siis siltä, että palvelusetelin käyttöönotto voidaan edellä mainituilla perusteilla tulkita liukumaksi universalismin sisällä, tarkemmin sanottuna liukumaksi yhtäläisten ja yhdenmukaisten palveluiden saatavuutta korostavasta universalismin tulkinnasta kohti tulkintaa, joka korostaa perheiden yhtäläisiä mahdollisuuksia valita varhaiskasvatuspalvelun tuottaja. Yksityisen hoidon tuki näyttäisi puolestaan olevan tukimalli, jonka turvin hyvätuloisten on keski- ja pienituloisia helpompi käyttää yksityisiä palveluja. Yksityisen hoidon tuella tuettu yksityinen varhaiskasvatus esitettiin kuitenkin diskursiivisesti erilliseksi, julkisia palveluita täydentäväksi toiminnaksi. Tällöin universalismi koski vahvaa julkista varhaiskasvatussektoria, jonka ulkopuolelle yksityinen toiminta asemoitui.

Se, että yksityisen hoidon tuki ei taloudellisesti mahdollista yksityisten palveluiden valintaa kaikille perheille, voidaan kuitenkin nähdä myös liukumana pois universalismista kohti selektiivisempää järjestelmää. Selektiivisyyden lisääntymiseen viittaa myös se, että tutkimuksen mukaan korkeasti koulutettujen huoltajien lapset ovat matalammin koulutettujen vanhempien lapsiin verrattuna suhteellisesti yliedustettuina sekä yksityisen hoidon tuella että palvelusetelillä tuetuissa yksityisissä päiväkodeissa. Tämä havainto saa vahvistusta aiemmasta tutkimuksesta, joka tiivistetysti esittää, että korkean sosioekonomisen aseman omaavat huoltajat arvostavat erilaisia asioita varhaiskasvatuksessa ja ovat taipuvaisempia valitsemaan jonkin muun kuin lähimmän päiväkodin tai koulun kuin matalamman sosioekonomisen aseman ja vähemmän kulttuurisia resursseja omaavat huoltajat (esim. Ball ym., 1996; Kamplicher ym., 2018; Kim & Fram, 2009; Kosunen, 2014; Vincent ym., 2008;). Tämä tutkimus vahvistaa myös aiempien tutkimusten havaintoa siitä, että yksityiset päiväkodit voivat asiakkaaksi ottamisen käytännöillään rajata joitakin lapsia yksityisten palveluiden ulkopuolelle, mikä osaltaan lisää varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmän selektiivisyyttä (esim. Jones & Jones, 2021; Levine Coley ym., 2014). Kuntapäättäjien haastattelut myös osoittavat, että markkinalogiikan taustalla olevaan uusliberaaliin maailmankatsomukseen liittyvät ideat valinnanvapaudesta, yksilön vastuusta ja taloudellisesta tehokkuudesta ovat tulleet universalistiseen maailmankatsomukseen liittyvien sosiaalista inkluusiota ja yhteiskunnan koheesiota korostavien ideoiden rinnalle, tai jopa niiden tilalle, mikä voidaan tulkita siirtymäksi pois universalismista. Haastatteluissa oli myös erotettavissa puhetapa, joka näki varhaiskasvatuksen investointina yksilön kilpailukykyyn ja osaamiseen, mikä on hyvin erilainen näkemys kuin perinteisempi koulutuksellista tasa-arvoa korostava universalistinen näkökulma.

Diskursiivisen institutionalismin näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen ilmenevät muutoksena politiikkakäytäntöjen sekä kuntapäättäjien, yksityisten palveluntuottajien ja perheiden toiminnan tasoilla sekä ideoiden välisenä valtakamppailuna politiikkaoh-

jelmien ja maailmankatsomusten tasoilla (ks. Schmidt, 2008). Tämän tutkimuksen perusteella näyttäisi siltä, että vaikka suomalainen varhaiskasvatuspolitiikka korostaa lasten koulutuksellista tasa-arvoa ja julkisen ja yksityisen palveluntuotannon yhdenmukaisuutta, lasten mahdollisuudet osallistua erilaisiin varhaiskasvatuspalveluihin ovat erilaiset riippuen heidän asuinpaikastaan, heidän kotikunnissansa harjoitetusta varhaiskasvatuspolitiikasta, heidän perheidensä sosioekonomisesta asemasta sekä yksityisten palveluntuottajien asiakkaaksi ottamisen politiikoista. Siten varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden markkinoistuminen ja yksityistyminen näyttäisivät ulottavan koulutuksellisen eriytymisen jo varhaislapsuuteen.

REFERENCES

Abrassart, A, & Bonoli, G. (2015). Availability, cost or culture? Obstacles to childcare services for low-income families. *Journal of Social Policy, 44*(4), 787–806. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279415000288

Act on Children's Day Care, 28/1985. *[Finland]*

Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, *540/2018. [Finland]*

Act on Children's Home Care Allowance*, 24/1985. [Finland]*

Act on Service vouchers*, 2009/569. [Finland]*

Adamson, E., & Brennan, D. (2014). Social investment or private profit? Diverging notions of "investment" in early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 46,* 47–61. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-013-0098-x

Ahto, O. (2020). Varhaiskasvatuksen palveluseteli on tasa-arvoteko [Letter to editor]. Hs. 12.3.2020. Retrieved from https://www.hs.fi/mielipide/art-2000006435470.html

Akgündüz Y. E., & Plantenga, J. (2014). Childcare in the Netherlands: Lessons in privatization. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22(3),* 379–385. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912900

Alasuutari, P. (2004). Suunnittelutaloudesta kilpailutalouteen: Miten muutos oli ideologisesti mahdollinen? [From planned economy to competition economy: How the change was ideologically possible?]. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, *69*(1), 3–16. https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe201209116971

Alasuutari, P., & Rasimus, A. (2009). Use of the OECD in justifying policy reforms: the case of Finland. *Journal of Power, 2*(1), 89–109. https://doi.org/10.1080/17540290902760899

Alasuutari, P. (2015). The discursive side of new institutionalism. *Cultural Sociology, 9*(2), 162–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514561805

Alasuutari, P., & Alasuutari, M. (2012). The domestication of early childhood education plans in Finland. *Global Social Policy*, *12*(2), 129–148

Alexandersen, N., Zachrisson, H. D., Wilhelmsen, T., Wang, M. V., & Brandlistuen, R- E. (2021). Predicting selection into ECEC of higher quality in a universal context: The role of parental education and income. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 55,* 336–348. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.01.001

Alila, K. (2013). Varhaiskasvatuksen laadun ohjaus ja ohjauksen laatu. Laatupuhe varhaiskasvatuksen valtionhallinnon ohjausasiakirjoissa 1972–2012. Doctoral dissertation. Tampere: University of Tampere.

Alila, K., & Kinos, J. (2014). Katsaus varhaiskasvatuksen historiaan. In K. Alila, M. Eskelinen, E. Estola, T. Kahiluoto, J. Kinos, H.-M. Pekuri, M. Polvinen, R. Laaksonen & K. Lamberg (Eds.), *Varhaiskasvatuksen historia, nykytila ja kehittämisen suuntalinjat: Tausta-aineisto varhaiskasvatusta koskevaa lainsäädäntöä valmistelevan työryhmän tueksi* (pp. 8–21). Opetus- ja

kulttuuriministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2014:12. Retrieved from http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-266-1
Alm Fjellborg, A., & Forsberg, H. (2021). Commuting patterns of preschool children in metropolitan Stockholm. *Regional Science Policy & Practice, 1–21.* https://doi.org/*10.1111/rsp3.12401*
Alvesson, M., & Karreman, D. (2000). Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse analysis. *Human Relations, 53*(9), 1125–1149. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700539002
Anttonen, A. (2002). Universalism and social policy: A Nordic-feminist revaluation. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, *10*(2), 71–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/080387402760262168
Anttonen, A., Häikiö, L., & Raitakari, S. (2013). Matkalla muutokseen ja hyvinvointimarkkinoille? *Janus, 21*(4), 290–297
Anttonen, A., Häikiö, L., Stefánsson, K., & Sipilä, J. (2012a). Universalism and the challenge of diversity. In A. Anttonen, L. Häikiö, & K. Stefánsson (Eds.), *Welfare State, universalism and diversity* (pp. 1–15). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Anttonen, A., Häikiö, L., & Stefánsson, K., (2012b). The future of welfare state: rethinking universalism. In A. Anttonen, L. Häikiö, & K. Stefánsson. (Eds.), *Welfare state, universalism and diversity* (pp. 187–196). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Anttonen, A., & Sipilä, J. (2012). Universalism in the british and scandinavian social policy debates. In A. Anttonen, L. Häikiö, & K. Stefánsson (Eds.), *Welfare state, universalism and diversity* (pp. 16–41). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Anttonen, A., & Meagher, G. (2013). Mapping marketisation: Concepts and goal. In G. Meagher & M. Szebehely (Eds.), *Marketisation in Nordic eldercare: A research report on legislation, oversight, extent and consequences* (pp. 13–22). Stockholm Studies in Social Work 30. Stockholm: Stockholm University
Archambault, J., Côté, D., & Raynault, M-F. (2020). Early childhood education and care access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Using a framework to guide intervention. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 48*(3), 345–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-01002-x
Arens, K., & Morin, A. (2016). Examination of the structure and grade-related differentiation of multidimensional self-concept instruments for children using ESEM. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 84*(2), 330–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2014.999187
Asiakastieto, Financial information about companies -database. (2021). https://www.asiakastieto.fi/web/en/frontpage.html.
Asparouhov, T., & Muthén, B. (2009). Exploratory structural equation modeling, structural equation modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 16*(3), 397–438. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705510903008204
Atkinson, Anthony B., & Andrea Brandolini. 2013. On the identification of the middle class. In J. C. Gornick & M. Jäntti (Eds.), *Income inequality: Economic*

disparities and the middle class in affluent countries (pp. 77–100). Standford University Press.
Ball, S., Bowe, R., & Gewirtz, S. (1996). School choice, social class and distinction: the realization of social advantage in education. *Journal of Education Policy, 11*(1), 89–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093960110105
Ball, S. J. (2007). *Understanding private sector participation in public sector education*. Abingdon: Routledge.
Ball, S., & Vincent, C. (2005). The "childcare champion"? New Labour, social justice and the childcare market. *British Educational Research Journal 31*(5), 557–570. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/30032646
Ball, S. & Youdell, D. (2007). *Hidden privatization in public education*. Brussels: Education International.
Becker, B, & Schober, P. S. (2017). Not just any child care center? Social and ethnic disparities in the use of early education institutions with a beneficial learning environment. *Early Education and Development, 28*(8), 1011–1034. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2017.1320900
Benson, M, Bridge, G., & Wilson, D. (2014). School choice in London and Paris – A comparison of middle-class strategies. *Social Policy & Administration, 49*(1), 24–43. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12079
Bhaskar, R. (2008). A realist theory of science. With a new introduction. London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge. [Originally published in 1975].
Biesta, G. (2010). Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 95–118). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193
Blau, D. M. (2021). The effects of universal preschool on child and adult outcomes: A review of recent evidence from Europe with implications for the United States. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 55,* 52–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.10.009
Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to social inquiry* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Blossfeld, H. P., Kulic, N., Skopek, J., Triventi, M., Kilpi-Jakonen, E., Daniela Vono, d. V., & Buchholz, S. (2019). Conditions and consequences of unequal educational opportunities in the life course: Results from the cross-national comparative project. *Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie, 71*(1), 399–428. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-019-00595-w
Bolino, M. C., Kacmar, K. M., Turnley, W. H., & Gilstrap, J. B. (2008). A multi-level review of impression management motives and behaviors. *Journal of Management, 34*(6), 1080–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308324325
Bosetti, L (2004). Determinants of school choice: Understanding how parents choose elementary schools in Alberta. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(4), 387–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093042000227465
Bourdieu P. (1990). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Breen R., Karlson, K. B., & Holm, A. (2018). Interpreting and understanding logits, probits, and other nonlinear probability models. *Annual Review of Sociology, 44*(1), 39-54. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041429

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., & Szebehely, M. (2012). The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and Liberal care regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *22*(4), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928712449772

Brennan, D. (2016). The business of care: Australia's experiment with the marketization of childcare. In C. Miller & L. Orchard (Eds.), *Australian public policy progressive ideas in the neoliberal ascendency* (pp. 151–167), Policy Press: Bristol (2016).

Bryman, A. (2006). Paradigm peace and the implications for quality. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 9,* 111–126. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13645570600595280

Bryman, A. (2007). Barriers to integrating quantitative and qualitative research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 8–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/2345678906290531

Bryman, A., Becker, S., & Sempik, J. (2008). Quality criteria for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 11,* 261–276. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401644

Bunar, N. (2010). Choosing for quality or inequality: current perspectives on the implementation of school choice policy in Sweden. *Journal of Education Policy, 25(1),* 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903377415

Bussu, S., Lalani, M., Pattison, S., & Marshall, M. (2021). Engaging with care: ethical issues in participatory research. *Qualitative Research, 21*(5), 667–685. https://doi.org/10.1177/146879412090488

Çalışkan, K., & Callon, M. (2010). Economization, part 2: A research programme for the study of markets. *Economy and Society, 39*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140903424519.

Carstensen, M. B., & Schmidt, V. A. (2016). Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. *Journal of European public policy 23*(3), 318–337. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1115534

Chen, F. F. (2007). Sensitivity of goodness of fit indexes to lack of measurement invariance, structural equation modeling. *A multidisciplinary Journal, 14*(3), 464–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705510701301834

Cheung, G., & Rensvold, R. (2002). Evaluating goodness-of-fit indexes for testing measurement invariance, structural equation modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 9*(2), 233–255. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15328007SEM0902_5.

Chitty, C. (1997). Privatisation and marketisation. *Oxford Review of Education, 23*(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498970230105

Chung, H., & Meuleman, B. (2017). European parents' attitudes towards public childcare provision: the role of current provisions, interests and ideologies. *European Societies, 19*(1), 49–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2016.1235218

Clarke, J., Newman, J., & Smith, N. (2007). *Creating Citizen-Consumers*. London: Sage.

Cleveland, G. (2008). *If it don't make dollars, does that mean that it don't make sense? Commercial, nonprofit and muncipal child care in the city of Toronto. A report to the children's services division*. City of Toronto.

Cleveland, G., & Krashinsky, M. (2003). *Financing ECEC services in OECD countries*. Paris; OECD.

Cleveland, G., & Krashinsky, M. (2009). The nonprofit advantage: Producing quality in thick and thin childcare markets. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 28*(3), 440–462. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/29739028

Cleveland, G., Forer, B., Hyatt, D., Japel, C., & Krashinsky, M. (2007). *An economic perspective on the current and future role of nonprofit provision of early learning and childcare services in Canada*. http://www.childcarepolicy.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/final-report.pdf

Cloney, D. (2016). Accessibility and effectiveness of early childhood education and care for families from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in Australia. PhD thesis, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne. URL: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/112371

Cloney, D, Tayler, C., Hattie, J., Cleveland, G., & Adams, R. (2016). The selection of ECEC programs by Australian families: quality, availability, usage and family demographics. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 41*(4), 16–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911604100403

Coley, R. L., Votruba-Drzal, E., Collins, M. E., & Miller, P. (2014). Selection into early education and care settings: Differences by developmental period. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29*(3), 319–332. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.03.006

Connolly, M., & Hughes-Stanton, J. (2020). The professional role and identity of teachers in the private and state education sectors. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 41*(5), 717–732. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2020.1764333

Creamer, E. (2018). Evaluating quality in mixed methods research publications. In E. Creamer (Eds.), *An introduction to fully integrated mixed methods research* (pp. 144–169). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781071802823

Creswell, J. (2010). Mapping the developing landscape of mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 45–68). SAGE Publications, Inc. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193

Degotardi, S., Sweller, N., Fenech, M., & Beath, A. (2018). Infuences on parents' child care choices: a comparative analysis of preschool and long day care users. *Child Youth Care Forum, 47*, 683–700. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-018-9452-3

Djelic, M.-L. (2006). Marketization: From intellectual agenda to global policy-making. In M.-L. Djelic & K Sahlin-Andersson (Eds.), *Transnational Governance: Institutional Dynamics of Regulation* (pp. 53–73). Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Dovemark, M., Kosunen, S., Kauko, J., Magnúsdóttird, B., Hansen, P., & Rasmussen, P. (2018). Deregulation, privatisation and marketisation of Nordic comprehensive education: Social changes reflected in schooling. *Education Inquiry*, *9*(1), 122–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1429768

Drange, N., & Telle, K. (2020). Segregation in a universal child care system: Descriptive findings from Norway. *European Sociological Review, 36*(6), 886–901. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcaa026

Duhn I. (2010). The centre is my business: Neo-liberal politics, privatisation and discourses of professionalism in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*(1), 49–60. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.49

Dworkin, R. (2002). *Sovereign virtue. The Theory and Practice of Equality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Dýrfjörð, K., & Magnúsdóttir, B. R. (2016). Privatization in early childhood education in Iceland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *11*(1), 80–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631062

Eerola-Pennanen, P., Vuorisalo, M., & Raittila, R. (2017). Johdatus varhaiskasvatukseen [Introduction to early childhood education and care] In M. Koivula, A. Siippainen & P. Eerola-Pennanen (Eds.), *Valloittava Varhaiskasvatus* [Charming Early Childhood Education and Care: Learning, participation and wellbeing] (pp. 12–25), Tampere, Vastapaino.

Enders, G. (2010). *Applied missing data analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Ernst, T., Mader, M., & Mierendorff, J. (2014). Gewerbliche anbieter von kindertagesbetreuung—eine systematisierung der trägerlandschaft. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie der Erziehung und Sozialisation*, *34*, 373–388.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. Oxford University Press.

Esping-Andersen, G. (2009). *The Incomplete Revolution. Adapting welfare states to women's new roles*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

EUROSTAT. (2021a). Archive: *Income poverty statistics*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Income_poverty_statistics&oldid=440992#At-risk-of-poverty_rate_and_threshold

EUROSTAT. (2021b). *EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) methodology - distribution of income*.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/EU_statistics_on_income_and_living_conditions_%28EU-SILC%29_methodology_-_distribution_of_income#Description
EURYDICE. (2021c). *Early childhood and school education funding*. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding-25_en
Fjällström, S., Karila., & Paananen., M. (2020). A matter of universalism? Rationalities of access in Finnish early childhood education and care. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, *6*(3), 207–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1816372
Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK). (2019). *Ethical review in human sciences. Ethical principles of research in the humanities and social and behavioural sciences.* https://www.tenk.fi/en/ethical-review-in-human-sciences
Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, FIFHAW. (2020). *Varhaiskasvatus 2019* [ECEC 2019]. https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/140541
Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, FINEEC. (2019). *Tilastoraportti varhaiskasvatuksen järjestämisestä* [Statistical report on the organization of early childhood education]. https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/Karvi_vaka_tilastoraportti_2019-1.pdf
Forsberg, H. (2018). School competition and social stratification in the deregulated upper secondary school market in Stockholm. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39*(6), 891–907. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2018.1426441
Freeden, M. (1996). *Ideology and political theory. A conceptual approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Friedman, M. (1962/2002). *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Gambaro, L., Stewart, K., & Waldfogel, J. (Eds.). (2014). *An equal start? Providing quality early education and care for disadvantaged children*. Bristol: Policy Press.
Gane, N. (2012). The governmentalities of neoliberalism: Panopticism, post-panopticism and beyond. *The Sociological Review, 60*(4), 611–634. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2012.02126.x
Garvis, S., & Lunneblad, J. (2018). Inequalities in access to early childhood education and care in Sweden. In K. Erhard, A. Scholz & D. Harring (Eds.). *The Equal Access Study (*pp. 30–34). ICEC Working Paper Series – Volume 1.
Ghiara V. (2020). Disambiguating the role of paradigms in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 14*(1), 11–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689818819928

Ghosh, S., & Dey, S. (2020). Public or private? Determinants of parents' preschool choice in India. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 14*(3), 16–32. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-020-00068-0
Giddens, A., (1999). *Runaway world: how globalization is reshaping our lives*. London: Profile Books.
Glenn-Applegate, K., Justice, L. M., & Kaderavek, J. (2016). How do caregivers select preschools? A study of children with and without disabilities. *Child & Youth Care Forum, 45*(1), 123–153. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-015-9322-1
Gobo, G. (2004). Sampling, representativeness and generalizability. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 435–456). London: SAGE Publications.
Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.
Goldring, E., & Phillips, K. (2008). Parent preferences and parent choices: the public–private decision about school choice. *Journal of Education Policy, 23*(3), 209–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930801987844
Gorsuch, R. (1983). *Factor analysis* (2nd edition). Hillsdale: Erlbaum
Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Grinza, E., Devicienti, F., Rossi, M., & Vannoni, D. (2016). *How entry into parenthood shapes gender role attitudes: New evidence from longitudinal UK data*. IZA Piscussion Paper No. 11088. https://docs.iza.org/dp11088.pdf
Grogan, K. (2012). Parents' choice of pre-kindergarten: the interaction of parent, child and contextual factors. *Early Child Development and Care, 182*(10), 1265–1287. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2011.608127
Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage Publications, Inc.
Gustafsson, J-E., Sörlin, S., & Vlachos, J. (2016). Policyidéer för svensk skola [Policy Ideas for the Swedish School]. Tukholma: SNS Förlag.
Halmetoja, A. (2015). Käsiteanalyysi universalismin ulottuvuuksista sosiaalipolitiikassa. *Sosiologia, 2*, 123–138.
Halmetoja, A. (2016). Universalismi sosiaalipolitiikan ideaalina. In A. Halmetoja, P. Koistinen & S. Ojala (Eds.), *Sosiaalipolitiikan lumo* (pp. 119–128). Tampere: Tampere University Press.
Hansen, M., & A. Lindholst. (2016). Marketization Revisited. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 29*(5), 398–408. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-05-2016-0090
Haug, P. (2014). The public-private partnership in ECEC provision in Norway. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal: Disadvantage and Social Justice*, *22*(3), 366–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912899
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.

Heiskanen, N., Neitola, M., Syrjämäki, M., Viljamaa, E., Nevala, P., Siipola, M., & Viitala, R. (2021). Kehityksen ja oppimisen tuki sekä inklusiivisuus varhaiskasvatuksessa: Selvitys nykytilasta kunnallisissa ja yksityisissä varhaiskasvatuspalveluissa sekä esitys kehityksen ja oppimisen tuen malliksi. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2021:13. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-829-8

Heracleous, L. T. (2004). Interpretivist approaches to organizational discourse. In. D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick & L. Putnam (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of organizational discourse* (pp. 175–192). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hietamäki, J., Kuusiholma, J., Räikkönen, E., Alasuutari, M., Lammi-Taskula, J., Repo, K., Karila, K., Hautala, P., Kuukka, A., Paananen, M., Ruutiainen, V., & Eerola, P. (2017). Varhaiskasvatus- ja lastenhoitoratkaisut yksivuotiaiden lasten perheissä: CHILDCARE-kyselytutkimuksen 2016 perustulokset. Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos (THL). Working paper 24/2017. Helsinki.

Hodgson, G. M. (2006). What Are Institutions? *Journal of Economic Issues, 40*(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2006.11506879.

HS, Helsingin sanomat. (2019, January 1). Yksityisellä päiväkotiketjulla useita luvattomia tiloja Helsingissä, poliitikot pohtivat Ankkalammen asemaa – ”En ole ikinä törmännyt tällaiseen”. https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005981809.html?share=4d31ec3a5f0359a1aa25a33305cb1b8b

Hu, L-T., & Bentler, P. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*(1), 1–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hyvinvointiala Hali [The Finnish Association of Private Care Providers]. (2019, june 6)). Hallitusohjelmassa hyvät tavoitteet -toimeenpano ratkaisee. Hali blog. https://www.hyvinvointiala.fi/7197-2/

Hyvinvointiala Hali [The Finnish Association of Private Care Providers]. (2020, March 2). Palvelusetelin hintakatto kaventaa valinnanmahdollisuuksia päivähoidossa. Hali blog. https://www.hyvinvointiala.fi/palvelusetelin-hintakatto-kaventaa-valinnanmahdollisuuksia-paivahoidossa/

IS, Iltasanomat. (2019, September, 7). Vanhemmat kertovat Touhulan arjesta: ”Tämä on niin absurdia, että kukaan ei usko. https://www.is.fi/taloussanomat/art-2000005993415.html

Japel, C, & Friendly, M. (2018). Inequalities in access to early childhood education and care in Canada. In K. Erhard, A. Scholz & D. Harring (Eds.), *The equal access study* (pp. 30–34). ICEC Working Paper Series – Volume 1.

Jacques, O., & Noël, A. (2021). Targeting within universalism. *Journal of European Social Policy, 31*(1), 15–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928720918973

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14–26. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014

Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*, 112–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224

Johnson R. B. (2017). Dialectical pluralism: A metaparadigm whose time has come. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 11*(2), 156-173. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689815607692

Jones, A. P., & Jones, R. (2021). Constructing (dis)ability through participation in early childhood markets: Preschool leaders' enrolment decision-making. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research, 10*(1), 60–82.

Jæger, M. M., & Karlson, K. (2018). Cultural capital and educational inequality: A counterfactual analysis. *Sociological Science, 5,* 775–795. https://doi.org/10.15195/v5.a33

Kaiser, H. (1960). The application of electronic computers to factor analysis. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 20*(1), 141–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316446002000116

Kamenarac O. (2021). Business managers in children's playground : Exploring a problematic (or not!) identity construction of early childhood teachers in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood,* 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949121989362

Kampichler, M, Dvořáčková, J, & Jarkovská, L. (2018). Choosing the right kindergarten: Parents' reasoning about their ECEC choices in the context of the diversification of ECEC programs. *Journal of Pedagogy, 9*(2), 9–32. https://doi.org/10.2478/jped-2018-0009

Kari, E. (2019, January 21). Varhaiskasvatusyritysten voitontavoittelua rajoitettava. Emma Kari blog. https://www.emmakari.fi/2019/01/29/varhaiskasvatusyritysten-voitontavoittelua-rajoitettava/

Karila, K. (2012). A Nordic perspective on early childhood education and care policy. *European Journal of Education, 47*(4), 584–595. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12007

Karlsson, M, Löfdahl, A., & Pérez Prieto, H. (2013). Morality in parents' stories of preschool choice: narrating identity positions of good parenting. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 34*(2), 208–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.714248

Kensinger Rose, K., & Elicker, J. (2008). Parental decision making about child care. *Journal of Family Issues, 29*(9), 1161–1184. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X07312103

Kildal, N., & S. Kuhnle. (2005). The Nordic welfare model and the idea of universalism. In N. Kildal & S. Kuhnle (Eds.), *Normative foundations of the welfare state: The Nordic experience* (pp. 13–33). London: Routledge.

Kim, J., & Fram, M. S. (2009). Profiles of choice: Parents' patterns of priority in child care decision-making. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 24, 77–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2008.10.001

Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th edition). New York: Guilford Press

Knijn, T., & Lewis, J. (2017). ECEC: childcare markets in the Netherlands and England. In B. Unger, D. Van Der Linde & M. Getzner (Eds.), *Public or private goods. redifining res publica* (pp. 150–174). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Korstjen, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Korsvold, T. (2005). For alle barn. In Korsvold, T. (Eds.). *Scandinavian Early childhood and consumer culture* (1–21). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Kosunen, S. (2014). Reputation and parental logics of action in local school choice space in Finland. *Journal of Education Policy, 29*(4), 443–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2013.844859

Kosunen, S., & Carrasco, A. (2016). Parental preferences in school choice: comparing reputational hierarchies of schools in Chile and Finland. *A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 46*(2), 172–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2013.861700

Krapf, S. (2014). Who uses public childcare for 2-year old children? Coherent family policies and usage patterns in Sweden, Finland and Western Germany. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 23*(1), 25–40. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12031

Kröger, T. (2011). Retuning the Nordic welfare municipality. Central regulation of social care under change in Finland. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 31*(3/4), 148–159. http://doi.org/10.1108/01443331111120591

Kulic, N., Skopek, J., Triventi, M., & Blossfeld, H-P. (2019). Social background and children's cognitive skills: The role of early childhood education and care in a cross-national perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology, 45(1)*, 557–579. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022401

Kumpulainen, K. (2018). A principled, personalised, trusting and child-centric ECEC system in Finland. In S. L. Kagan (Eds.), *The Early Advantage 1: Early Childhood Systems That Lead by Example* (pp. 72–98), New York: Teachers College Press.

Kurttila, T., (2017, September 23). Business pois päiväkodista. Blog of Ombudsman for children. Lapsiasia blog. http://blogi.lapsiasia.fi/2017/09/business-pois-paivakodeista.html

Lahtinen, J., & Selkee, J. (2016). *Varhaiskasvatuskyselyraportti II: hallinto, kuntalisät, palveluseteli* [ECEC report II: Governance, Municipal Supplements, Voucher]. Helsinki: Kuntaliitto. https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/sites/default/files/media/file/varhaiskasvatuskysely2016%20II%20raportti.pdf

Lahtinen, J. & Svatsjö, M. (2020). *Kotihoidontuen ja yksityisen hoidon tuen kuntalisät ja palveluseteli* [The Municipal Supplements for Home Care Allowanve and Private Daycare Allowance, and Vouchers). Helsinki: Kuntaliitto. https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/julkaisut/2020/2089-kotihoidontuen-ja-yksityisen-hoidon-tuen-kuntalisat-ja-palveluseteli

Land, H., & Himmelweit, S. (2010). *Who cares: Who pays? A report on personalisation in social care*. Unison, London.
Langford, T. (2011). *Alberta's day care controversy from 1908 to 2009 – and beyond.* AU Press, Athabasca University
Laiho, A., & Pihlaja P. (2022). Is Finnish early childhood education going private? – Legislative steps and local policy actors' representations of privatisation. *Policy Futures in Educati*on. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103221074474.
Laiho, A., & Pihlaja, P. (2018, November 15–16). Varhaiskasvatuksen yksityistäminen Suomessa [Privatisation of ECEC in Finland] [Konference presentation] Kasvatustieteiden päivät, Tampere.
Lawson, T. (2016). Comparing conceptions of social ontology: Emergent social entities and/or institutional facts? *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 46(4),* 359–399. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12126
Layne, H., & Dervin, F. (2016). Problematizing Finland's pursuit of intercultural (kindergarten) teacher education. *Multicultural Education Review, 8*(2), 118–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2016.1161290
Leseman, P.P.M., & Slot, P.L. (2020). Universal versus targeted approaches to prevent early education gaps. The Netherlands as case in point. *Z Erziehungswiss, 23,* 485–507. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-020-00948-8
Lee, I. (2018). (Re)Landscaping early childhood education in East Asia: A neoliberal economic and political imaginary. *Policy Futures in Education, 16*(1), 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317736434
Li, H., & Wang, J. (2018). Implementing free early childhood education in a completely privatized market: A case study of Hong Kong. In L. Miller, C. Cameron, C. Dalli, & N. Barbour (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of early childhood policy* (pp. 537–550). SAGE.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1989). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. *Review of Higher Education, 12*(3), 221–240.
Lloyd, E. (2008). The Interface between childcare, family support and child poverty strategies under New Labour: Tensions and contradictions. *Social Policy and Society, 7*(4), 479–494. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746408004442
Lloyd, E. (2019). Reshaping and reimagining marketised early childhood education and care systems. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik, 65*(3), 89–106. https://doi.org/10.3262/ZPB1901089
Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2014). Childcare markets in an age of austerity. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *22*(3), 386–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912901
Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2012). Childcare Markets: Can they deliver an equitable service? Bristol, England: Policy Press: The University of Bristol.
Lundkvist, M., Nyby, J., Autto, J., & Nygård, M. (2017). From universalism to selectivity? The background, discourses and ideas of recent early

childhood education and care reforms in Finland. *Early child development and care*, *187*(10), 1543–1556. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1295041

Mahon, R. (2010). After neo-liberalism? The OECD, the World Bank and the child. *Global Social Policy, 10*(2), 172–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468018110366615

Mahon, R., Anttonen, A., Bergqvist, C., Brennan, D., & B. Hobson. (2012). Convergent care regimes? Childcare arrangements in Australia, Canada, Finland and Sweden. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *22*(4), 419–431. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928712449776.

Malin, P., & Honkasalo, V. (2020, March 10). Helsingin ei tule avata varhaiskasvatusta voitontavoittelulle [letter to editor]. *Helsingin Sanomat*. https://www.hs.fi/paivanlehti/10032020/art-2000006433271.html

Marsh, H. W., Muthén, B., Asparouhov, T., Lüdtke, O., Robitzsch, A., Morin, A. J. S., & Trautwein, U. (2009). Exploratory structural equation modeling, integrating CFA and EFA: Application to students' evaluations of university teaching, structural equation modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 16(3),* 439–476. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705510903008220

Marsh, H. W., Hau, K.-T., & Grayson, D. (2005). Goodness of fit evaluation. In A. Maydeu Olivares & J. McArdle (Eds.), *Contemporary psychometrics* (pp. 275–340). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Martikainen, M., Holmqvist, V., & Lehtisalo, O. (2019). *Myyttejä ja mielikuvia yksityisestä varhaiskasvatuksesta* [Myths and images about private ECEC]. Pilke päiväkodit. https://www.pilkepaivakodit.fi/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/Varhaiskasvatus_26042019.pdf

Mason, J. (2011). Facet methodology: The case for an inventive research orientation. *Methodological Innovations Online, 6*(3), 75–92.

Mathers, S., Sylva, K. and Joshi, H. (2007), *Quality of childcare settings in the Millenium cohort study*. London, DCSF, RR025. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8088/7/SSU2007FR025_Redacted.pdf

Mathers, S. & Sylva, K. (2007). *National Evaluation of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative: The Relationship between Quality and Children's Behavioural Development*. London DCSF, SSU/2007/FR/022. https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/18819/1/18819.pdf

Maxwell, J. & Mittapalli, K. (2010). Realism as a stance for mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 145–168). SAGE Publications, Inc.. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193

Maxwell J. (2019). Distinguishing between quantitative and qualitative research: A response to Morgan. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 13*(2), 132–137. https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689819828255

Meyers, M., & Gornick, J. (2003). Public or private responsibility? Early childhood education and care, inequality, and the welfare state. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 34*(3), 379–411. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41603889

Meyers, M. K., & Jordan, L. P. (2006). Choice and accommodation in parental child care decisions. *Community Development, 37*(2), 53–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490207

Mierendorff, J., Ernst, T., Mader, M. (2018). Embedded internationalisation and privilege in german early years provision. In C. Maxwell, U. Deppe, H. H. Krüger & W. Helsper (Eds.), *Elite education and internationalisation (*pp. 121–137). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Miles & Huberman, (2009). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Ming Sin Wong, J., & Rao, N. (2020). Pursuing quality in early childhood education with a government-regulated voucher: views of parents and service providers in Hong Kong. *Journal of Education Policy*, *37*(1), 39–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1764628

Misukka, H. (2018, December 19). Miksi varhaiskasvatuksella saa tehdä bisnestä? *Blog of The Trade Union of Education in Finland, OAJ*. https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/blogiartikkelit/koulutus-ratkaisee/2018/miksi-varhaiskasvatuksella-saa-tehda-bisnesta/

Mocan, N. (2007). Can consumers detect lemons? An empirical analysis of information asymmetry in the market for child care. *Journal of Population Economics, 20*(4), 743–780. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-006-0087-6

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 48–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/2345678906292462

Moss, P. (2009). *There are alternatives! Markets and democratic experimentalism in early childhood education and care*. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, Number 53. Bernard Van Leer Foundation.

Moss, P. (2014). *transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. Routledge.

Muthén, L. K. & Muthén, B. O. (1998–2017). MPlus user's quide (8th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.

Mäntyjärvi, M., & Puroila, A-M. (2019). Has something changed? Leaders', practitioners' and parents' interpretations after renewed early childhood education and care legislation in Finnish private centres. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *20*(1), 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949119828158

Natsiopoulou, T., & Vitoulis, M. (2015). Criteria of parents for choosing Preschool centers during the period of economic crisis in Greece. *International Journal of Caring Sciences, 8*(3), 698–708. file://fileservices.ad.jyu.fi/homes/viilruut/Downloads/21_Natsiopoulou_original_8_3.pdf

Naumann, I. (2011). Towards the marketization of early childhood education and care? Recent developments in Sweden and the United Kingdom. *Nordic Journal of Social Research, 2*(0), 37–53. https://doi.org/10.7577/njsr.2049.

Neuman, M. J. (2005). Governance of early childhood education and care: recent developments in OECD countries. *Early Years, 25*(2), 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140500130992

Newberry, S., & Brennan, D. (2013). The marketisation of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia: A structured response. *Financial Accountability & Management, 29*(3), *227*–245. https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12018

Niiniluoto, I. (1999). *Critical scientific realism*. Oxford University Press.

Nikander, P. (2008). Constructionism and discourse analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gudrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp. 413–428). NewYork: Guilford Press.

Nikander, P. (2012). Interviews as discourse data. In J. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. Marvasti & K. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft (2 ed.)* (pp. 397–414). Thousand Oaks: California: SAGE Publications Inc.

Nisskaya, A. (2018). What modern parents think about preschool education: What makes a preschool attractive? *Russian Education & Society, 60*(7), 601–622. https://doi.org/10.1080/10609393.2018.1527165

Niu, L. (2020). A review of the application of logistic regression in educational research: common issues, implications, and suggestions. *Educational Review, 72(1),* 41–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1483892

Noailly, J., &Visser, S. (2009). The impact of market forces on child care provision: insights from the 2005 Child Care Act in the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy, 38*(3), 477–498. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003109

North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change, and economic performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nyby, J., Nygård, M., Autto, J., Kuisma, M. & Blum, S. (2018). The role of discourse in family policy reform: The case of Finland. *Critical social policy, 38*(3), 567–588. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018317745609

Nygård, M., Nyby, J. & Kuisma, M. (2019). Discarding social investment and redistribution in the name of austerity? The case of Finnish family policy reforms 2007–2015. *Policy & society, 38*(3), 519–536. https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2019.1655834

O'Cathain, A. (2010). Assessing the quality of mixed methods research: toward a comprehensive framework. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 531–556). SAGE Publications, Inc.. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193

Ofsted (2008). Early years: Leading to excellence. A review of childcare and education provision 2005–2008, London, Office for Standards in Education.

Onnismaa, E-L., & Kalliala, M. (2010). Finnish ECEC policy: interpretations, implementations and implications. *Early Years*, *30*(3), 267–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2010.511604

Onnismaa, E-L., Paananen, M., & Lipponen, L. (2014). Varhaiskasvatusjärjestelmän polkuriippuvuuksien jäljillä [Exploring the Path-Dependency of Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care System]. *Kasvatus & Aika, 8*(2), 6–21. http://www.kasvatus-ja-*aika.fi/dokumentit/onnismaa_korjattu_0806141138.pdf*

Paananen, M. (2017). *Imaginaries of early childhood education: Societal roles of early childhood education in a transnational era of accountability* [doctoral dissertation, University of Helsinki]. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/173807 http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-2882-9

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. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904115601446

Paananen, M., Repo, K., Eerola, P., & Alasuutari, M. (2019). Unravelling conceptualizations of (in)equality in early childhood education and care system. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 5*(1), 54–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2018.1485423

Pace, R., Pluye, P., Bartlett, G., Macaulay, A. C., Salsberg, J., et al. (2012). Testing the reliability and efficiency of the pilot Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for systematic mixed studies review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 49,* 47–53.

Patomäki, H. (2020). On the historicity of social ontology. *Journal of Theory of Social Behavior, 50,* 439–461. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12254

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: a matter of policies or preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy*, *25*(6), 878–893. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1401108

Penn, H., & Lloyd, E. (2014). How can government ensure that early care and education is of high quality in a market system? Learning from international experience. In T. Wolfe (Eds.), *Childcare – Business or profession?* (pp. 13–52). Dublin: Start Strong.

Penn, H., & Maynard, T. (2010). *Siyabonana: We all see each other: Building better childhoods in South Africa*. Edinburgh: Children in Scotland.

Penn, H. (2007). Childcare market management: How the United Kingdom government has reshaped its role in developing Early Childhood Education and Care. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *8*(3), 192–207. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2007.8.3.192

Penn, H. (2009). International perspectives on quality in mixed economies of childcare. *National Institute Economic Review, 207*, 83–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0027950109103687

Penn, H, (2011a), Gambling on the market: The role of for-profit provision in early childhood education and care. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 9*(2), 150–161. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X10387999

Penn, H. (2011b). 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. https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568210369846
Penn, H. (2012a). Childcare Markets: Do they Work?. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn, (Eds.), *Childcare Markets – Can they Deliver an Equitable Service?* (pp. 19–41). Bristol: The Policy Press in association with the University of Chicago Press.
Penn, H. (2012b). "Raw and Emerging Childcare Markets. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn, (Eds.), *Childcare Markets – Can they Deliver an Equitable Service?* (pp. 173–190). Bristol: The Policy Press in association with the University of Chicago Press.
Penn, H. 2014. International Indicators as a Measure of National Policies. *International Journal of Early Childhood, 46,* 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-013-0099-9
Pennerstorfer, A., & Pennerstorfer, D. (2020). Inequalities in Spatial Accessibility of Childcare: The Role of Non-profit Providers. *Journal of Social Policy,* 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000990
Petersen, O. H., & Hjelmar, U. (2014). Marketization of welfare services in Scandinavia: A review of Swedish and Danish experiences. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, *17*(4), 3–20. http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/sjpa/article/view/2749
Petitclerc, A., Côté, S., Doyle, O., Burchinal, M., Herba, C., Daae Zachrisson, H., Boivin, M., Tremblay, R., Tiemeier, H., Jaddoe, V., & Raat, H. (2017). Who uses early childhood education and care services? Comparing socioeconomic selection across five western policy contexts, *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 11*(3), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-017-0028-8
Peyton, V., Jacobs, A., O'Brien, M., & Roy, C. (2001). Reasons for choosing child care: Associations with family factors, quality, and satisfaction. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16*(2), *191–208.* https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00098-9
Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction. *Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods, Vol. 50.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Pihlaja, P. & Neitola, M. (2017). Varhaiserityiskasvatus muuttuvassa varhaiskasvatuksen kentässä. *Kasvatus & Aika*, *11*(3), 70–91.
Plantegna, J. (2012). Local providers and loyal parents: Competition and consumer choice in a Dutch childcare market. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare Markets: Can They Deliver an Equitable Service*. Bristol: Policy Press.
Pluye, P., Gagnon, M. P., Griffiths, F., & Johnson-Lafleur, J. (2009). A scoring system for appraising mixed methods research, and concomitantly appraising qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods primary studies in mixed studies reviews. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 46,* 529–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2009.01.009.

Pluye, P., & Hong, Q. N. (2014). Combining the power of stories and the power of numbers: Mixed methods research and mixed studies reviews. *Annual Review of Public Health, 35*, 29–45. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182440.

Polanyi, K. (1945). *Origins of Our Time: The Great Transformation*. London: Gollancz.

Potter, J. (2004). Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 187–207). London: Sage.

Potter, J. (2012). Discursive psychology and discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee, J & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 104–119). Routledge Ltd -M.U.A.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1995). Discourse analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Harré & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 80–92). London: SAGE Publications Ltd

Prentice, S. (2005). For-profit child care: Past, present, future. Toronto: Child Care Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto.

Prentice, S. (2007). Childcare, the "business case" and economic development: Canadian evidence, opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Economic Development, 9*(4), 269–300. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/236138432?accountid=11774

Press F, & Woodrow C. (2005). Commodification, corporatisation and children's spaces. *Australian Journal of Education, 49*(3), 278–291. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410504900305

Press, F., & Woodrow, C. (2018). Marketisation, elite education and internationalisation in Australian early childhood education and care. In C. Maxwell, U. Deppe, H. H. Krüger & W. Helsper (Eds.), *Elite education and internationalisation* (pp. 139–159). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Prieto, L. M., Aguero-Valverde, J., Zarrate-Cardenas, G., & Van Maarseveen, M. (2019). Parental preferences in the choice for a specialty school. *Journal of School Choice, 13*(2), 198–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2018.1442087

Puroila, A-M., & Kinnunen, S. (2017). *Selvitys varhaiskasvatuksen lainsäädännön muutosten vaikutuksista* [Report on the impacts of amendments to early childhood education and care legislation]. Publications of the Govenrment´s analysis, assessment and research activities 78/2017. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160405/78_Loppuraportti%20VakaVai%20051217docx.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Raatikainen, P. (2014). Realism: Metaphysical, scientific, and semantic. In K. R. Westphal (Eds.), *Realism, Science, and Pragmatism* (pp. 139–158). Routledge.

Raittila, R., Liinamaa, T., & Tuominiemi, L. (2017). Tulevaisuuteen suuntaava varhaiskasvatustiede. *Kasvatus & Aika, 11*(3). https://journal.fi/kasvatusjaaika/article/view/68724

Ramos Lobato, I., Bernelius, V., & Kosunen, S. (2018). Looking for the ordinary? Parental choice and elite school avoidance in Finland and Germany. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 4*(3), 156–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2018.1548239

Rauhala, P-L. (2009). Childcare as an issue of equality and equity: the example of the Nordic countries. In K. Scheiwe & H. Willekens (Eds.), *Childcare and preschool development in Europe: Institutional perspectives* (pp. 142–156). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Repo, K., Alasuutari, M., Karila, K. & Lammi-Taskula, J. (Eds.) (2020). The policies of childcare and early childhood education. Does equal access matter? Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Riitakorpi, J., Alila, K., & Kahiluoto, T. (2017). *Varhaiskasvatuksen yksityiset palvelut: Valtakunnallinen selvitys 2015.* Report no. 2017:3. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

Roberts-Holmes, G. (2013). The English early years professional status (EYPS) and the "split" early childhood education and care (ECEC) system. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(3), 339–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2012.704304

Roberts, J. (2011). Trust and early years childcare: Parents' relationships with private, state and third sector providers in england. *Journal of Social Policy, 40*, 695–715. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047279411000225

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2018). Markkinoistuvat varhaiskasvatuspalvelut. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, *83*(4), 441–447. http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2018092036143

Ruutiainen, V. (2018, November 16). Kotitalouksien keskitulot yksityisten ja julkisten päiväkotien lähialueilla: tapaus Helsinki. *Tutkittua varhaiskasvatuksesta* -blog. https://tutkittuavarhaiskasvatuksesta.com/tag/ville-ruutiainen/

Räsänen, T., & Österbacka, E. (2019, October 24–25). *Voimistaako lasten yksityisen hoidon tuki julkisten ja yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden eriytymistä?* [Conference presentation]. The annual Social policy conference, Joensuu, Finland.

Rønning Haugen, C. (2020). Teachers´ experiences of school choice from ´marginalised´ and ´privileged´ public schools in Oslo. *Journal of Education Policy, 35*(1), 68–94. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2019.1587519

Salminen, J. (2017). Early Childhood Education and Care System in Finland. *Nauki o Wychowaniu, 5*(2), 135-154. https://doi.org/10.18778/2450-4491.05.09

Saranko, L., Räikkönen, E., Makkonen, M., & Alasuutari, M. (2021). Äitien palvelutyytyväisyyden rakentuminen ja yhteistyökokemukset varhaiskasvatuksessa. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research, 10*(2), 1–27. https://jecer.org/fi/aitien-palvelutyytyvaisyyden-rakentuminen-ja-yhteistyokokemukset-varhaiskasvatuksessa/

Satorra, A., & Bentler, P. (2001). A scaled difference chi-square test statistic for moment structure analysis. *Psychometrika, 66*(4), 507–514. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02296192

Scheiwe, K., & Willekens, H. (2009). Path-dependencies and change in child-care and preschool institutions in Europe – Historical and institutional perspectives. In K. Scheiwe & H. Willekens (Eds.), *Childcare and Preschool Development in Europe: Institutional Perspectives* (pp. 1–22). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schimank, U., & Volkmann, U. (2012). Economizing and marketization in a functionally differentiated capitalist society – A theoretical conceptualization. In U. Schimank & U. Volkmann (Eds.), *The marketization of society: Economizing the non-economic* (pp. 37–64). Bremen: Research Cluster "Welfare Societies.

Schlomer, G., Bauman, S., & Card, N. (2010). Best practices on missing data management counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018082

Schmidt, V. A. (2008). Discursive Institutionalism: The explanatory power of ideas and discourse. *Annual Review of Political Science 2008, 11*(1), 303–326. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.060606.135342

Schmidt, V. A. (2009). Putting the political back into political economy by bringing the state back in yet again. *World Politics, 61*(3), 516–546. 10.1017/S0043887109000173

Schmidt, V. A. (2010a). Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth "new institutionalism". *European Political Science Review, 2*(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577390999021X

Schmidt, V. A. (2010b). Reconciling ideas and institutions through discursive institutionalism. In D. Béland & R. H. Cox (Eds.), *Ideas and politics in social science research* (pp. 76–95). Oxford Scholarship Online. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199736430.003.0003

Schmidt, V. A. (2011). Speaking of change: why discourse is key to the dynamics of policy transformation. *Critical Policy Studies, 5*(2), 106–126. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2011.576520

Schmidt, V. A (2014). Institutionalism. *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (pp. 1836–1839). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118474396.wbept0513

Schmidt, V. A. (2015). Discursive institutionalism: Understanding policy in context. In F. Fischer, D. Torgerson, A. Durnová, & M. Orsini (Eds.), *Handbook of critical policy studies* (pp. 171–189). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783472352

Schmidt, V. A., & Thatcher, M. (2013). Theorizing ideational continuity: the resilience of neo-liberal ideas in Europe. In V. A. Schmidt, & M, Thatcher (Eds.), *Resilient Liberalism in Europe's Political Economy (*pp. 1–50). Cambridge: University Press. ISBN 9781107041530

Schober, P.S., & Spiess, C.K. (2013). Early childhood education activities and care arrangements of disadvantaged children in Germany. *Child Indicators Research, 6*, 709–735. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-013-9191-9

Scholz, A., Erhard, K., Hahn, S., & Harring, D. (2018). *Inequalities in access to early childhood education and care in Germany*. https://www.dji.de/fileadmin/user_upload/bibs2018/27203_WEB_DJI_GesamtEnglisch.pdf

Schwiter, K., Berndt, C., & Truong, J. (2015). Neoliberal austerity and the marketisation of elderly care. *Social & Cultural Geography, 19(3),* 379–399. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2015.1059473

Searle J. (1995). *The construction of social reality*. New York: Free Press.

Searle J. (2016). The Limits of emergence: Reply to Tony Lawson. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 46*(4), 400–412. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12125

Sen, A. 2009. The Idea of justice. London: Allen Lane. An imprint of Penguin Books.

Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Sibley, E, Dearing, E., Toppelberg, C., Mykletun, A., Son, Z., & Daae, H. (2015). Do increased availability and reduced cost of early childhood care and education narrow social inequality gaps in utilization? Evidence from Norway. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 9*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s40723-014-0004-5

Sim, J., & Waterfield, J. (2019). Focus group methodology: some ethical challenges. *Quality & Quantity, 53,* 3003–3022. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-019-00914-5

Siippainen, A., Repo, L., Metsämuuronen, J., Kivistö. A., Alasuutari, M., Koivisto, P., & Saarikallio-Torp, M. (2019). *Viisivuotiaiden maksuttoman varhaiskasvatuksen kokeilun ensimmäisen vaiheen arviointi. varhaiskasvatukseen osallistuminen ja kokeilun järjestäminen*. Kansallinen koulutuksen arviointikeskus, Julkaisut 16:2019. https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/KARVI_1619.pdf

Silvennoinen, H., Kalalahti, M., & Varjo, J. (2018). Koulutuspoliittinen tasa-arvo 2000-luvun Suomessa. In R. Rinne, N. Haltia, S. Lempinen & T. Kaunisto (Eds.), *Eriarvoistuva maailma – tasa-arvoistava koulu?* (pp. 93–120). (Kasvatusalan tutkimuksia; No. 78). Helsinki: Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura.

Silverman, D. (1998). *Harvey sacks: Social science and conversation analysis*. Polity Press.

Simon, A., Penn, H., Shah, A, Owen, C., Lloyd, E., Hollingworth, K., & Quy, K. (2021). *Acquisitions, mergers and debt: the new language of childcare – Main report*. London: UCL Social Research Institute, University College London.

Sipilä., J., Rantalaiho, M., Repo, K., & Rissanen, T. (Eds.). (2012). *Rakastettu ja vihattu lasten kotihoidon tuki* [Beloved and Hated Child Homecare Allowance]. Jyväskylä: Vastapaino.

Sipilä, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Social Care Services: The Key to the Scandinavian Welfare Model*. Aldershot: Avebury.
Sipilä, J., 2020). For all, for free! Why do parents have to pay for early childhood education but not for primary education? In K. Repo, M. Alasuutari, K. Karila, & J. Lammi-Taskula (Eds.), *The policies of childcare and early childhood education: Does equal access matter?* (pp. 22–39). Edward Elgar. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788117753
Smith, B. (2003). John Searle: From speech acts to social reality. In B. Smith (Eds.) *John Searle* (pp. 1–33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from http://www.ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/articles/SearleIntro.pdf
Smith, B. (2008). Searle and de Soto: The new social ontology of the social world. In B. Smith, M. David, & I. Ehrlich (Eds.), *The mystery of Capital and the Construction of Social Reality* (pp. 35–51). Chicago: Open Court.
Smit, J., Buekens, F., & Du Plessis, S. (2011). what is money? an alternative to searle's institutional facts. *Economics and Philosophy, 27*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266267110000441
Social Insurance Institution of Finland (SIIoF). (2022). Child home care allowance. https://www.kela.fi/web/en/child-home-care-allowance?inheritRedirect=true
SOOL [Teacher Student Union of Finland]. (2018, June 19). Yksityistäminen uhkaa varhaiskasvatuksen laatua. *SOOL blog*. https://www.sool.fi/vaikuttaminen/kannanotot/yksityistaminen-uhkaa-varhaiskasvatuksen-laatua/
Sosinsky, L. S., Lord, H., & Zigler, E. (2007). For-profit/nonprofit differences in center-based child care quality: results from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 28*(5/6), 390–410. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2007.06.003
Stahl, J. F., Schober, P. S., & Spiess, C. K. (2018). Parental socio-economic status and childcare quality: Early inequalities in educational opportunity? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 44,* 304–317. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.011.
StataCorp. (2021). mlogit — Multinomial (polytomous) logistic regression. https://www.stata.com/manuals/rmlogit.pdf, retrieved 14.6.2021.
Stefánsson, K. 2012. What is in a word? Universalism, ideology and practice. In A. Anttonen, L. Häikiö & K. Stefánsson (eds.), *Welfare state, universalism and diversity* (pp. 42–68). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Storø, J. (2013). Kindergarten — a universal right for children in Norway. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 7*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-7-2-1
Sulkanen, M., Närvi, J., Kuusiholma, J., Lammi-Taskula, J., Räikkönen, E., & Alasuutari, M. (2020). *Varhaiskasvatus- ja lastenhoitoratkaisut neljävuotiaiden lasten perheissä. CHILDCARE-kyselytutkimuksen 2019 perustulokset.* Finnish

Institute for Health and Welfare, FIFHAW. Working papers 28/2020. Helsinki.
Sumsion, J. (2012). ABC Learning and Australian early childhood education and care: A retrospective ethical audit of a radical experiment." In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare Markets – Can they Deliver an Equitable Service?* (pp. 209–225), Bristol: The Policy Press in association with the University of Chicago Press.
Sylva, K, Stein, A., Leach, P., Barnes, J., Malmberg, L-E., & FCCC-Team. (2007). Family and child factors related to the use of non-maternal infant care: An English study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 22*(1), 118–136. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.11.003.
Tabachnik, B., & Fidell, L. (2001). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Tannen, D. (1993). What's in a frame?: Surface evidence for underlying expectations. In D. Tannen (Eds.), *Framing in discourse* (pp. 14–56). Oxford University Press.
Tang, S., Coley, R.L., & Votruba-Drzal, E. (2012). Low-income families' selection of child care for their young children. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*, 2002–2011. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.06.012
Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. (2010). Overview of contemporary issues in mixed methods research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (pp. 1–42). SAGE Publications, Inc.. https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781506335193
Trumberg, A., & Urban, S. (2020). School Choice and Its Long-Term Impact on Social Mobility in Sweden. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 65*(4), 569–583. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1739129
Trætteberg, H. S., Sivesind, K. H., Paananen, M., & Hrafnsdóttir, S. (2021). *Private Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the Nordic Countries: Development and governance of the welfare mix*. Institutt for samfunnsforskning: Rapport – Institutt for samfunnsforskning. https://hdl.handle.net/11250/2831519
Tuori, K. (2021). *Asiantuntijaselvitys eräistä yksityisen varhaiskasvatuksen sääntelyyn liittyvistä oikeudellisista kysymyksistä.* Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja 2021:22. http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-865-6
Ünver, Ö., Bircan, T., & Nicaise, I. (2018). Perceived accessibility of childcare in Europe: a cross-country multilevel study. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 12*(5). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-018-0044-3
Urban, M., & Rubiano; C. I. (2014). *Privatisation in early childhood education (PECE) An explorative study on impacts and implications.* Education International. https://download.eiie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EI2015_PrivationECE_EN_final.pdf
Vainikainen, M-P., Lintuvuori, M., Paananen, M., Eskelinen, M., Kirjavainen, T., Hienonen, N., Janhukainen, M., Thuneberg, H., Asikainen, M., Suhonen, E., Alijoki, A., Sajaniemi, N., Reunoma, J., Keskinen, H-L. & Hotulainen, R.

(2018). *Educational support from early childhood to the transition to upper secondary education: actualisation of equity and needs for development*. Publications of the Government´s analysis, assessment and research activities 55/2018.

Valenzuela, J. B., Bellei, C., & de los Ríos, D. (2014). Socioeconomic school segregation in a market-oriented educational system. The case of Chile. *Journal of Education Policy, 29*(2), 217–241. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2013.806995

Valkonen, S., Pesonen, J., & Brunila, K. (2021). Varhaiskasvatuksen markkinat - Näkökulmana yksityistyvät palvelut. *Kasvatus*, *52*(2), 223–234. https://journal.fi/kasvatus/article/view/111446

Vamstad, J. (2016). Bottom-up childcare in a top-down welfare state: explaining cooperative organization among Swedish parents. *International Review of Sociology, 26*(1), 69–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2016.1148345

Vandenbroeck, M, Visscher, S., Nuffel, K., & Ferla, J. (2008). Mothers' search for infant child care: The dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental European welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 23,* 245–258. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.09.002.

Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of early childhood education and care: a state of affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22*(3), 327–335. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912895

Van der Werf, W.M., Slot, P.L., Kenis, P., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2020). Hybrid organizations in the privatized and harmonized Dutch ECEC system: Relations with quality of education and care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 53,* 136–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.03.006.

Van der Werf, W. M., Slot, P. L., Kenis, P. N., & Leseman, P. P. M. (2021). Inclusive practice and quality of education and care in the Dutch hybrid early childhood education and care system. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-020-00079-x

Van Egmond, K. (2017). Value-Based demarcation between the public and the private domain. In Unger, B., Van Der Linde, D., & Getzner, M. (pp. 18–36), *Public or Private Goods. Redifining Res Publica*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Van Huizen, T., & Plantenga, J. (2018). Do children benefit from universal early childhood education and care? A meta-analysis of evidence from natural experiments. *Economics of Education Review, 66,* 206–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.08.001.

Van Lancker, W, & Ghysels, J. (2016). Explaining patterns of inequality in childcare service use across 31 developed economies: A welfare state perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, *57*(5), 310–337. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715216674252

Van Lancker W. (2013). Putting the child-centred investment strategy to the test: evidence for the EU27. *European Journal of Social Security*, *15*(1), 4–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/138826271301500103
Van Lancer, W. (2018). Reducing inequality in childcare service use across European countries: What (if any) is the role of social spending? *Social Policy & Administration, 52*(1), 271–292. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12311
Vlasov, J. (2018). reflecting changes in early childhood education in the USA, Russia and Finland. Tampere University Press.
Verger, A., Moschetti, M. C., & Fontdevila, C. (2020). How and why policy design matters: understanding the diverging effects of public-private partnerships in education. *Comparative Education, 56*(2), 278–303. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2020.1744239
Vermeulen, P., Ansari, S., & Lounsbury, M. (2016). Understanding "failed" markets: Conflicting logics and dissonance in attempts to price the priceless child, how institutions matter! *Research in the Sociology of Organizations, 48*(B), 37–68. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X201600048B002
Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2001). A market in love? Choosing pre-school childcare. *British Educational Research Journal, 27*(5), 633–651. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920120095799
Vincent, C, Braun, A & Ball, S. (2008). Childcare, choice and social class: Caring for young children in the UK. *Critical Social Policy, 28*(1), 5–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018307085505
Vincent, C., Braun, A., & Ball, S. (2010). Local links, local knowledge: Choosing care settings and schools. *British Educational Research Journal, 36*(2), 279–298. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27823606.
Välimäki, A-L, & Rauhala, P-L. (2000). Lasten päivähoidon taipuminen yhteiskunnallisiin murroksiin Suomessa [Children's day care yields to societal changes in Finland]. *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka, 65*, 387–405.
Wahlström, N., & Sundberg, D. (2018). Discursive institutionalism: towards a framework for analysing the relation between policy and curriculum. *Journal of Education Policy, 33*(1), 163–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1344879
Walliman, N. (2006). Ethics (Sage Course Companions). London, UK: Sage. Retrieved from https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209939
Warner, M. E. , & Gradus, R. H. J. M. (2011). The Consequences of implementing a child care voucher scheme: Evidence from Australia, the Netherlands and the USA. *Social Policy & Administration, 45*(5), 569–592. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2011.00787.x
Wassmer, R. W. (2016). The importance of supply and demand to policymaking designed to alter preschool attendance. *California Journal of Politics and Policy*, *8*(4). http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/P2cjpp8432741

Wennström, J. (2020). Marketized education: how regulatory failure undermined the Swedish school system. *Journal of Education Policy, 35*(5), 665–691. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2019.1608472

West, A. (2006). The pre-school education market in England from 1997: quality, availability, affordability and equity. *Oxford Review of Education, 32*(3), 283–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980600775516

West, A., Blome, A., & Jane Lewis. (2020). What Characteristics of Funding, Provision and Regulation Are Associated with Effective Social Investment in ECEC in England, France and Germany? *Journal of Social Policy 49*(4), 681–704. https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047279419000631

West, A., & Nikolai, R. (2013). Welfare regimes and education regimes: Equality of opportunity and expenditure in the EU (and US). *Journal of Social Policy, 42*(3), 469–493. https://doi.org/10.1017/ S0047279412001043

Westberg, J., & Larsson., E. (2020). Winning the war by losing the battle? The marketization of the expanding preschool sector in Sweden. *Journal of Education Policy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1861338

White, L.A., & Friendly, M. (2012). Public funding, private delivery: States, markets, and early childhood education and care in Liberal welfare states – A comparison of Australia, the UK, Quebec, and New Zealand. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice, 14*(4), 292–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2012.699789

Whitty, G., & Power, S. (2000). Marketization and privatization in mass education systems. *International Journal of Educational Development, 20*(2), 93–107. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(99)00061-9

Wirth, Heike (2013): *Kinderbetreuung in Europa – Soziale Differenzierung oder allgemeiner Zugang?* Munich: Deutsches Jugendinstitut. https://www.dji.de/veroeffentlichungen/literatursuche/detailansicht/literatur/15945-kinderbetreuung-in-europa-soziale-differenzierung-oder-allgemeiner-zugang.html

Wood, L., & Kroger, R. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text.* SAGE.

Woodrow, C., & Press, F. (2018). The privatization/marketization of ECEC debate: Social versus neo liberal models. In L. Miller, C. Cameron, C. Dalli, & N. Barbour (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of early childhood policy* (pp. 537–550). SAGE.

Xie, C., & Ma, Y. (2019). The mediating role of cultural capital in the relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement in 14 Economies. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(4), 838–855. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3528

Yang Hansen, K., & Gustafsson, J-E. (2016). Causes of educational segregation in Sweden – school choice or residential segregation. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 22(*1–2), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2016.1178589

YLE [public broadcasting company of Finland]. (2018, June 26). *Yksityinen päiväkoti saa takoa miljoonavoittoa, vaikka laki kieltää saman yksityisen koulun*

kohdalla – Suomessa voi olla pian kuntia, joissa ei ole kunnallista päiväkotia lainkaan. https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10260650

Yuen, G., & S. Grieshaber. (2009). Parents' choice of early childhood education services in Hong Kong: A pilot study about vouchers. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 10*(3), 263–279. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2009.10.3.263.

Yuen, G. (2012). Tinkering with early childhood education and care: Early education vouchers in Hong Kong. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare Markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 79–96). Bristol, England: Policy Press: The University of Bristol.

Yuen, G. (2015). Markets, choice of kindergarten, mother's care responsibilities, and the voucher scheme in Hong Kong. *Children and Youth Services Review 48,* 167–176. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.12.003

ORIGINAL PAPERS

I

RATIONALISING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PRIVATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE: THE CASE OF FINLAND

by

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. 2020

Sociology of Education, *41(1)*, 32-47.

DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2019.1665497

Rationalising Public Support for Private Early Childhood Education and Care: The Case of Finland

Abstract

In Finland, early childhood education and care (ECEC) is traditionally publicly provided. However, private ECEC provision has increased during the past decade, largely as a result of financial support from the public sector. Drawing on qualitative interviews with municipal decision-makers, this article identifies three frames within which publicly subsidised private ECEC provision and marketisation is rationalised: the *pragmatic frame*, *government frame* and *choice frame*. The results show that even though market logics and tendencies seem to have gained a strong foothold in local policies, there is a keen interest in universalism and maintaining public control over local ECEC provision.

Keywords: early childhood education and care, marketisation, Nordic countries, choice, public subsidies

Introduction

Finland is conceived of as a part of the Nordic educational regime (West & Nikolai, 2013), and most early childhood education and care (ECEC) is publicly provided (author reference) and based on the idea of universalism (Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Naumann, 2011). In that sense, Finnish and Nordic ECEC trajectories diverge from global ECEC pathways, which have been influenced by neoliberal ideas concerning effectiveness, competition and freedom of choice (e.g. Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Akgunduz & Plantega, 2014; Penn, 2011, 2012; Vanderbroeck, 2006). This is especially true in liberal English-speaking countries where market-oriented ECEC often comprises a substantial part of ECEC provision (see Penn, 2012). However, 'Nordic countries have edged toward a neoliberal free choice model', relying on the co-existence of a regulated private sector and substantially larger subsidised public ECEC provision (Mahon, Anttonen, Bergqvist, Brennan, & Hobson, 2012). In Finland, this has been particularly prevalent during the last decade, with municipalities being key actors. In this article, we will illuminate how municipal politicians and administrators *view the recent development in the provision of ECEC in Finland.*

Traditionally, publicly subsidised private ECEC provision in Finland has involved only small, local for-profit entrepreneurs and non-profit agents. In 2000, the share of private ECEC services was roughly 11% (Säkkinen & Kuoppala, 2017). Since the enforcement of the Act on Service Vouchers in Social Welfare and Health, AoSV (569/2009) in 2009, many municipalities have begun to provide ECEC vouchers for families. As a result, the private ECEC sector has expanded especially during the past decade, and now accounts for 17% of all ECEC provision (Säkkinen & Kuoppala, 2017). At the same time, private provision has become more diverse because large national and multinational for-profit companies have begun to provide ECEC services in many municipalities. Public demand-side subsidies,

especially those granted by municipalities, have enabled the expansion of the private sector. These developments differentiate ECEC provision from the provision of primary and secondary education, which is almost exclusively a public responsibility and protected from profit interests.

In this article, we draw on expert interviews to examine how municipal politicians and administrators view the growth of private ECEC provision and public support for ECEC in Finland. Overall, issues related to the marketisation of ECEC are widely discussed in the literature (e.g. Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Akgunduz & Plantega, 2014; Brennan, Cass, Himmelweit, & Szebehely, 2012; Lewis & West, 2016; Lloyd & Penn, 2014; Moss, 2009; Penn, 2000, 2011; Vincent, Braun & Ball, 2008). However, recent developments in Finland have gone without significant scientific interest. The evolution of the Finnish ECEC system is, though, linked with international trends (author reference). Therefore, an examination of recent local-level developments in the Finnish context also offers an interesting perspective on the marketisation of ECEC in the Nordic welfare and education regimes and more broadly.

The Marketisation of ECEC

The current era of globalization is characterized by intense marketisation, including the promotion of market ideology and market-based reforms (Djelic, 2006). Many countries have turned to market mechanisms for the provision of ECEC and other welfare services (Adamson & Brennan, 2014).

Marketisation is seen as a manisfestation of neo-liberal policy (see Vanderbroeck, 2006) and its austerity measures (Schwiter, Berndt & Truong, 2015), or as a form of the economisation of society (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). Marxist theory of modern society argues that this is a logical and understandable process because of the preponderance of the capitalist economy over other sectors of society. According to this view, economisation is constantly present in capitalist societies (Schimank & Volkmann, 2012). Foucault-inspired thinking points out that marketisation penetrates every aspect of the state and its institutions in neo-liberal (especially ordoliberal) societies, since the markets are tied to government (Gane, 2012). Therefore, as Foucault (2008, 121) states, ‘one must govern for the market, rather than because of the market’. Consequently, the state is no longer keeping an eye on the market, but it is rather guided by the market as it increasingly keeps an eye on itself (Gane, 2012).

Marketisation changes the way that the roles of the state and the individual are seen. In the context of education, this means that individuals and families must assume increasing responsibility for self-management etc. (Ozga, 2011). However, parents differ significantly in terms of their cultural and economic capital for making successful choices (Angus, 2015; Vincent et al 2008). Moreover, when education is treated as a commodity, its instrumental value is stressed at the expense of its intrinsic value (Brancaleone & O’Brien, 2011).

In practice, marketisation can assume many different forms, including quasi-markets, contracting out, benchmarking and yardstick competition, and public-private collaboration

(Hansen & Lindholst, 2016). Markets can only exist by generating and reproducing distinctions between 'things' that are valued and 'agencies' valuing them (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010). Although marketisation often includes service privatisation, this is not a necessary part of marketisation. Likewise, there can be privatisation without marketisation (Hansen & Lindholst, 2016; Anttonen & Meagher 2013). In the case of Finnish ECEC, both dimensions are present to some extent. Demand-side subsidies granted by the public sector both increase families' range of choices and give an incentive for private agents to start providing services.

In the ECEC context, marketisation may involve providing ECEC through a mixed economy of public, private non-profit and private for-profit providers (Lloyd & Penn, 2014) or it may include the outsourcing of service provision to private providers and helping families to purchase such services (Adamson and Brennan, 2014). Briefly, the marketisation of childcare can be conceived of as government measures that authorise, support or enforce the introduction of markets, the creation of relationships between buyers and sellers or the use of market mechanisms to allocate care (Brennan et al., 2012). Hence, the marketisation of ECEC should be understood as political action (see Lewis & West, 2016). Due to its political nature, the marketisation process is context-specific and path-dependent (Brennan et al., 2012), and it is shaped by the complex and meandering historical trajectories of the development of welfare states (Naumann, 2011).

The standard rationale for the marketisation of ECEC follows general market logic, which is based on the idea of rational customers choosing from many competitive service providers. The providers' competition is expected to increase the quality of services and guarantee such services' cost effectiveness. Markets should also reflect customers' various preferences and thus foster innovativeness and flexibility in service provision. Shortages, related to unsatisfactory services, will lead to market-based corrections. Thus, markets are expected to be self-regulatory (e.g. Brennan et al., 2012; Moss, 2009; Naumann, 2011; Penn, 2009).

The Finnish Context to Marketisation of ECEC

In Finland, the provision of early education and childcare constitutes an integrated system. Municipalities are obligated to provide ECEC for all children from 0 to 6 years, regardless of parents' labour market status. Pre-primary education for 6-year-olds is an obligatory part of ECEC, and at the age of 7 years children start primary education. The ECEC system is mostly centre-based, but it also includes family day care. Families' income-tested ECEC fees in the public sector (0–290€) cover around 14% of the municipalities' costs of ECEC provision (e.g. Vlasov 2018; FNAfE 2018; Act on ECEC 36/1973).

The governance of ECEC involves two levels. At the national level, ECEC provision and pedagogy are regulated by national legislation and normative core curriculum guidelines under the Ministry of Education and Culture. Municipalities, for their part, have a statutory responsibility for ECEC provision. However, they have the freedom to choose to provide ECEC services themselves, to purchase outsourced services or to provide them privately by subsidising demand. Municipal authorities also have the statutory duty to monitor private

provision (FNAfE 2016; Act on ECEC 36/1973)[1]. Thus, public and private ECEC are likewise regulated by central and municipal governments. For example, private providers are obliged to comply with the national ECEC curriculum and national statutes regarding staff qualifications and child-adult ratios.

Private ECEC provision and families' ability to choose an ECEC provider are supported by demand-led subsidies granted by municipalities and the state. The municipalities can choose between a voucher system and a local private day care allowance (PDAMS) or use both. The municipality defines the monetary value of the ECEC voucher. The voucher enables the family to freely choose the private provider that they prefer, as long as the provider is approved by the municipality. The guidelines for voucher systems are laid down in legislation (AoSV 569/2009). Local authorities then conclude local voucher contracts that regulate private provision within their region. Vouchers are usually income-tested, and legislation requires that municipalities define their value so that it is 'reasonable' from the customer's perspective. In practice, voucher values are set in such a way that customer fees for families are relatively close to those in the public sector. The PDAMS combines the private childcare allowance (PDA), which is granted by the Social Insurance Institution and available for every family in Finland, and a municipal supplement (MS), which is paid by around 40% of Finnish municipalities (Lahtinen & Selkee, 2016). The PDA consists of fixed and income-tested components. The value of the municipal supplement varies by municipality and may be income-tested or fixed. In practice, due to the small size of plain PDA, the municipal supplement is always necessary in cases where the municipality decides to support centre-based ECEC with PDA.[2]

In 2016, among children attending centre-based ECEC or family day care, an ECEC voucher was granted to 7.5% of children, and a PDAMS was granted to 6.7% of children. Recently the use of vouchers has been increasing and the use of PDAMS decreasing (see Säkkinen & Kuoppala 2017).

Theoretically, it can be presumed that the form of subsidy used in a given municipality has a dual effect on local ECEC markets. Firstly, public subsidies for private ECEC provision are believed to enhance the public sector's regulatory power (Wadsworth & George, 2009). However, mainly because of the more explicit legislation and municipal control via local contracts, voucher-subsidised private provision can be expected to be more tightly regulated than services subsidised with PDAMS. Secondly, when the subsidy is income-tested, which is the case especially with vouchers, customer fees in the private sector are relatively close to those in the public sector. Fixed-sum subsidies, usually PDAMS, in turn, mean that the customer fee in the private sector is the same for every family. On this basis it may be assumed that income-tested subsidies should allow families in diverse financial situations to make use of private services, whereas fixed-sum subsidies favour middle class families who would have to pay the maximum fee in the public sector anyway.

[1] Municipalities' costs are covered by municipal taxes and government transfers, which cover around 25% of municipal spending (MoF 2018).

[2] Voucher values in different municipalities range typically from 371€ to 1,148€. Depending on parents' income, the value of PDA ranges from 173.74 to 319.85€ and MS from 100 to 860€ (Lahtinen & Selkee 2016)

Data and Methods

The data for the study are drawn from qualitative research interviews with municipal decisionmakers regarding ECEC that were conducted in 2016. To include the two key parties in municipal decision making related to ECEC policy, both local politicians and ECEC administrators were interviewed. Thus, the data consist of interviews with 18 politicians and 29 administrators in seven Finnish municipalities. The politicians represented parties that played both major and minor roles in the local policy of a given municipality. Nine interviewed politicians and two administrators were males. Each interviewee was personally invited to participate in the research. Participation was voluntary, and the interviewees were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage in the process. All the interviewees signed an informed consent form. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, only their positions (administrators/politicians) are described. The seven municipalities were located in different parts of the country, had diverse demographical features[3] and had different policies regarding the demand-based subsidies they provided for private ECEC. Two of them provided only PDAMS, three provided both vouchers and PDAMS, and two provided only vouchers. The selection of the municipalities aimed to maximise the variation between them and thus increase the transferability of the findings (Gobo, 2004).

The interviews were carried out by a team of nine researchers, with each interview conducted by one researcher. The interviews, 90 minutes on average, ranged widely over ECEC provision, as well as system and service guidance, in a given municipality. We selected all the sections that related to public support for private ECEC or private ECEC provision more broadly for a closer analysis.

In the data analysis, we apply interpretative discourse analysis (DA) to scrutinise the social contexts at work and the discourse supporting them (see Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Interpretative discourse analysis examines multiple texts that 'constitute bodies of discourse' and thus seeks to identify discursive patterns and structures (Heracleous, 2004, p. 176). We use discourse as an analytical concept understood as a general system used to formulate and articulate ideas during a particular period of time (see Alvesson & Karreman, 2000). Discourses provide people with a range of resources to draw on and make sense of the world with (Potter, 2012; Potter & Wetherell, 1995). While discourses themselves are constructions of the resources used, they can also be understood as constructive in the sense as they build or produce versions of the world, society and events (see Potter, 2004, 2012).

DA understands interview data as a form of accounting rather than factist reports about reality (Nikander, 2012). Thus, our analysis focused on how social reality was produced in the interviews and which available cultural resources were used in that process. Although both the interviewer and interviewee(s) act as agents and agenda setters in an interview situation and participate in the meaning-making process (see Nikander 2012), in this study we focus on the interviewees' accounts and discussion. At the beginning of the analysis, we scrutinised how the interviewees described public support for private ECEC and different

[3] The populations of the municipalities ranged from around 13,000 to 650,000 inhabitants.

subsidy systems. Similarities and differences in the descriptions of the subsidy systems were identified. However, focusing on the discussion of the subsidies as such overlooked certain aspects of the descriptions of increased private ECEC provision. Therefore, the analysis was taken further to allow a more encompassing view of the connective and repetitive features of the descriptions and explanations related to subsidies for private ECEC. In the analysis we worked with the Finnish data. The interview extracts presented in this article were selected so that they were illustrative, and there were only minor challenges related to translation and contextual knowledge (see Nikander 2008). A bilingual (Finnish-English) translator has checked the translations.

A detailed examination of the connective and repetitive features of the talk revealed that notions of a municipality's role as service organiser and provider comprise an essential aspect of the discussion of the various subsidy systems. Based on this finding, we were able to identify three frames within which public support for private ECEC was rationalised. In each frame, the municipality's relationship to private provision and is considered from a different viewpoint. The three frames are the *pragmatic frame, government frame* and *choice frame*. However, these three frames are not mutually exclusive but often overlap and intertwine.

Pragmatic frame

The pragmatic frame implies that increasing public support for private provision is a cost-efficient way to produce ECEC services, to respond to fluctuating service demand and to solve issues concerning investments in ECEC infrastructure. In this approach, the role of the municipality as an ECEC provider is hence constructed in relation to its statutory obligations, the demand for ECEC services and the economic realities presented in the discussion. Typically, the increased dependence on the private ECEC sector is represented as a pragmatic progression, without linking it to any political viewpoints or ideals. It is represented as independent of the 'personal' viewpoints that the interviewees express[4]. More pronounced accounts represent public support for private provision as a necessity that will allow economic leeway for a municipality facing financial hardship or increased ECEC demand. Excerpt 1 demonstrates how this necessity is constructed.

Excerpt 1 (Administrator)

1 *…The same [private] entrepreneur [subsidised with vouchers] has just started work on a new*
2 *branch (…) to help improve our day care situation. At the moment we've got temporary*
3 *premises and the situation we have is that we don't, the municipal authority doesn't really*
4 *have any vacancies of its own. Our options are either to start building our own day care*
5 *centre, there was some talk to that end during the previous council's term, and we actually*
6 *have the blueprints and so on. But in the end it was not felt… felt that this was a good option*

[4] The data implies a sort of political consensus about public support for private ECEC provision at the local level. This is visible, for example, in the way that interviewees justify and accept local developments even if they contradict the party's national policies. The administrators, for their part, described the daily practices and the situation of local ECEC in more detail and more comprehensively than politicians, but nonetheless drew on the same discourses as the politicians in their accounts.

and at the moment we've had some major school renovations underway and they've been given priority. In that sense it was really good that a private provider took over and we had these discussion that they'll commission the development of a new day care centre, which will allow us to offload some of these temporary premises.

The interviewee refers to the challenging reality within which the decisions about ECEC in the municipality are made: a shortage of ECEC services and premises, as well as investments in school buildings used for compulsory education[5]. In this situation, the private ECEC provider is represented as the municipality's helper because it takes charge of the investments in ECEC infrastructure. Excerpt 1, therefore, demonstrates how the necessity of investment in ECEC infrastructure translates into the necessity of implementing private ECEC provision with the help of public subsidies.

While viewing private ECEC as a necessity for the municipality, the interviewees also describe the increase in private provision as an economically rational policy, as illustrated in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2 (Politician)

So cost-efficiency is what is looked for when private providers get involved and whether the private sector can deliver greater economy, that remains to be seen. But there are lots of examples that they've done just that in other areas. This of course is the national policy that all citizens have access to services so that they're provided almost by anyone. It's the individual's choice and that's expected to produce greater efficiency in service provision. The same goes for ECEC, better results with less financial input.

The interviewee represents private ECEC provision as cost-effective by referring to experiences in other service sectors and a national multi-provision trend (lines 2–4). Here, individual freedom of choice, enabled by a multi-provision model, is seen as enhancing the efficiency of services in general, as well as in ECEC specifically. Supporting private ECEC provision is thus represented as a rational development leading to better outcomes for the services, with fewer resources being consumed. By using passive voice (lines 1, 2, 4, 5) and speculative utterances (lines 2, 5), the interviewee avoids explicitly positioning himself related to the topic. This analytical mode represents private provision as a result of rational contemplation that is free of political and personal ideals. Thus, private ECEC provision and economic support for such are viewed as a pragmatic solution given the situation at hand. Elsewhere in the data, pragmatism is produced, for example, by underscoring the fact that although privatisation is not in line with interviewee's own ideology, supporting it is an economic necessity. Pragmatism can be constructed also by presenting doubts and contradictions related to privatisation and its' actual cost-effectiveness.

Government frame

The government frame consists of talk that addresses the relationship between public sector and private ECEC provision. Private provision may be positioned in a complementary role or as a part of the public ECEC network. These two ways of representing the public-private

[5] In Finland, the provision of primary and secondary education is statutorily, a public responsibility.

relationship differ from each other in terms of the aspects of governance, regulation and control. The way in which this relationship is represented appears to be connected to the private sector's share of a municipality's ECEC provision and the features of the local subsidy system.

When the interviewees rationalise the PDAMS system, the private sector, as a provider, is typically positioned, as Excerpt 3 illustrates, in a complementary position relative to public ECEC provision.

Excerpt 3 (Politician)

Well they do pay some municipal supplement [on top of PDA] so that people can afford to send their kids [to a private ECEC centre] if public day care is not available (…) but they do work together, I mean their existence is really appreciated and absolutely they're like a partner.

In Excerpt 3, the interviewee states that the municipal supplement (MS) enables families to use private ECEC services *if* public services are not available. The use of the subordinating conjunction *if* positions private provision in a secondary role and public provision in a primary role as ECEC providers. Public-private relationship is thus represented as hierarchical, but the line between the sectors is blurred by underscoring collaboration with and appreciation for private provision (line 3). Throughout the data, the interviewees emphasise collaboration between the sectors, though the element of sparring in private provision is explicated in some accounts.

The PDAMS system is not typically rationalised as an instrument of control, regulation or governance regarding private ECEC provision. In fact, the interviewees from municipalities that have begun to provide ECEC vouchers alongside the PDAMS system might state that private providers may choose to stay with the PDAMS system when they are not willing or capable of accepting the terms of the local voucher contract and the municipal control it implies. In addition, PDAMS is connected to private providers' opportunity to freely price their services.

Thus, the relationship between the municipality and private ECEC provision follows a different logic when the interviewees describe the ECEC voucher system. First, the regulation and governance of the private sector are emphasised; second, private provision is often aligned with public provision and presented as a part of the same service system. Typically, this is done by underscoring 'uniformity' between the sectors, as Excerpt 4 illustrates.

Excerpt 4 (Administrator)

It's just plain ordinary families [who use private services], I mean we refer more families with children than there are those who apply out of their own accord. Oppila [name of the provider] has worked closely with them in the sense that they're committed to the same objectives and rules and ways of working as we are [public ECEC], and because it's this income-tested voucher system which is not intended only for certain families, but anyone is eligible to apply or we can refer anyone, it appears as exactly the same kind of service as all our other services.

In Excerpt 4, the uniformity of public and private ECEC is produced by highlighting their similarities from the families' and municipality's perspectives and by illustrating a close collaboration (lines 1, 2) and consistent course of action (line 3) between the sectors. The

interviewee emphasises the evenness of public and private provision in utterances like '*plain ordinary'* (line 1) and '*exactly the same kind'* (line 6). In sum, by underlining the uniformity of public and private ECEC provision, the interviewee depicts private services as though they were part of the municipality's service provision and not a separate service sector. Highlighting similarities is a typical way of positioning private provision as aligned with public provision in municipalities that provide vouchers.

But not all interviewees accept the premise that private and public ECEC provision are equal and uniform. Instead, it is argued that some private providers tend to choose their customers. The voucher system is described as an instrument that is used to steer private providers in a desired direction and so to guarantee the similarity and equality of public and private provision, for instance in terms of the availability of special support. Private providers are thus represented as economically rational actors who can be controlled by financial incentives. Moreover, private providers' reliance on public subsidies is produced, for example, in accounts of negotiations about the value of local vouchers. This reliance constructs an asymmetric power relationship between public ECEC administration and private providers because the former has control over the cash flows on which the latter depend. The income tested voucher system is hence represented as an instrument that positions private ECEC both as a part of the municipality's service portfolio and in a subordinate relationship as compared to the administration of public ECEC. Nevertheless, in municipalities where private provision already has a notable foothold, private providers are represented as having significant power resources as well. These power resources are produced with the following logic: the more the private providers' share of service provision in the municipality increases, the more the municipal ECEC administration will be forced to consider these private providers' standpoints.

Though increasing private provision is often represented in a positive tone, the risks of this development are explicated as well.

Excerpt 5 (Politican)

Of course there's the risk [in providing vouchers], which we did recognize, that when you're creating markets you will see all flowers blooming for a while and you'll get new and local service providers. But there is this risk of concentration and a major operator buying them all out, in which case you'll soon be left with not many service providers after all, so again you'll be faced with this pricing issue and what have you. So again just one or two providers will be calling the shots, so I mean for me, this is something you have to be wary about. For me, we should have both local, association-based providers as well as business operators. They should all have the chance to get involved. But if you have just one or two providers running the whole day care business in the city, that in my opinion isn't a good place to be in because you have to remember that they, if they're limited companies following the rules of normal market economy, then it definitely has, especially if it's backed by some multinational investment group, then it will have certain specified yield requirements and that's at the expense of something else. (...) But I do think that this [private provision] is necessary, I mean it's a good servant but a bad master and you need to make sure it doesn't get too much power.

Excerpt 5 demonstrates the contradictory web of meanings connected to publicly subsidised ECEC markets. Though the diverse forms of private provision are represented as worth pursuing (lines 6 – 8, 12), the consolidation of private provision is represented as an

avoidable form of progress by linking it to the increased pricing (lines 3 – 5) power of private providers; large corporations' determined profit seeking, which restricts resourcing in '*something else'* (lines 11 – 12), and the increasing power of private ECEC in relation to municipal administration (lines 12 – 14). Throughout the entire account, especially when using the idiom of good master and bad servants (lines 13 – 14), the interviewee legitimises the municipality's need to control and regulate privatisation development and also represents the multi-provision model of ECEC as desirable.

In sum, the voucher system is represented as an instrument that enables municipalities to control the size of the private sector. The ECEC voucher is seen both as a subsidy via which private provision can be increased in the municipality and as a means of restricting the share of private ECEC in the municipality when needed. Thus, the voucher system is rationalised as an instrument via which private provision can be adapted to meet the fluctuating demand for ECEC services. The terms of the local voucher contract are represented as a mechanism via which the private sector can be governed, controlled and regulated by the municipal ECEC administration.

Choice frame

The choice frame comprises interview discussions that consider the municipality's role in families' ECEC choices. The key notion of the approach is that increasing private provision affords all families greater freedom to decide about their children's ECEC. More precisely, this approach is comprised of accounts that consider private provision as an improvement to the municipality's ECEC service selection and discuss its affordability for families and their access to private services.

One aspect of the frame represents private provision as an improvement in the municipality's service selection, which thus enables the local ECEC system to better serve families. This is demonstrated in the following excerpt, in which the interviewee describes the benefits of private provision.

Excerpt 6 (Administrator)

I'm sure that from the child's and family's point of view it's having a choice. Perhaps being able to make the best possible choice based on the family's and the child's needs, it gives that freedom of choice.

The interviewee underscores both the family's and the child's interests and needs in the selection of ECEC. In her response, the possibility of choosing the best ECEC provider for the child and the family is linked with the existence of private provision. Elsewhere in the data, the interviewees sometimes associate private provision's ability to meet families' needs with specific pedagogical approaches that private providers may follow. Such diversity in ECEC services is equated with quality service selection. For example, in Excerpt 6, the interviewees implicitly position the parents as responsible for their ECEC choices while underscoring the possibility of each parent choosing the best services for their child and family. Moreover, the municipalities' economic support for private provision is usually represented as in the interest of the families.

Another aspect of the frame relates to both families' financial opportunities to choose a satisfactory provider and affordability of private provision. The significance of this aspect of this approach is evident because the interviewees often, either implicitly or explicitly, account for it, even although they were not asked about it. Different subsidy systems are rationalised using different logics regarding the affordability of the services.

Excerpt 7 (Administrator)

Q: What was the reason why you decided to switch to this voucher system [income-tested]?

A: We wanted it [private ECEC] to give families equal… the option. Private day care allowances make day care so expensive that it hasn't been a real option for all families. So here [the voucher system] we're looking at giving everyone the opportunity to apply [for private ECEC].

As Excerpt 7 shows, the interviewee explains that the income-tested voucher system was introduced in the municipality because it provides equal economic opportunities for every family to apply for private ECEC services (lines 2, 4). Moreover, the interviewee associates the PDAMS system with the selectivity of private ECEC (lines 2, 3). Hence, it appears that affordability and selectivity are understood as opposite sides of same coin regarding the price of customer fees. The municipality is represented as a responsible actor, serving families and allowing them to choose the services they want.

Indeed, the voucher system is specifically justified by stating that it enables private ECEC for all families, regardless of socio-economic situation. This is also demonstrated in Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8 (Administrator)

As for the voucher system, what we've been aiming to do with our planning and development efforts is precisely to achieve equality among all local residents. We've not wanted to create an elite day care centre, but precisely to [provide services] for everyone on an equal basis.

Above, the interviewee represents the voucher system as an instrument that guarantees equality among local residents. Equality is implicitly connected with the affordability of private ECEC when the interviewee responds to an alleged selectivity accusation by underscoring the fact that the municipality's purpose is to develop not an elite day care centre but a centre that is equally just for everyone (lines 2, 3). For example, in Excerpt 8, the affordability of private ECEC, irrespective of a family's socio-economic situation, is particularly connected to the voucher system, and it is also repeatedly produced in the data as a precondition for equality among local families.

The PDAMS system, especially fixed-sum, is usually associated with the selection of client families for private ECEC based on their financial resources. The selectivity is also used as a justification for the municipality's decision to change its subsidy system from PDAMS to a voucher. Excerpt 9 demonstrates the logic by which the PDAMS system and selectivity are related to one another.

Excerpt 9 (Administrator)

Private provision is brought alongside the service network as a complementary service (…) And the private provider then sets the customer fees so that they can maintain their own customer base, looking at what kind of customer fees they can charge. But in the planning and

preparation process, we haven't started out from the concept that you see in so many voucher systems that the fees [for private ECEC] have to be exactly the same [as for public ECEC] (…) And as we haven't even started out from the idea that it should be priced at the exact same level. Yes of course in some cases it will cost a little bit more to families.

In Excerpt 9, the interviewee explicitly positions private ECEC provision as complementing public ECEC provision. Regarding private providers' ability to select clientele, the interviewee describes the freedom of private providers to set their own (higher) customer fees. The account thus separates the municipality from the governance of the private sector and draw on market logic, according to which the prices of ECEC services are negotiated between customers and providers. Thus, market logic is used to implicitly legitimise the selectivity of private providers.

Families' subject positions are constructed differently in the two subsidy systems. Regarding both vouchers and PDAMS, parents and families are considered active subjects who are free to decide about and choose their child's care and education. However, the accounts that promote the voucher system underscore the equality of families in ECEC selection, which is safeguarded by the municipal subsidy policy. When discussing the PDAMS system, parents and families are described as individual subjects or clients who act independently on the ECEC markets. The latter notion includes though the possibility that the family's freedom of choice may be limited due to the pricing of the customer fees for private ECEC.

Conclusion

In this article, we have identified three frames within which public subsidies (vouchers and PDAMS) for private ECEC and ECEC privatisation are rationalised: the *pragmatic frame*, *government frame* and *choice frame*. The pragmatic frame is constructed by representing publicly subsidised increases in private ECEC as an economically rational, pragmatic or necessary method of development. The government frame includes two ways of producing the public-private relationship. The first positions private provision as part of the public service network and presents municipal ECEC administration as occupying a power position and being in charge of the control, regulation and government of private provision. The second positions private ECEC in a complementary role and as a separate sector by drawing a line between the public and private sectors, emphasising the public sector's role as the main provider of ECEC and allowing more space for market mechanisms at the expense of public involvement. The choice frame is related to the government frame such that when private provision is positioned as a part of the public ECEC system, the affordability of private ECEC and thus every family's equal opportunity of choice is emphasised. When private provision is positioned in a complementary role, families are represented as active market agents, with the result that the selectivity of private ECEC becomes implicitly accepted.

The results show how the rationalisations within the frames function to facilitate the privatisation and marketisation of ECEC. At the same time, the results imply that municipalities primarily endeavour to keep ECEC provision under their own control, as suggested by Foucauldian thinking which argues that in contemporary neoliberal governance markets are constituted and maintained by states (Gane, 2012).

This study also suggests that the neoliberal market rationality presented in the previous literature (e.g.Brennan et al., 2012; Moss, 2009; Naumann, 2011; Penn, 2009, 2012), as reflected in ideas such as freedom of choice, economic effectiveness and quality due to competition, represents an important resource for the interviewees to use in legitimising and accounting for municipal ECEC policies related to private provision. However, the perceived importance of the equality and affordability of private ECEC for all families can be understood as a heritage of the ideas of universalism, on which Finnish ECEC institutions have been based. The intertwinement of market rationality and universalism can be related to Naumann's (2011) observations suggesting that ECEC policies, which are shaped by historical trajectories, do not evolve from one paradigm or regime to another as such. Rather, the process can be understood as the maturation of 'old' welfare-state promises and also as searching for new paths (see also Mahon et al., 2012). In the Finnish context, this process becomes especially visible in the way in which publicly financed, regulated and governed private ECEC is constructed as a part of public ECEC network in the accounts analysed. The old promises of universalism are still involved even as new paths, such as market rationality, are used to justify ongoing developments.

The findings of this study imply that the concept of equality in the context of ECEC may be shifting from a universal conception which emphasizes *families' universal right to public ECEC of uniform quality* towards *families' equal opportunity to choose the services they want to use*. Parents are thus constructed, using Yuen and Grieshaber's (2009) conceptualisation, as well-informed consumers bearing the risk and responsibility of making successful choices for their children. Furthermore, the choices made by parents can thus be understood as acts of moral accountability (Karlsson, Löfdahl, & Prieto, 2013).

Conceptualising equality of ECEC access in terms of equal opportunities to choose emphasizes the equal distribution of ECEC. However, this notion can be problematic from a social justice point of view. If social justice is understood as 'a strong equality of opportunity among individuals', it is clearly inadequate to focus only on different distributive patterns. Instead, we must also intervene in the institutional and individual-level processes and interactions which maintain structural inequalities and constrain equal opportunities (Young, 2001). Fraser's (1998) dual framework of justice likewise includes both economic redistribution and cultural recognition. Moreover, as Lazenby (2016) argues, in addition to concentrating on equal distribution, the profound conception of equality of opportunity in education requires making a distinction between equality of opportunity *through* and *for* education where *through* refers to the instrumental value and *for* to the intrinsic value of education. Therefore, as Connel argues (2012), future discussions about the marketisation of ECEC should recognize that social justice in education is not just about the equal distribution (access) of educational services but about the nature of the service itself, and its consequences for society over time as well.

In sum, this article has shown that the meanings and ideas used to rationalise the marketisation of Finnish ECEC give a contradictory and inconsistent picture of this process. Even though market logics and tendencies seem to have gained a strong foothold in local policies, there is a firm commitment to universalism and maintaining public control over

local ECEC provision. An interesting and important question for future research is to explore the evolution of the relationship between private providers, which increasingly often are consist large corporations, and municipal control and governance.

References

Adamson, E., & Brennan, D. 2014. "Social Investment or Private Profit? Diverging Notions of 'Investment' in Early Childhood Education and Care." *International Journal of Early Childhood* 46 (1): 47–61.

Angus, L. 2015. "School choice: neoliberal education policy and imagined futures." *British Journal of Sociology of Education.* 36 (3): 395-413.

Akgunduz, Y. E., & Plantega, J. 2014. "Childcare in the Netherlands: Lessons in privatisation." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 22 (3): 379–385.

Alvesson, M., & Karreman, D. 2000. "Varieties of Discourse: On the Study of Organizations through Discourse Analysis." *Human Relations* 53 (9), 1125–1149.

Anttonen, A. & Meagher, G. 2013. Mapping marketisation: concepts and goal. In *Marketisation in Nordic eldercare: a research report on legislation, oversight, extent and consequences*, edited by G. Meagher & M. Szebehely, 13–22. Stockholm Studies in Social Work 30. Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Brancaleone, D & O'Brien, S. 2011. "Educational commodification and the (economic) sign value of learning outcomes." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 32 (4): 501-519.

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., & Szebehely, M. 2012. "The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and liberal care regimes." *Journal of European Social Policy* 22 (4): 377–391.

Çalışkan, K & Callon, M. 2010. "Economization, part 2: a research programme for the study of markets." *Economy and Society*. 39 (1): 1-32.

Connell, R. 2012. "Just education." Journal of Education Policy, 27 (5): 681-683

Djelic, M.-L. 2006. "Marketization: from intellectual agenda to global policy-making", in), *Transnational Governance: Institutional Dynamics of Regulation.* Edited by Djelic, M.-L.and Sahlin-Andersson, K, 53 – 73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Finnish National Agency For Education, FNAFE 2018. Early Childhood Education and Care. https://www.oph.fi/english/education_system/early_childhood_education 20.10.2018

Fraser, N. 1998. "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist Age'." *Feminism & Politics,* edited by Phillips, A. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 430−460.

Gane, N. 2012. "The governmentalities of neoliberalism: panopticism, post-panopticism and beyond." *The Sociological Review* 60: 611–634.

Gobo, G. 2004. Sampling, Representativeness and Generalizability. In, *Qualitative Research Practice, edited by* C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium, & D. Silverman London, 435–456: SAGE Publications.

Hansen, M. & Lindholst, A. 2016. "Marketization revisited." *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 29 Issue: 5, pp.398-408, https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-05-2016-0090

Heracleous, L. T. 2004, Interpretivist Approaches to Organizational Discourse, in. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Discourse*, edited by Grant, D., Hardy, C., Oswick, C. & Putnam, L, 175 – 192. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Karlsson, M., Löfdahl, A., & Prieto, H. P. 2013."Morality in parents' stories of preschool choice: narrating identity positions of good parenting", *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 34 (2): 208–224.

Kildal, N. & Kuhnle, S. 2005. "The Nordic welfare model and the idea of universalism." In *Normative Foundations of the Welfare State: The Nordic Experience*, edited by Kildal, N. & Kuhnle, S. 13–33. London: Routledge.

Lahtinen, J., & Selkee, J. 2016. "Varhaiskasvatuskyselyraportti II: hallinto, kuntalisät, palveluseteli." Helsinki: Kuntaliitto.

Lazenby, H. 2016. "What is equality of opportunity in education?" *Theory and Research in Education* 14 (1): 65–76.

Lewis, J., & West, A. 2016. "Early Childhood Education and Care in England under Austerity: Continuity or Change in Political Ideas, Policy Goals, Availability, Affordability and Quality in a Childcare Market?" *Journal of Social Policy* 46 (2): 1–18.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. 2014. "Childcare markets in an age of austerity." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 22 (3): 386–396

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.

MoF, Finnish Ministry of Finance. 2018. https://vm.fi/en/local-government-affairs 20.10.2018.

Moss, P. 2009. "There Are Alternatives! Markets and Democratic Experimentalism in Early Childhood Education and Care." Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, Number 53.

Naumann, I. 2011. "Towards the marketization of early childhood education and care? Recent developments in Sweden and the United Kingdom." *Nordic Journal of Social Research* 2 (2): 37–53.

Nikander, P. 2012. Interviews as discourse data. in *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2 ed.), edited by J. Gubrium, J. Holstein, A. Marvasti, & K. McKinney, 397–414. Thousand Oaks: California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Nikander, P. 2008. Working with Transcriptions and Translated Data. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 5: 3, 225-231. Special issue on Teaching Qualitative Methods.

Ozga, J. 2011. "Governing Narratives: 'Local' Meanings and Globalising Education Policy." Education Inquiry 2 (2): 305–318.

Penn, H. 2000. "Policy and Practice in Childcare and Nursery Education." *Journal of Social Policy* 29 (1): 37–54.

Penn, H. 2009. 'International Perspectives on Quality in Mixed Economies of Childcare', *The National Institute Economic Review* 207 (1): 83–89.

Penn, H. 2011. "Gambling on the Market: The Role of For-Profit Provision in Early Childhood Education and Care." *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 9 (2): 150–16.

Penn, H. 2012. Childcare markets: do they work? In *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?*, edited by Lloyd, E & Penn, H, 19–42. Bristol: Policy Press.

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. 2002. "Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction." Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods, Vol. 50, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Potter, J. 2004. “Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk.” In *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*, edited by Silverman, D. 187–207. London: Sage.
Potter, J. 2012. “Discursive psychology and discourse analysis.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Edited by Gee, J. P. & Handford, M. 104–119. Routledge Ltd - M.U.A.
Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. 1995. “Discourse analysis.” In *Rethinking methods in psychology* , edited by Smith, J.A., Harré, R. & Van Langenhove, L.80–92. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
Schimank, U. & Volkmann, U. 2012. “Economizing and Marketization in a Functionally Differentiated Capitalist Society – A Theoretical Conceptualization.” in *The Marketization of Society: Economizing the Non-Economic*. Edited by Schimank, U. & Volkmann U.; Published 2012; Bremen: Research Cluster “Welfare Societies”.
Schwiter, K., Berndt, C. & Truong, J. 2015. “Neoliberal austerity and the marketisation of elderly care.” *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19 (3): 379-399.
Säkkinen, S., & Kuoppala, T. 2017. “Varhaiskasvatus 2016.” THL:n tilastoraportti 29/2017.
Wadsworth, J., & George, R. 2009. “Choosing the Right Approach: New Labour and the care and education of young children.” *FORUM* 51 (3): 309–318.
Vanderbroeck, M. 2006. “Globalisation and Privatisation: The Impact on Childcare Policy and Practice.” Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, No. 38.
West, A. & Nikolai, R. 2013. “Welfare Regimes and Education Regimes: Equality of Opportunity and Expenditure in the EU (and US)”, *Journal of Social Policy* 42 (3): 469–493.
Vincent, C., Braun, A. & Ball, S. 2008. “Childcare, choice and social class: Caring for young children in the UK.” *Critical Social Policy* 28 (1): 5–26.
Vlasov, J. 2018. “Reflecting Changes in Early Childhood Education in the USA, Russia and Finland.” Academic dissertation. Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 2416.
Young, I. 2001. “Equality of Whom? Social Groups and Judgments of Injustice.” *The Journal of Political Philosophy*. 9 (1): 1-18.
Yuen, G., & Grieshaber, S. 2009. “Parents' Choice of Early Childhood Education Services in Hong Kong: A Pilot Study about Vouchers.” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 10 (3): 263–279.

Transcription key:

(…)	excluded section
[ ]	Author’s comment
…	sentence is not completed, address continues

II

SELECTIVITY OF CLIENTELE IN FINNISH PRIVATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

by

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. 2021

Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, *7(2*), 91-105.

DOI: 10.1080/20020317.2021.1911161

NORDIC JOURNAL OF STUDIES IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY
2021, VOL. 7, NO. 2, 91–105
https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2021.1911161

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Selectivity of clientele in finnish private early childhood education and care

Ville Ruutiainen [a], Maarit Alasuutari [b] and Kirsti Karila [c]

[a]Ville Ruutiainen, Department of Education, University Of Jyväskylä, Jyvaskyla, Finland; [b]Maarit Alasuutari, Department of Education, University Of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylän Yliopisto, Finland; [c]Kirsti Karila, Faculty of Education, University of Tampere, Tampereen Yliopisto, Finland

ABSTRACT

In accordance with the Nordic welfare model, the Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) system has traditionally been based on public provision and the idea of universalism. However, over the last twenty years the ECEC system has undergone market-oriented reforms. As a result, the share of private for-profit ECEC provision has grown significantly. By applying impression management theory, this qualitative research examines how representatives of private ECEC providers describe the selection and selectivity of their clientele and how they aim at managing the impression they convey through their descriptions. The study shows how three different mechanisms of selectivity are produced and legitimized in the interview talk. Furthermore, the study makes visible the cultural assumptions and expectations related to private ECEC provision and the potential selectivity it produces.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 22 February 2021
Accepted 26 March 2021

KEYWORDS
Early childhood education and care; impression management; private provision; selectivity; legitimation

Introduction

Scholars have argued that during the neoliberal era welfare states have undergone a transformation characterized by intense marketization (Çalışkan & Callon, 2010; Djelic, 2006; Gilbert, 2002; Moss, 2014). This marketization has extended into education as well, including early childhood education and care (ECEC) (Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Rubiano & Urban, 2014; Vanderbroeck, 2006). Market-oriented reforms within ECEC services have been especially intense in liberal Anglo-Saxon countries (e.g. Adamson & Brennan, 2014; Mahon et al., 2012) and they are presented as a way to increase parents' freedom of choice by enabling them to choose the services they prefer from among many competitive providers. Thus, ECEC (or childcare) becomes conceptualized as a commodity purchased from markets (e.g Ruutiainen, Alasuutari & Karila, 2020; Woodrow & Press, 2018). However, the accessibility and affordability of services in ECEC markets is often questionable (Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). This, in turn, potentially leads to growing inequality of children and families (e.g. Brennan et al., 2012; Knijn & Lewis, 2017).

Unlike Anglo-Saxon countries, Nordic countries have traditionally relied more on public service provision and the idea of universalism[1] (e.g. Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Lloyd & Penn, 2014; Vlasov, 2018). However, neoliberal policy discourses have spread to Nordic welfare regimes as well (Brennan et al., 2012; Mahon et al., 2012), and there have been various shifts towards market-oriented systems (e.g. Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016; Haug, 2014; Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019; Naumann, 2011; Vlasov, 2018). For example, in Sweden roughly 20% (EURYDYCE, 2018) and in Norway around half (Jacobsen & Vollset, 2012) of ECEC is privately provided, with a growing focus on for-profit provision. Due to increased privatization and marketization, parents have become positioned as subjects ultimately responsible for ECEC choice and thus their choices become moral acts related to what is considered good parenting (Karlsson et al., 2013).

In Finland, the shift towards ECEC markets is evident in the increase of private ECEC provision. Until the 2010s, less than 10% of ECEC was privately

CONTACT Ville Ruutiainen ville.ruutiainen@jyu.fi Ville Ruutiainen, Department of Education, University Of Jyväskylä, Jyvaskyla Finland

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

Transcription key
(. . .) excluded section
[] Author's comment
. . . sentence is not completed, address continues
, A short break. pause in speech, continues the speech
(-) Missing word or part of a word
(–) Missing section(word) Unclear word or section
underlining Stressed word or section

provided (see Mahon et al., 2012), but in 2019 the share of private provision was already around 18% (FINEEC, 2019). At the same time, small local enterprises and non-profit providers were joined by rapidly growing ECEC chains. Between 2015 and 2019, the combined revenue of the three biggest for-profit chains increased from around EUR 46 million to EUR 146 million. During the same period, their staff increased from 1,033 to 3,566 employees (Asiakastieto, Financial information about companies -database, 2021). The growth of private provision is supported by public funding. Our previous study (Ruutiainen et al., 2020) demonstrated how municipal politicians and ECEC administrators commonly consider private ECEC accessible and affordable to all families and children. Their view was that contemporary development in Finland would not lead to differentiation of clientele between public and private services, even though the risk for this was identified. In this study, we turn to the private ECEC providers in Finland, inquiring about how they describe, in particular, their services and clientele from the viewpoint of selectivity.

The reforms promoting the marketization of ECEC in Finland have been enacted on an already existing universal and public system (See Mahon et al., 2012; Vlasov, 2018). The organization of ECEC services in Finland is municipalities' obligation, but the municipalities are allowed to decide whether they provide the services publicly or purchase them from private organizations. As is typical in Nordic countries, the governance of ECEC in Finland combines information governance and national-level regulations, including national core curriculum and statutes about preschool staff qualifications and adult-child ratios (Act on Early Childhood Education and Care). The same legislation regulates both public and private providers.

Traditionally, municipalities have made purchase contracts with private ECEC providers, but today two different demand-side subsidies have almost completely replaced them: the private daycare allowance (PDAMS), introduced in 1997, and ECEC vouchers, introduced in 2009.[2] The features of the two demand-side subsidies differ somewhat. Vouchers are granted by municipalities. They are usually income-tested (Lahtinen & Svartsjö, 2018) and, according to legislation, their value should be 'reasonable' for the customer. The PDAMS combines a private day care allowance (PDA) granted by the Social Insurance Institution and a municipal supplement (MS) granted by municipalities. The PDA has fixed and income-tested parts and the MS can be either income-tested or fixed. In principle, income-tested subsidies enable customer fees relatively close to those in public sector.[3] If the subsidy is fixed-sum, the customer fee is the same for every family regardless of their income level.

There is a growing body of academic literature about the marketization of ECEC, childcare[4] and education and how they are enabled or promoted in policies and policy discourses (e.g. Mahon et al., 2012; Vanderbroeck, 2006; Ruutiainen et al., 2020; Woodrow & Press, 2018). The other stream of research has touched upon affordability, accessibility and availability or other characteristics of ECEC systems that potentially increase or reduce the selectivity of ECEC(e.g. Barnett, 2010; Lloyd & Penn, 2012; Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019; Noailly & Visser, 2009; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014; Van Lancker, 2017). The research on parents' ECEC choices, in turn, argues that successful choices in ECEC markets require skills and resources (economic and cultural). These skills and resources are not equally distributed, and thus, market conditions benefit some families more than others (e.g. Angus, 2015; Eika, 2006; Grogan, 2012; Kampichler et al.'s, 2018; O'Donnell, 2018; Vincent & Ball, 2006). Research has also started to pay attention to the reciprocal relationship between the ECEC system and parents' choices and how the two affect each (e.g. Meyers & Jordan, 2006; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008).

However, regardless of the many perspectives researched around the potential selectivity related to ECEC markets, little is known, especially in Nordic contexts, about how private providers themselves see their role in relation to possible selectivity. A study by Vandenbroeck et al. (2008) suggests that the admission policies of childcare settings can form an environmental constraint on the accessibility of ECEC. However, in their study, the state, municipal and private providers' policies rarely differed from each other. Mäntyjärvi and Puroila (2019) research in the Finnish context, in turn, indicates that some private providers value their freedom to choose their customers (e.g. only children in need of whole-day-ECEC) and resist public interference in that freedom. This qualitative interview study continues this branch of research by examining how representatives of private ECEC providers describe the selection and selectivity of their clientele and how they aim at managing the impression they convey through their descriptions. Furthermore, by applying impression management theory, we investigate the cultural assumptions and expectations related to private ECEC provision and the potential selectivity it produces.

Impression management

Impression management (IM) theory, introduced by Ervin Goffman (1959), provides a framework for wide-scale studies on both individuals and organizations. According to the theory, people use different techniques or tactics to manage the impression they wish to give in interactional situations.

Organizational IM, in turn, can be understood as actions purposefully trying to influence an audience's perceptions about the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). The techniques applied depend on what people think is appropriate in a certain situation. In other words, IM techniques used in a particular situation depend on the expectations and assumptions individuals presume that the other parties of an interaction have for them. According to Schlenker's (1980 6) widely quoted definition, IM is 'the conscious or unconscious attempt to control images that are projected in real or imagined social interactions'. Traditionally, IM research has focused on individual impression management behaviour, for example, in interviews, performance appraisals and career success (Bolino et al., 2008; Lievens & Peeters, 2008; Tata & Prasad, 2015). However, organizational-level IM by organizations' spokespersons and representatives has also been a subject of research (e.g. Bolino et al., 2008; Elsbach, 2003; Elsbach et al., 1998; Talbot & Boiral, 2018; Vaara & Monin, 2010). It has been suggested that organizations should be understood as unique social actors, or as a bridge between institutions and individuals, and therefore it might be more appropriate to use individual-level theories when constructing theories of them (King et al., 2010; Whetten et al., 2009). In this respect, individual-level IM constructs are possible in interpreting organizational action (Tata & Prasad, 2015).

Brennan and Merkl-Davies (2013) suggest four different perspectives for examining organizational IM: economic, psychological, sociological and critical perspectives. This study focuses on the sociological approach, which understands IM according to legitimacy theory as actions aimed to align an organization's norms and values with those of society (Brennan & Merkl-Davies, 2013). IM is, thus, understood as an instrument for organizations or organizational spokespersons in trying to increase the legitimacy of an organization or its actions (Elsbach, 2003; Elsbach et al., 1998; Ogden & Clarke, 2005; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Tata & Prasad, 2015).

Research at both the individual (e.g. Boeije, 2004; Bolino et al., 2008; Ellis et al., 2002) and organizational (Bolino et al., 2008: Mohamed et al., 1999; Talbot & Boiral, 2018; Tata & Prasad, 2015) levels often recognizes defensive and assertive IM techniques. At the individual level, assertive IM tactics may include self-promotion tactics, exemplification and ingratiation. Defensive tactics may include excuses, justifications and apologies (Ellis et al., 2002). At the organizational level, assertive IM tactics are often proactive and used to enhance the organization's image. To respond to threatening situations, organizations may adopt more responsive defending tactics (Mohamed et al., 1999). Such accounts may include excuses, justifications, denials and apologies (Brennan & Merkl-Davies, 2013; Elsbach, 2003). In general, defensive IM tactics are used to minimize bad effects and assertive tactics to maximize good effects (Bolino et al., 2008). Moreover, IM strategies are used to promote credibility and maintain the social accessibility of companies (Lillqvist & Louhiala-Salminen, 2014) or to provide explanations, legitimizations and rationalizations of organizations' actions (Tata & Prasad, 2015).

This article draws on the notion of IM described above. Methodologically, following Vaara and Monin (2010) suggestion, the study adopts a discursive approach as a means to examine the sense-making processes through which organizational legitimacy is established.

Data and analysis

The data of this study consist of qualitative interviews with representatives (entrepreneurs, owners or managers) of private ECEC providers ($N = 12$) from seven Finnish municipalities in 2016. In order to capture different orientations to ECEC provision, the interviewees represented non-profit organizations ($n = 3$), ECEC chains ($n = 4$) and small local entrepreneurs ($n = 5$). All of the ECEC chains provided services in two or more municipalities and the size of their business varied notably from a few centres to dozens. The average duration of the interviews was 81 minutes. In total, the data comprise 126,643 transcribed words (156 pages).

The interviews were conducted by a team of four experienced researchers so that in the actual interviews, only one interviewer and interviewee were present. All of the interviewers were trained and they used the same thematic interview template. The interview questions concerned the background of the organization, the economy and operating environment, pedagogical and ideological orientations, clientele and possible future visions. The interviews included explicit questions about the selection of clientele, the selectivity of customers, possible inequalities caused by the marketization of ECEC, and interviewees' considerations of critiques that have been directed at private ECEC providers or provision. The interviewees were also asked to describe their customer families.

Figure 1[5] summarizes the premises of the analysis of this study. In this article, we analyse the talk of the interviewees that considers and relates to the present and potential future clientele of their organization and private ECEC in general. In such descriptions the interviewees, explicitly or implicitly, include or exclude families, parents and/or children in/from their clientele. Instead of using these expert interviews as a source of knowledge about the specific private ECEC providers, we approach them as accounting (see Nikander, 2012). By analysing such

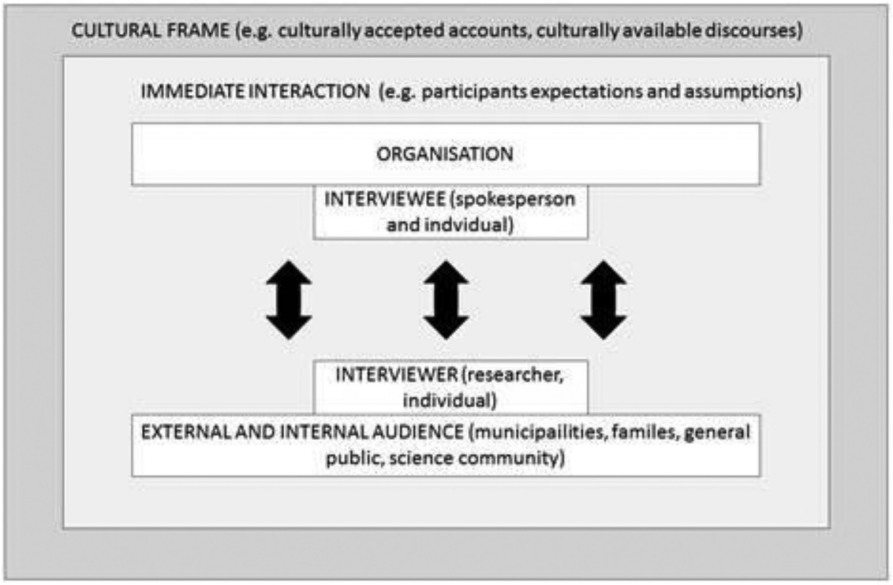

Figure 1. Organizational impression management in research interviews.

accounting, one is able to observe the generally approved cultural discourses that the interviewees draw on in their talk (see Tienari et al., 2003). Thus, although the research data consist of person-to-person conversation, it can be related to a wider cultural context (Wetherell, 2003).

The interviewees had a dual role in the interviews: they represented themselves but they act also as spokespersons and representatives for their organizations (Bolino et al., 2008; Elsbach, 2003; Elsbach et al., 1998). Because of this dual role, the audience (see Elsbach, 2003; Elsbach et al., 1998; Goffman, 1959; Parker & Warren, 2017; Tata & Prasad, 2015) of the interview talk can also be understood as twofold (Lillqvist & Louhiala-Salminen, 2014 The unseen (Goffman, 1959 81) or the external audience includes members of other organizations, public interest groups and the general public, while the internal audience consists of, for example, employees or stockholders (Elsbach, 2003). The interviewer, in turn, comprises the immediate audience of the situation. Therefore, in keeping with Goffman's (1959) original metaphor, even if some 'backstage' moments might occur (see Lillqvist & Louhela-Salminen, 2013) in this study, the interview situations are understood mainly as 'official frontstage' performance (see Sinclair, 1997). As Tata and Prasad (2015) suggest, the IM used is expected to increase as interviewees interpret the interview situation containing public elements. Since the accounts and descriptions by the interviewees are expected to be directed to a wider audience, we are able to analyse the interview talk as organizational IM. Hence, this study takes advantage of the view, sometimes used as a critique of interview data, that interviews contain features of a public performance (see Silverman, 1998).

In the analysis, we first carefully read the interviews and distinguished the talk related to the clientele of ECEC. This talk could be categorized in three thematically different types of talk in relation to the potential selectivity of private ECEC (see Braun & Clarke, 2006): screening of clientele, families' financial situation as a reason for selectivity, and cultural and ideological selectivity. Then, by applying tools of discourse analysis (Wood & Kroger, 2000) and using Deborah Tannen's (1993) ideas about expectation frame as a guideline for analysis, we examined the linguistic characteristics of the talk to identify the forms of IM used in it. We categorized descriptions that function to foster the organizations' image or legitimacy as assertive IM. These descriptions were often brought out without the interviewer presenting an explicit question about the issue, and they included, for example, overtone of pride, examples of high morals (e.g. aim for non-selective services) and descriptions of how the organization contributes to the benefit of families or municipalities. The IM interpreted as defensive comprises accounts that function to protect the organization's legitimacy or image. These accounts included, for example, justifications and excuses (e.g. Bolino et al., 2008). The identified IM allowed us to analyse the cultural assumptions regarding the selectivity of the ECEC system (Table 1).

Table 1. Impression management (IM) used as analytical tool.

IM	Tactics	Function
Assertive/proactive	Self-promotion Exemplification Ingratiation Other linguistic/rhetoric means	Enhancing the organization's image/legitimacy To create the desired image or impression
Defensive	Justifications apologies excuses	Defending from expected accusation Protecting organization's image

Legitimating selection and selectivity of private ECEC's clientele

Every interview included discussion about the selectivity of clientele. Eight interviews touched upon features of clientele's screening, in 10 interviews the selectivity was considered in relation to families' financial situation, and in 10 interviews selectivity was rationalized through cultural and ideological issues. Overall, the talk about selectivity comprised both assertive and defensive IM. The assertive IM was used to promote an organization's legitimacy and defensive IM to protect it.

Screening of clientele

Screening of clientele refers to talk that expresses how the provider is active in selecting the customers and excluding particular children and families from the services. Selecting or excluding customers was discussed in eight interviews. Selecting customers was based on children's age, gender or the hours they would attend ECEC per day. Exclusion, in turn, was linked to the organization's decision not to offer particular services, in most cases, special educational support. Even though the private providers positioned themselves as intentional in *screening of the clientele*, the reasons for it, even pragmatic ones, were presented so that they would strengthen the impression of an organization that aims at the best interest of children. In addition, the screening was justified by stating that the provider's hands were tied for external reasons (such as the subsidy system or municipalities' choices). Only *defensive IM* tactics were used in the context of screening of clientele.

When the selection of clientele is associated with children's best interest, the interviewees present justifications concerning daily ECEC routines, the provider's limited resources, group structure and financial realities. Excerpt 1 demonstrates how these different viewpoints may be brought together to justify or excuse an organization's decision to favour families in need of whole-day ECEC at the expense of those families who use the service for part-time ECEC.

Excerpt 1

1 Mainly I try to offer only whole-day care since the part-time children sort of break it, how to
2 say this, also the week programme, and then it should always be considered that if these one
3 or two children aren't present in the afternoon they'll always miss something. And further,
4 since my programme is so full, this week pro gramme, the parents can't actually decide, and
5 then they say that is because all the days are so good that it's not possible to be away from
6 anything. Until now I've strived to offer only whole-day-care and the private daycare
7 allowance doesn't even recognise half-day care (…) But then it is hard to plan the staffing,
8 that how those 20-hour-children (part-time) *could be present so that the* [legal] *ratio isn't*
9 exceeded. (…) Well, it's kind of true that why would we accept [part-time children]*? But I have*
10 a few families that are going to start maternity leave and sure we'll continue their customer
11 relationship. Obviously I don't chase them away. But… because, in principle, I think that it's
12 not a wise decision to halve the day, and we, however, choose the customers, so I do rather
13 take whole-day children so that the group isn't burdened that there then is, because it should
14 run in the same way with those two children than with that one child.

In excerpt 1, the interviewee explains that children's part-time ECEC (20 h per week) would make it more difficult to plan pedagogy for all children and that children would miss some pedagogical activities (1–3). Furthermore, a little later the interviewee says that having part-time children in the group would burden it and increase the group size (13–14). Both reasons for selection are hence justified by presenting them as serving children's best interest. In a similar manner, the justification of the child's best interest was produced by another interviewee, who stated that the selection of customers can be based on the child's age, gender and language 'profile' so that the selection serves the group's 'needs' as well as the aims to facilitate the group's functionality, enhance ECEC quality and support the staff's motivation.

In Excerpt 1, the interviewer also invokes the inflexibility of the subsidy system (6–7) and the regulation of ECEC to account for the selection by stating that children's part-time attendance of ECEC would complicate following the regulations regarding the adult–child ratio (7–9). From an IM perspective, the regulation and inflexible subsidy system serve as external reasons for the selection and thus the account functions as an excuse.

The interviewee also mentions in passing the public subsidies' role in decisions about excluding part-time children from the clientele (6–7). This indicates that financial aspects play a role in the selection. Elsewhere in the data, the selection of customers is related to the administration and financial management of the enterprise and pedagogy. However, as in Excerpt 1, when the financial aspects related to selection are touched upon it is done rarely, vaguely and briefly, and only when asked about explicitly. This caution around the theme indicates interviewees' assumptions about the cultural sensitivity of the subject and is thus understood as a form of defensive IM.

Financial aspects were, however, invoked when justifying the exclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN). The Finnish education system has a three-tired support system: general, intensified and special support (Heiskanen et al., 2018). The legislation obligates municipalities to provide educational support () for the children with SEN. However, the role of private providers is not explicitly specified. Thus, practices related to public–private partnerships in providing educational support vary between municipalities. Some municipalities may pay increased subsidies for children with SEN and/or offer consulting services (special education teachers) to private providers. Municipalities can also try to obligate private providers to provide special support or they can decide not to direct children with SEN to the private sector at all. If a SEN appears when the child is already in private services, the practices to address it are diverse. The existing literature suggests that especially the educational support, which requires resourcing, is provided mainly in the public sector (Eskelinen & Paananen, 2018). When financial aspects were mentioned regarding the exclusion of children with SEN, the private providers stated that they would actually benefit financially if they accepted children with SEN, but the organization still excluded them, because the public ECEC was considered better resourced to support the children than private providers are. The talk about finances functioned to strengthen the credibility of the argument regarding the child's best interest, which was expanded to justify the exclusion of children with special educational needs.

Some interviewees also explain that their organizations' decision not to offer special educational support is made in mutual understanding or in cooperation with municipalities' ECEC administration. This shifts at least part of the responsibility for exclusion from private organizations to the public sector, so such accounts thus serve as excuses.

Another way to account for the decision to exclude children with special educational needs is to represent the municipality as responsible for the restriction. In our data, the reasons that interviewees mention are (1) municipalities' decisions to take charge of educational support themselves and, thus, not to refer children with special educational needs to private ECEC and (2) as Excerpt 2 demonstrates, the providers' reliance on the municipal subsidy policy.

Excerpt 2

1 (…) It [The municipal voucher system] *is a*
terribly bad system [laughs]. *It does not work, it*
2 *doesn't enable any kind of special support* [fo
children with special educational needs] *in*
3 *reality and it… causes mostly awkward situations.*
It's totally insufficient.

In Excerpt 2, the provider presents deficient public subsidies as an external reason that precludes the provision of special support. Elsewhere in the data, the form of subsidies is also blamed. The fixed-sum PDAMS is represented as an inflexible system that does not enable resourcing in special education. The voucher system, in turn, is represented as a flexible system that enables special education if a municipality decides to set a reasonable value for it. In all cases, the public subsidies are represented as enabling or disabling special support in private ECEC. Hence, the public subsidies serve as excuses that diminish organizations' responsibility for the negatively interpreted outcome.

The interviewees presented the child's age as another reason for the exclusion of clientele. Age-based exclusion was justified by the provider's limited resources and by presenting opinions about the importance of home care for children under two years of age. Highlighting the deficient resources can be interpreted as an excuse and the ideological view about the right age to start ECEC justifies exclusion in the name of the child's best interest.

Families' financial situation as a reason for selectivity

The interviews included discussion about the affordability of private ECEC services and the potential selectivity related to them. In 10 out of 12 interviews, the representatives of private ECEC mentioned that the provider has, at least slightly, higher customer fees than the public sector.[6] The reported amounts of the extra costs varied from 10 euros per month per child to around 160 euros on top of the maximum price of the public sector.[7] In this context, *defensive IM* tactics were mainly used. However, some *assertive*

overtones could be distinguished as well. Moreover, the accounts produced by the same interviewee could be internally contradictory. For example, one interviewee emphasized their organization's striving for affordable and accessible ECEC, but said elsewhere that the organization also runs centres, under a different 'brand', that provide specialized ECEC at a higher price.[8]

Defensive IM

In the accounts analysed, five different ways to justify or excuse the higher customer fees or selectivity related to them could be identified. The first explanation was to justify the higher prices of the organization by linking them with higher quality and, consequently, with children's best interest. Second, the interviewees could underline families' initiative by representing them as active in seeking for high quality ECEC and by representing the organization as just answering to this demand. Third, the municipality's subsidy system or law could be presented as an excuse for higher prices. Fourth, the interviewees could present the gravitation of families from a higher socioeconomic background to private services as natural. Finally, they could understate the price difference between their services and public sector by arguing that it is so low that it does not actually cause selectivity.

Excerpt 3

1 Well, when we started, we wanted it (ECEC) *to be*
2 high quality. So at the moment we, say we
3 are the best childcare and ECEC in the city…(…)
So it's also expensive. That is, it's €150 more
4 than municipal daycare at the moment, for over
three-years-olds. For under three-years-olds
5 it's twice as expensive. So, it's just that socio
economic factors limit our growth to other cities.
6 (…) Then one must not avoid that the task of a
limited company is to make a profit for
7 stockholders. Then pricing has to be based on that.
And then, quality costs. That too, I guess
8 everyone recognises that a chipboard table is
completely different from a handcrafted oak
9 table. That's the starting point. (…) Then of
course, at some point we'll see if the parents will
10 continue to pay that much. And now I see that the
tendency is all the time that as people are
11 aware that their own child must be given the best
possible opportunities because the children
12 of [the name of the home city] or [name of the
region] or the nation no longer compete only
13 with each other for the next (sets of learning)
and opportunities, but the whole world is in
14 play, so I believe that families' investments are
increasing in the future (…) And, sure it's a pity
15 that it (the value of the municipal subsidy) is
pretty low compared to neighbouring
16 municipalities, that in the [neighbouring muni
cipality] the subsidies are around €100 more per
17 child, so there in [neighbouring municipality]
can be said that the private ECEC is a real
18 alternative to municipal ECEC, whereas in
[home city] families have to make a values-based
19 choice or have the financial resources to make
the choice. This is an unfortunate trend indeed
20 if it's not evened out at some point. (…) Now, I
am operating in a municipality where a family
21 has to pay the most, in the whole country, so it's
a little absurd, because we're anyway in a
22 city which has the biggest costs of living, and life
is anyway stressful, (–) and then even
23 daycare is made into an issue of inequality. (…)
In the future, if [the municipal subsidy] doesn't
24 stay at a certain level, there might be a little
segregation and inequality, I mean, the
socioeconomic, a family's socioeconomic, situa
tion starts to have an effect.

In Except 3, the interviewee accounts for the higher fees of the organization's services by employing the first three of the explanations listed above.

In the account, the interviewee notes that the customer fees of the organization are higher than in public services and that families' socioeconomic conditions in other municipalities hinder their growth (1–4). This indicates the interviewee's perception that the organization's services are financially inaccessible for some families. Firstly, the higher fees causing the selectivity are justified by the high quality of ECEC the organization provides. The interviewee offers an example of how different kinds of tables differ in price, drawing a parallel between ECEC provision and markets for other goods (1, 6–8). The suggestion is that ECEC is the same as any other good exchanged in the markets. By that logic, prices are elastic according to the quality of a good.

The interviewee also implies that today's parents are willing to invest in high-quality ECEC because they are nowadays more and more interested in developing their children's competitiveness (8–13). The parents are represented as active and demanding subjects and the provision of high-priced and high-quality private ECEC as an answer to that demand. Thus, the IM used justifies the higher fees with parents' preferences. The other interviewee, in turn, states that in larger cities 'there is a completely separate clientele wanting private services anyway' and that private ECEC providers compete for these 'marginal groups' (exemplified by referring to the employees of high-end technology companies). The interviewee represents private provision as an answer to the prevailing demand of those solvent families 'wanting' private services. Therefore, in this kind of IM, the selectivity of clientele (earlier in the interview,

the interviewee states that they are not 'only' an elite centre) is justified by diminishing the provider's agency and highlighting 'marginal groups'.

Moreover, in contrast to those accounts, elsewhere in the data, downplaying a provider's possibilities to make a profit or justifying a company's strong finances by stating that it enables them to be a reliable partner for the municipalities, the interviewee in Excerpt 3 states that a limited company's statutory duty is actually to make profits for its shareholders (5–6). Using the modal phrases 'one must not avoid' and 'pricing has to' indicates the interviewee's assumption that bringing up profit-seeking in the context of ECEC is somehow not an accepted way of talking and thus against cultural norms. Hence, the interviewee uses IM and excuses profit-seeking by referring to an external reason, namely the law. The other external subject presented the municipality's subsidy policy as a reason for higher fees and selectivity (13–24). The interviewee implies that the value of the subsidy is so low that the ECEC provider has no other option but to charge high fees. The argument is strengthened by mentioning the more generous subsidies in other municipalities and highlighting the socioeconomic segregation caused by subsidies that are too low. In general, municipalities' subsidy policies are repeatedly represented in the data as playing a key role in the interviewees' accounts of the selectivity due to families' financial situations. Income-tested subsidies are connected to affordability and fixed-sum PDAMS to selectivity of services.

Defensive IM is also used to justify socioeconomic selectivity by representing it as a natural situation. In such accounts, however, the prices of the services are not discussed directly but, as Excerpt 4 exemplifies, the naturalization is created by describing the clientele in a way that indicates high socioeconomic positions in society.

Excerpt 4

1 (…) because this [private ECEC] must not only be
for the for the privileged few. But, sure it's
2 true of course that if I'm thinking of our custo
mers, and their socioeconomic position, it's true
3 that we have, like I said we have a lot of teachers'
children, and then we have a lot, that is
4 ours, the level of education, the parents' level of
education is really (high). That's just how it is.

The interviewee starts the account with the modal expression 'must not' and thus brings out the norm of universally accessible ECEC (1). Then, when noting that typically their clientele is highly educated, the interviewee uses the expressions *kyllähän* (but, sure it's true) and *onhan* (it's true that we have), which in Finnish in this context indicate admitting or confessing to an undesirable state of affairs (1–4). This contradiction between the norm and the actual situation threatens the organization's legitimacy, so the interviewee uses IM to naturalize the situation: using the expression 'That's just how it is' represents the situation as a natural state of affairs beyond the organization's authority and hence offers justification for the selectivity.

In sum, it can be said that clear add-ons in public fees and the selectivity of families related to those are expected to be not accepted and thus defensive IM tactics are used when discussing them. In addition, as noted above, assuring somehow that the services are accessible and/or affordable for every family is one way of managing the image of the organizations. However, depending on the context, this kind of talk can represent defensive or assertive IM. When the interviewees produce accounts that function to diminish the importance of their slightly higher customer fees than those in the public sector (e.g. 30 euros add-on per moth), the IM is interpreted as defensive. In such instances, IM functions to diminish the negative readings of the importance of an organization's somewhat higher customer fees and is therefore interpreted as giving justifications.

Assertive IM

Assertive IM is not used in the context where interviewees discuss possible selectivity related to their higher customer fees. However, as mentioned above, the interviewees can also assure that their services are affordable and accessible for every family. When this is done in an assertive sense, the interviewees can highlight that they have 'all kinds of families' as customers or describe themselves as a local service for ordinary families living nearby. When these issues are mentioned with overtones of pride or without an explicit question they are understood as exemplification. Exemplification is an assertive IM tactic used to present oneself as a model of morally virtuous or principled conduct (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Excerpt 5 demonstrates the use of assertive IM.

Excerpt 5

1 When we founded [the organisation] our idea was
that [the organisation] would be a centre
2 for everybody, regardless of family size, income
level, background that whether they are
3 native Finns or not, so they would have the
opportunity to come to (the organisation). And
4 the voucher system enables that. At the moment,
depending on the voucher value and local
5 level of costs, our extra customer fee is 0–37 euros.
We strive to keep it to zero or close to
6 zero, so that it would genuinely be available to all.
(…) (The voucher system) enables
7 actualisation of values pretty important to
Finnish people. Myself, I have a master's in social
8 sciences and it's important to me that everyone
has the opportunity, that we don't start to

9 categorise children so that for high-income families, it is possible to go to a private ECEC
10 centre, no, but everyone has to have the opportunity then.

Excerpt 5 is a part of the response to a question about the provision of special educational support. Later the interviewee says that the organization provides special education when public subsidies enable it. In the account, the interviewee assures that they do not intentionally select customers and there is no selectivity of customers (1–3, 8–10). This is interpreted as assertive IM (exemplification) since the organization represents itself as an active subject in aiming for affordable and accessible ECEC. The subject role is produced by presenting the organization's ideology and vision about 'a centre for everybody' (1–2). Moreover, the interviewee mentions their social sciences degree and personal view that families should have equal opportunities to choose private services (see Ruutiainen et al., 2020), which serves as a rhetorical move that strengthens the impression of the interviewee and the organization as morally righteous actors (7–10). When the interviewee proactively presents the organization (without being prompted) as an egalitarian actor, and on the other hand, avoids the impression that the organization or the interviewee is motivated by financial benefit of profit-seeking (cf. Excerpt 3), it can be interpreted as assertive IM, because it represents the organization as a morally legitimate actor.

In Excerpt 5 (as in Excerpt 3) the extra fees are explained as the result of municipalities' subsidy policy (3–7). At the same time, the organization becomes represented as an egalitarian actor whose good intentions are enabled or hindered by features of the subsidy systems. The income-tested voucher system is linked to affordability and in other part of the same interview fixed-sum PDAMS is linked to selectivity. As noted before, this kind of outsourcing of responsibility to an external author (subsidy system) is understood as an expression of excuses. At the same time, the commitment to a voucher system that 'enables actualization of values pretty important to Finnish people', is interpreted as assertive IM since it is mentioned with an overtone of pride. Therefore, Excerpt 5 also illustrates how defensive and assertive IM can be intertwined, even to the extent that they can be difficult to distinguish.

Cultural and ideological selectivity

One way the interviewees position their organization as a part of the Finnish ECEC system is to describe their services, features, specialities, emphases, visions and so on. These characteristics are represented as serving different families' different tastes or needs, as a state of affairs or as self-fulfilment of a provider's personal vision. In this study, cultural and ideological selectivity refers to differentiation of the service users of different ECEC services on the basis of their varying preferences regarding ECEC.

Different descriptions of the provider's services draw a picture of ECEC markets where families choose not only between public and private settings, but also between numerous different features of services, such as the size of the centre or child group, location, the educational background of the staff, operating language, different pedagogical emphases, available diets, educational programmes, value bases, uniqueness or ideologies. Consequently, families are represented as subjects evaluating the different opportunities that are available. Families may explicitly or implicitly become pictured as customers whose satisfaction is important.

Parents' opportunities to choose services they prefer are not an issue that interviewees tend to account for. Rather, it is mentioned in either a factual way or with a positive overtone, indicating interviewees' assumptions about its general acceptability. Thus, only *assertive IM* tactics were used in this context. Excerpt 6 demonstrates how the private provider's specialization in certain kinds of services and families' choices between services are represented as a natural reason for cultural or ideological selectivity.

Excerpt 6
1 And when we talked about how the private day care's customers are selected, so, sure of course
2 there are all of these, let's say, if they have like Montessori, Steiner, some language, that
3 affects the selection. Well, we have this sustainable development perspective, so that has an
4 effect. (…) It is just that these families are, how to say it, they don't think that society should
5 simply offer some door through which I put my child, and then take out. They don't think about
6 it in that way, but they are extremely interested in the content.

The interviewee brings out the different pedagogical programmes or emphases as impacting parents' ECEC choice (1–4). By using the utterance 'sure, of course there are all of these' this situation is represented as a matter of fact and thus the selectivity based on families and ECEC providers' different preferences becomes naturalized. This indicates the assumption of the general acceptability of this kind of selectivity and is thus interpreted as assertive IM.

In Excerpt 6, the interviewee explains that parents can select an appropriate ECEC from among the many different pedagogical emphases. Then the interviewee explicitly describes the organization's customer parents as active in ECEC selection and 'extremely interested in the content' of ECEC

provided (5–6). Also different generally valued and highly educated professions included in the clientele are named in the interviews as well. The fact that these highly educated and demanding parents have chosen a certain ECEC setting that interviewees represent is explained with an overtone of contentment or even pride. Accordingly, passing the test of demanding parents is employed to strengthen the organization's legitimacy and image. This indicates the use of assertive IM (self-promotion) (Bolino et al., 2008; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Moreover, parents' ECEC choice becomes represented as a cultural or ideological act reflecting families' values, preferences or way of living.

As shown above, one way to justify the selectivity caused by families' financial situation is to represent parents as active subjects. The production of parents' subject position is used also in a more assertive way when discussing cultural and ideological selectivity, as Excerpt 7 exemplifies.

Excerpt 7

1 Definitely we wouldn't have any customers in the private sector if parents' didn't have needs,
2 and the most important thing is that families get an opportunity to choose, for themselves and
3 for their child, the place they feel safe. Often when a family starts it is important that the
4 parents first have a feeling of safety, so that the child can adopt it. Nowadays, in the municipal
5 sector as well, parents' look through many centres before they decide on the one where they
6 will apply for a daycare place for their child.

In Excerpt 7, the interviewee represents parents as subjects that make active, needs-based decisions regarding ECEC. This is done by stating that parents have 'needs' (1) and thus it is 'important' (2) that they have the 'opportunity to choose' (2). The interviewee also states that parents make these choices within the public service network 'as well' (4–6), thereby normalizing the selectivity in private provision. Private provision only extends the parents' possibilities to choose. Representing private service provision as a complement to the public ECEC provision therefore legitimizes the expansion of private provision. The excerpt also functions to legitimize cultural and ideological selectivity by representing it as a result of active choices that parents as subjects make on the basis of their needs. Thus, possible selectivity reflects a fulfilment of such needs. Moreover, the interviewee's statement that the private services get customers because parents have 'needs' (1) implies that such services are able to answer to those needs. Thus, the excerpt can be understood as self-promotion (private services are so good that parents end up choosing them).

Another way to legitimize cultural and ideological selectivity is to represent a provider itself as a subject. In such cases, the interviewees may describe their personal vision or ambition. These descriptions entail, for example, sustainable development, a certain pedagogical programme or the interviewee's need for a sense of autonomy. ECEC services were also described as a package, a product or a programme that families can take or leave. Consequently, parents become represented as active decision-making subjects and children as objects of, for example, a societal project.

Overall, the potential for cultural and ideological selectivity is produced when interviewees position parents as subjects whose choices between different service providers reflect their ECEC preferences. At the same time, parents become represented as consumers with purchase power, which, in turn, outsources private providers' responsibility for the selectivity of families to the families themselves. With that kind of framing, attracting customers can be understood as an indication of relative success compared to other service providers, which, in turn, is used as self-promotion (assertive IM).

Impression management used in legitimation

In line with IM theory (e.g. Goffman, 1959; Schlenker, 1980), the investigation of IM in the present study makes visible the interviewees' expectations and assumptions about the cultural accessibility of different forms of selectivity regarding private ECEC. Table 2 relates the three types of selectivity and selection described in the previous sections to IM by dividing the different techniques employed in legitimating the selection and the selectivity in the defensive and assertive types of IM (see Boeije, 2004; Bolino et al., 2008; Ellis et al., 2002; Mohamed et al., 1999; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984).

Briefly, *the screening of clientele* included only defensive accounts. *The families' financial situation as a reason for selectivity* was mainly a subject of defensive IM, but was employed in assertive IM as well. *The cultural and ideological selectivity* was used as assertive IM to gain or maintain legitimacy (see Suchman, 1995), but can be understood also as a proactive justification.

Discussion

Finnish ECEC policies are based on the idea of universalism (see Kildal & Kuhnle, 2005; Mahon et al., 2012; Vlasov, 2018) and despite the recent development of marketization, the ideal of universal non-selective ECEC remains strong (Ruutiainen et al., 2020). In addition, Finnish ECEC policies have promoted the uniformity of ECEC through similar statutory and curricula requirements for public and private ECEC. However, this study suggests that market-based ECEC provision may entail at least three

Table 2. Impression management (IM) employed in legitimizing the selectivity of private ECEC's clientele.

IM	Type of selectivity/ selection	IM tactics used	Cultural assumptions and expectations related to selection and/or selectivity of private ECEC
Defensive	*Screening of clientele*	Justification (child's best interest), Avoiding talk about finances Excuses (mutual understanding with municipalities, subsidy system and regulation)	Selection and/or selectivity culturally disapproved of, controversial or debated. Child's best interest as an acceptable reason for selectivity. Selection and/or selectivity culturally disapproved of, controversial or debated. Tension between universal non-selective ECEC and screening of clientele
	Families' financial situation as a reason for selectivity	Justifications (quality-based pricing, child's best interest, naturalization, parents as subjects, understating of price difference) Excuses (subsidy system or law as an external reason)	Selection and/or selectivity culturally disapproved of controversial or debated. Selection and/or selectivity culturally disapproved controversial or debated. The contradiction between selectivity, universalism and choice discourse is neutralized by appealing to external reasons
	Cultural and ideological selectivity	-	-
Assertive/ -	proactive	*Screening of clientele*	-
	*Families' financial situation as a reason for selectivity**	Exemplification Self-promotion	Selection and/or selectivity based on affordability and accessibility as culturally approved
	Cultural and ideological selectivity	Naturalization, very matter-of-fact way of talking Parents as subjects, used in an assertive sense Self-promotion Private agents as subjects (own vision or ideology)	Selection and/or selectivity based on differentiation of ECEC services as a culturally approved or natural issue Selection and/or selectivity reflecting opportunity to choose as culturally acceptable Selection and/or selectivity reflects a provider's success in responding to parents' preferences Selection and/or selectivity reflecting self-fulfilment through ECEC provision culturally accepted

*employed in an assertive sense in assuring that the service is affordable and accessible for every family

mechanisms of selectivity of service users. Selectivity may originate from private providers' admission policy or decisions (possibly in mutual understanding with municipalities) to limit their service selection. The prices of private ECEC can also form a barrier limiting the affordability of the services for some of families. The third mechanism of selectivity concerns families' ECEC choices reflecting their preferences. On the basis of this study, however, it is not possible to estimate the extent of these three forms of selectivity, and it is even a separate empirical question. Yet, as Table 2 summarizes, the first two forms of selectivity are, as IM theory suggests, expected or assumed to be culturally disapproved of and thus defensive IM is used to justify or excuse those. Moreover, highlighting the affordability and accessibility of (private) ECEC and the assertive talk about cultural and ideological selectivity indicate the general acceptability of selectivity that occurs as a by-product of parent's choices as long as they are not restricted by financial issues. Thus, the IM used indicates that the universally accessible non-selective ECEC system is still a norm to which interviewees have to adapt their accounts and descriptions.

The theoretical decision to apply IM theory as an analytical tool seems successful in making visible the culturally accepted ways of thinking related to the tension between the universalistic and market logic of ECEC provision. The IM practised by the interviewees can be related to the two different types of logic that are used by municipal decision makers to rationalize the marketization of Finnish ECEC (Ruutiainen et al., 2020).[9] The first type positions private ECEC as a part of the public ECEC system, so the accessibility and affordability of services is emphasized. The second type sees private ECEC as a complementary service allowing more space for a market mechanism. The use of the types of logic becomes visible in how organizations' possibilities to allocate and price their service, select their customers and produce returns are emphasized in some accounts and descriptions, while others underline the affordability and non-selectivity of ECEC and parents' equal possibilities to choose the services they want. Interestingly, although the application of business logic to ECEC appears to be culturally unacceptable or is at least considered controversial, children's best interest appears to be a culturally legitimate reason for higher priced ECEC and thus better possibilities to produce profits. It is however noteworthy that, in their accounts, the same interviewees could move between both types of logic.

The interviewees tended to justify or deny the selectivity and strengthen the positive image of their organization/provision by pleading children's best interest, equal accessibility of ECEC or parents' opportunities to choose. The frequency with which and how it was possible to plead these issues indicates

that they are culturally acceptable discourses. It appears that by adapting arguments to these discourses it is possible to protect or gain organizational legitimacy (see Tienari et al., 2003). Moreover, when it was not possible to adapt accounts to acceptable discourses, the interviewees offered excuses to assure that the selectivity was caused by external reason. These reasons presented concerned municipalities' policies related to private ECEC provision, public subsidies, regulation and legislation. This study complements previous research (e.g. Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Mäntyjärvi & Puroila, 2019; Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Van Lancker, 2017) according to which local and national ECEC policies play a crucial role in the accessibility of ECEC by suggesting that on the micro level these policies also serve as external authors which the private providers can use to legitimate their actions.

The existing research conducted in the Finnish ECEC context suggests (Ruutiainen et al., 2020; Paananen et al., 2019) that the equality of the ECEC system is increasingly understood as families' equal opportunities to choose the service corresponding to their preferences. This study shows how this notion is used to justify the differentiation and specialization of private ECEC services and thus the selectivity of service users. However, according to results, the choice appears to be two-sided: the choice discourse also includes providers' choices about their clientele and selectivity related to pricing and targeting of their services. Thus, the Finnish ECEC policy emphasizing families' equal opportunities to choose appears to be followed by consequences that might be at least partly unintended (see Paananen, 2017; Settlage & Meadows, 2002). As Vandenbroeck et al. (2008) suggest, ECEC providers' admission policies might be related to the selectivity of ECEC service users. However, whether or not or to which extent such selection is happening in the Nordic context is ultimately an empirical question that remains unanswered.

Previous research (e.g. Moss, 2009; Lee, 2018; Yuen & Grieshaber, 2009, Ruutiainen et al., 2020) has argued that the emergence of market rationale in the context of ECEC conceptualizes parents as active and rational market agents selecting services corresponding to their preferences. This study indicates that this conceptualization of parents is employed in defensive and assertive IM by representing parents as demanding subjects. Accordingly, private service providers appeared as though they were just reacting to the prevailing demand offering different opportunities to choose (see also Karlsson et al., 2013). This notion of parents appears to be somewhat simplified because, as Meyers and Jordan (2006) note, parents' childcare choices appear to demonstrate their accommodations to prevailing economic and social realities rather than differences in a priori preferences. Moreover, ECEC choice is more or less related to parents' background, which manifests as cultural awareness or socioeconomic situation (e.g. Eika, 2006; Grogan, 2012; Kampichler et al., 2018; Vincent & Ball, 2006).

Overall, this study shows how the consumerist ideas that challenge the understanding of school education as a public good and drive school segregation and differentiation in Nordic countries (Dovemaovemark et al., 2018) have gained a foothold in the area of ECEC as well (see also Karlsson et al., 2013). The Nordic model of universal and egalitarian education policy has aimed at reducing inequalities related to children's background (Esping-Andersen, 1996), but the current development of ECEC policy has set these objectives at risk. It appears that the marketization and privatization of ECEC, even carried out in a way that preserves the idea of universalism (see Ruutiainen et al., 2020), has the potential to increase the selectivity of such services. Thus, the inconsistency between ECEC policy objectives and actualization seems evident. Even though ECEC legislation and other regulations function to produce uniformity between public and private ECEC and to avoid stratification of their clientele, this study suggests that the marketization of Finnish ECEC may be leading – at least somewhat – to a differentiated clientele between the two provisions. However, since the empirical research (e.g. Degotardi et al., 2018; Grogan, 2012; Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008) on selectivity and accessibility is highly context specific, further multi-methodological investigation is needed to fill the gaps in knowledge about the consequences of ongoing marketization development in the Nordic context and more broadly.

Notes

1. Universalism is defined differently in different contexts (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2014). However, this paper combines definitions by Moberg (2017) and Szebehely and Meagher (2018) in the context of Nordic elder-care. Accordingly, universalism is characterized by clearly defined right to services, equal needs-based inclusion, public funding, affordability and service provision, and comprehensive usage of services achieved by good quality.
2. In 2019, 14,318 families received a private day care allowance, 30,532 received vouchers and 4,898 children were in purchased service.
3. Customer fees in public ECEC are income tested, varying between €0 and €288 per child per month.
4. The concept used varies according to place and historical moment.
5. We regenerate illustration introduced by Lillqvist and Louhela-Salminen's (2013) to demonstrate the

complexity of corporate impression management in social media.

6. Two interviews did not include talk about the amount of customer fees, but on their websites both organizations list higher fees than those in the public sector.
7. If the municipal subsidy for the use of private ECEC is completely income tested, families will pay the same fee for the services as they would in public ECEC plus a possible extra fee set by the provider. However, if the subsidy is partly income tested and partly not – as is the case quite often (Lahtinen & Svartsjö, 2018) – the fee the families pay for private ECEC may exceed the fee they would pay for public ECEC. Since low-income families do not need to pay any fee for public ECEC services, for them the difference between the costs of public and private ECEC may be considerable if the subsidy is not fully income tested.
8. In addition to selectivity between public and private ECEC there appears to be potential for selectivity within settings as well. It is told that at an additional cost parents can purchase different hobby opportunities available during the ECEC days. Offering these paid extra services is justified by representing them as better serving customer families and giving their children the opportunity to have a hobby already during an ECEC day and thus save families' evening time.
9. The first type of logic is closely related to the income-tested voucher system and the other to fixed-sum PDAMS.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Finnish Strategic Research Council, Academy of Finland [grant number 21000031071]. The study is partly funded by The Emil Aaltonen Foundation.

ORCID

Ville Ruutiainen http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2241-9270
Maarit Alasuutari http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4881-632X
Kirsti Karila http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6233-2615

References

Abrassart, A., & Bonoli, G. (2015). Availability, cost or culture? Obstacles to childcare services for low-income families. *Journal of Social Policy*, *44*(4), 787–806. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279415000288

Act on Early Childhood Education and Care, 540/2018. [Finland].

Adamson, E., & Brennan, D. (2014). Social investment or private profit? Diverging notions of 'investment' in early childhood education and care. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, *46*(1), 47–61. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-013-0098-x

Angus, L. (2015). School choice: Neoliberal education policy and imagined futures. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *36*(3), 39–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2013.823835

Asiakastieto, Financial information about companies - database. 2021. https://www.asiakastieto.fi/web/en/frontpage.html.

Barnett, W. S. (2010). Universal and targeted approaches to preschool education in the USA. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, *4*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-4-1-1

Boeije, H. R. (2004). and then there were three: self-presentational styles and the presence of the partner as a third person in the interview. *Field Methods*, *16*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X03259228

Bolino, M. C., Kacmar, K. M., Turnley, W. H., & Gilstrap, J. B. (2008). A multi-level review of impression management motives and behaviors. *Journal of Management*, *34*(6), 1080–1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308324325

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brennan, D., Cass, B., Himmelweit, S., & Szebehely, M. (2012). The marketisation of care: Rationales and consequences in Nordic and liberal care regimes. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *22*(4), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928712449772

Brennan, N., & Merkl-Davies, D. (2013). Accounting narratives and impression management, open access publications 10197/4949, Research Repository, University College Dublin.

Çalışkan, K., & Callon, M. (2010). Economization, part 2: A research programme for the study of markets. *Economy and Society*, *39*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140903424519

Degotardi, S., Sweller, N., Fenech, M., & Beath, A. (2018). Influences on parents' child care choices: A comparative analysis of preschool and long day care users. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *47*(5), 683–700. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-018-9452-3

Djelic, M.-L. (2006). Marketization: From intellectual agenda to global policy-making. In M.-L. Djelic & K. Sahlin-Andersson (Eds.), *Transnational governance: institutional dynamics of regulation* (pp. 53–73). Cambridge University Press.

Dovemark, M., Kosunen, S., Kauko, J., Magnúsdóttird, B., Hansen, P., & Rasmussen, P. (2018). Deregulation, privatisation and marketisation of Nordic comprehensive education: Social changes reflected in schooling. *Education Inquiry*, *9*(1), 122–141. https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1429768

Dutton, J. E., & Dukerich, J. M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal*, *34*(3), 517–554. DOI:10.2307/256405.

Dýrfjörð, K., & Magnúsdóttir, B. R. (2016). Privatization in early childhood education in Iceland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *11*(1), 80–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631062

Eika, K. (2006). The difficult quality: Essays on human services with limited consumer sovereignty, PhD thesis. Department of Economics, University of Oslo.

Ellis, A. P. J., West, B. J., Ryan, A. M., & Deshon, R. P. (2002). The use of impression management tactics in structured interviews: A function of question type? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(6), 1200–1208. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1200

Elsbach, K. D. (2003). Organizational perception management. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *25*, 297–332. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085(03)25007-3

Elsbach, K. D., Sutton, R. I., & Principe, K. E. (1998). Averting expected challenges through anticipatory impression management: A study of hospital billing. *Organization Science*, *9*(1), 68–86. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.9.1.68

Eskelinen, M., & Paananen, M. (2018). Lapsen tuen toteutuminen yksityisissä päiväkodeissa. *eErika: Erityispedagogista Tutkimusta Ja Koulutuksen Arviointia*, *(2018*(2), 4–9. https://journals.helsinki.fi/e-erika/article/view/9/8.

Esping-Andersen, G. (1996). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Polity Press.

EURYDYCE (2018). Sweden: Organisation of private education. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-private-education-80_en

FINEEC (2019). Tilastoraportti varhaiskasvatuksen järjestämisestä. FINEEC. https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/Karvi_vaka_tilastoraportti_2019-1.pdf

Gilbert, N. (2002). *Transformations of the Welfare State*. Princeton University Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.

Grogan, K. (2012). Parents' choice of pre-kindergarten: The interaction of parent, child and contextual factors. *Early Child Development and Care*, *182*(10), 1265–1287. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2011.608127

Haug, P. (2014). The public-private partnership in ECEC provision in Norway. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal: Disadvantage and Social Justice*, *22*(3), 366–378. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912899

Heiskanen, N., Alasuutari, M., & Vehkakoski, T. (2018). Positioning children with special educational needs in early childhood education and care documents. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *39*(6), 827–843. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2018.1426443

Jacobsen, K., & Vollset, G. (2012). Publicly available and supported early education and care for all in Norway. In E. Lloyd & H. Penn (Eds.), *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* (pp. 115–130). Policy Press.

Kampichler, M., Dvořáčková, J., & Jarkovská, L. (2018). Choosing the right kindergarten: parents' reasoning about their ECEC choices in the context of the diversification of ECEC programs. *Journal of Pedagogy (Warsaw)*, *9*(2), 9–32. https://doi.org/10.2478/jped-2018-0009

Karlsson, M., Löfdahl, A., & Pérez Prieto, H. P. (2013). Morality in parents' stories of preschool choice: Narrating identity positions of good parenting". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *34*(2), 208–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.714248

Kensinger Rose, K., & Elicker, J. (2008). Parental decision making about child care. *Journal of Family Issues*, *29*(9), 1161–1184. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X07312103

Kildal, N., & Kuhnle, S. (2005). The nordic welfare model and the idea of universalism. In N. Kildal & S. Kuhnle (Eds.), *Normative foundations of the welfare State: The nordic experience* (pp. 13–33). Routledge.

King, B., Felin, T., & Whetten, D. (2010). Finding the organization in organizational theory: A meta-theory of the organization as a social actor. *Organization Science*, *21*(1), 290–306. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1090.0443

Knijn, T., & Lewis, J. (2017). ECEC: Childcare markets in the Netherlands and England. In B. Unger, D. Van Der Linde, & M. Getzner (Eds.), *Public or private goods? Redefining res publica* (pp. 150–171). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lahtinen, J., & Svartsjö, M. 2018. Kotihoidontuen ja yksityisen hoidon tuen kuntalisät ja palveluseteli Helsinki: Kuntaliitto.

Lee, I. (2018). (Re)Landscaping early childhood education in East Asia: A neoliberal economic and political imaginary. *Policy Futures in Education*, *16*(1), 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317736434

Lievens, F., & Peeters, H. (2008). Interviewers' sensitivity to impression management tactics in structured interviews. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, *24*(3), 174–180. https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.24.3.174

Lillqvist, E., & Louhiala-Salminen, L. (2014). Facing facebook: Impression management strategies in company–consumer interactions. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *28*(1), 3–30. https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651913502359

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (Ed). (2012). *Childcare markets: Can they deliver an equitable service?* Policy Press.

Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2014). Childcare markets in an age of austerity. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *22*(3), 386–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912901

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. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928712449776

Mäntyjärvi, M., & Puroila, A.-M. (2019). Has something changed? Leaders', practitioners' and parents' interpretations after renewed early childhood education and care legislation in Finnish private centres. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *20*(1), 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949119828158

Meyers, M. K., & Jordan, L. P. (2006). Choice and accommodation in parental child care decisions. *community development. The Economic Importance of Child Care for Community Development*, *37*(2), 53–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490207.

Moberg, L. (2017). Marketisation of nordic eldercare - is the model still universal? *Journal of Social Policy*, *46*(3), 603–621. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279416000830

Mohamed, A. A., Gardner, W. L., & Paolillo, J. G. P. (1999). A TAXONOMY OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS. *Advances in Competitiveness Research*, *7*(1), 108–130.

Moss, P. 2009. "There are alternatives! Markets and democratic experimentalism in early childhood education and care." Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, Number 53. Bernard Van Leer Foundation, 2009.

Moss, P. (2014). *transformative change and real utopias in early childhood education: A story of democracy, experimentation and potentiality*. Routledge.

Naumann, I. (2011). Towards the marketization of early childhood education and care? Recent developments in Sweden and the UK. *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, *2*(2), 37–53. https://doi.org/10.7577/njsr.2049

Nikander, P. (2012). Interviews as discourse data. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 397–414). SAGE Publications.

Noailly, J., & Visser, S. (2009). The impact of market forces on child care provision: Insights from the 2005 child

care act in the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *38*(3), 477–498. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003109

O'Donnell, E. (2018). Parents' beliefs and goals in early childhood. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, *18*(5), 10–29. https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/37366129.

Ogden, S., & Clarke, J. (2005). Customer disclosures, impression management and the construction of legitimacy. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *18*(3), 313–345. https://doi.org/10.1108/09513570510600729

Paananen, M. (2017). *Imaginaries of early childhood education: Societal roles of early childhood education in a transnational era of accountability*. University of Helsinki.

Paananen, M., Repo, K., Eerola, P., & Alasuutari, M. (2019). Unravelling conceptualizations of (in)equality in early childhood education and care system. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, *5*(1), 54–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2018.1485423

Parker, L. D., & Warren, S. (2017). The presentation of the self and professional identity: Countering the accountant's stereotype. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *30*(8), 1895–1924. https://doi.org/10.1108/AAAJ-09-2016-2720

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: A matter of policies or preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy: The Future of the Social Investment State: Politics, Policies, and Outcomes*, *25*(6), 878–893. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1401108.

Ravasi, D., & Schultz, M. (2006). Responding to organizational identity threats: Exploring the role of organizational culture. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *49*(3), 433–458. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2006.21794663

Rubiano, C., & Urban, M. (2014). *Privatisation in early childhood education (PECE): An explorative study on impacts and implications*. Education International.

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2020). Rationalising public support for private early childhood education and care: the case of Finland. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *41*(1), 32–47.

Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management, the self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Brooks/Cole.

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. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.10012

Silverman, D. (1998). *Harvey sacks: Social science and conversation analysis*. Polity Press.

Sinclair, S. (1997). *Making doctors: An institutional apprenticeship*. Berg.

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, *20*(3), 571–610. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080331

Szebehely, M., & Meagher, G. (2018). Nordic eldercare – Weak universalism becoming weaker? *Journal of European Social Policy*, *28*(3), 294–308. https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928717735062

Talbot, D., & Boiral, O. (2018). GHG reporting and impression management: An assessment of sustainability reports from the energy sector. *Journal of Business Ethics, Springer*, *147*(2), 367–383. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2979-4

Tannen, D. (1993). What's in a frame?: Surface evidence for underlying expectations. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Framing in discourse* (pp. 14–56). Oxford University Press.

Tata, J., & Prasad, S. (2015). CSR communication: An impression management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *132*(4), 765–778. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2328-z

Tedeschi, J. T., & Melburg, V. (1984). Impression management and influence in the organization. In B. S. Bacharach & E. J. Lawler (Eds.), *Research in the sociology of organizations* (pp. 31–58). JAI.

Tienari, J., Vaara, E., & Björkman, I. (2003). Global capitalism meets national spirit: Discourses in media texts on a cross-border acquisition. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *12*(4), 377–393. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492603258975

Vaara, E., & Monin, P. (2010). a recursive perspective on discursive legitimation and organizational action in mergers and acquisitions. *Organization Science*, *21*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1080.0394

Van Lancker, W. (2017). reducing inequality in childcare service use across European Countries: What (if any) is the role of social spending? *Social Policy & Administration*, *52*(1), 271–292. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12311

Vandenbroeck, M., De Visscher, S., Van Nuffel, K., & Ferla, J. (2008). Mothers' search for infant child care: The dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental European welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *23*(2), 245–258. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.09.002

Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of early childhood education and care: A state of affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal: Disadvantage and Social Justice*, *22*(3), 327–335. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912895

Vanderbroeck, M. (2006). Globalisation and privatisation: The impact on childcare policy and practice. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, No. 38. Bernard Van Leer Foundation 2006.

Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2006). *Childcare, choice and class practices: Middle-class parents and their children*. Routledge.

Vlasov, J. (2018). *reflecting changes in early childhood education in the USA, Russia and Finland*. Tampere University Press.

Wetherell, M. (2003). Racism and the analysis of cultural resources in interviews. In H. Van Den Berg, M. Wetherell, & H. Houtkoop-Steenstra (Eds.), *Analyzing race talk: Multidisciplinary approaches to the interview* (pp. 11–30). Cambridge University Press.

Whetten, D. A., Felin, T., & King, B. G. (2009). the practice of theory borrowing in organizational studies: Current issues and future directions. *Journal of Management*, *35*(3), 537–563. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308330556

Wood, L., & Kroger, R. (2000). Doing Discourse Analysis: Methods for Studying Action in Talk and Text. SAGE.

Woodrow, C., & Press, F. (2018). The privatization/marketization of ECEC debate: Social versus neo liberal models. In L. Miller, C. Cameron, C. Dalli, & N. Barbour (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of early childhood policy* (pp. 537–550). SAGE.

Yuen, G., & Grieshaber, S. (2009). Parents' choice of early childhood education services in hong kong: A pilot study about vouchers. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *10*(3), 263–279. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2009.10.3.263

III

SOCIOECONOMIC AND ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SERVICE USERS OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE IN THE FINNISH CONTEXT

by

Ruutiainen, V., Räikkönen, E., & Alasuutari, M.

Submitted to *Journal of Childcare and Education Policy*.

Socioeconomic and attitudinal differences between service users of private and public early childhood education and care in the Finnish context

Abstract

The marketisation and privatisation of welfare services such as early childhood education and care (ECEC) have been a global trend in recent decades. Earlier research suggests that market-based ECEC provision often leads to inequalities and stratification of service users. In Finland, as in other Nordic countries where provision of ECEC has traditionally been a public responsibility, ECEC services have also been undergoing marketisation and privatisation. Until now, especially in Finland, little has been known about service users of public and private ECEC or parental decisions between public and private ECEC. This study addresses that gap by showing that the clientele of private and public ECEC differ in their socioeconomic attitudinal characteristics. It appears that the combination of marketisation and privatisation of ECEC extend processes of educational and social distinction into the early childhood.

Key Words

Early childhood education and care, privatisation, marketisation, selectivity, choice, stratification

Introduction

Issues related to parental decisions between public and private schools in different education policy contexts are a subject of wide academic interest (e.g., Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Holmes Erikson, 2017; Morris & Perry, 2019; Benson, Bridge & Wilson, 2014; Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz, 1996). Research findings underline the importance of family socioeconomic status (SES) and class position in such decisions. However, although there seems to be an emerging interest in families' choices between public and private services in early childhood education and care (ECEC) (e.g., Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Ghosh & Dey, 2020, Vamstad, 2016; Kampichler, Dvorácková & Jarkovská, 2018; Karlsson, Löfdahl & Pérez Prieto, 2013), the topic is still scarcely investigated. This article addresses this research gap by investigating the selection of private versus public ECEC in the Finnish context.

There is an abundance of research examining how various family characteristics, such as SES or ethnicity (e.g., Sibley et al., 2015; Petitclerc et al., 2017; Grogan, 2012; Coley et al., 2014) and ECEC policies and systems (e.g., Pavolini & Van Lancker, 2018; Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; Meyer & Jordan, 2006; Sylva et al., 2007) are related to parents' childcare decisions and children's ECEC attendance. Moreover, due to the emphasis placed on the beneficial impact of high quality ECEC for children's learning and development (van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018), there is a growing body of research studying inequalities in the use of high-quality ECEC (Cloney et al., 2016; Becker & Schober, 2017; Stahl, Schober & Spiess, 2018; Grogan, 2012; Mierendorff, Ernst, & Mader, 2018). Previous research suggests that national ECEC policies, regarding for example public supply, universal entitlement and low costs for low-income families, have the potential to reduce inequalities in ECEC participation (Van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; Van Lancker, 2018; Peticlerc et al., 2017; Meyers & Gornik, 2003). Although

ECEC participation appears somewhat stratified also in the Nordic context (see Sibley et al., 2015, Krapf, 2014), Nordic countries are often considered textbook examples of universalistic welfare policies that make ECEC services accessible for children from all backgrounds. In comparison to European parents, on average Nordic parents also perceive ECEC services to be more accessible (Ünver, Bircan, & Nicaise, 2018).

In recent decades, Nordic ECEC systems have undergone relatively intense marketisation and privatisation development (Westberg & Larsson, 2020; Mahon et al., 2012; Ruutiainen, Alasuutari & Karila, 2020; Haugh, 2014; Dýrfjörð & Magnúsdóttir, 2016). In the Nordic contexts, however, marketisation and privatisation has rather shaped the existing ECEC systems than replaced one paradigm (universalism) with another one (market logic) (Naumann, 2011; Ruutiainen et al., 2020; Westberg & Larsson, 2020). For example, in Finland (Ruutiainen et al., 2020) and in Sweden (Westberg & Larsson, 2020), marketisation and privatisation have entailed the increase of private for-profit ECEC provision and policy measures that have sought to increase parental choice. However, the ideal of universalism is still manifest in the mainly publicly provided ECEC services, children's legal entitlement to ECEC and generous demand-side subsidies granted by municipalities to cover the costs of private ECEC services. Moreover, the emergence of quality differences between public and private ECEC is counteracted by similar regulation of both provision types.

Even though private ECEC seems to have increased under the umbrella of universalistic ideals in Finland, it has been suggested that service users of public and private ECEC could become differentiated based on their social and educational backgrounds (Ruutiainen, Alasuutari & Karila, 2021). This study extends the current understanding of how parental ECEC decisions may be shaped by national and municipal policies, and by family and parental characteristics, through examining the potential differentiation of public and private centre-based ECEC users in Finland. The study investigates whether family SES or parental attitudes are associated with the use of public or private centre-based ECEC. The impact of national and local policies is addressed by considering subsidies for private ECEC use in the research design.

Parental ECEC decisions as accommodations

Parental ECEC decisions, and thus the potential differentiation of private and public ECEC users, reflect many contextual factors. Therefore, such decisions may be better understood as accommodations to prevailing contextual conditions than as free choices (Meyers & Jordan, 2006). Research has suggested that parental decisions are shaped by: local ECEC policies and employment opportunities; the availability, affordability and accessibility of ECEC services; parental beliefs, attitudes and demographic characteristics; child-related factors; and the financial and other resources available (e.g., Sylva et al., 2007, Ghos & Dey, 2020, Vandenbroeck et al., 2008, Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014; Archambault, Côté, &, Raynault, 2020; Coley et al., 2014). The interest of this study is especially in the role of families' SES and parental attitudes in parents' ECEC decisions. Moreover, other factors theoretically related to the decisions, namely the subsidy model used, parents' countries of birth, the need for flexibly scheduled ECEC and the amount of ECEC received, are considered in the research design.

Availability and accessibility of services

The prerequisite of choice between public and private ECEC services is that both services are available (Karlsson et al., 2013). In Finland, around 18% of ECEC services are privately provided (FIFHAW, 2020; FEEC, 2020), but private services are unequally distributed. While in some municipalities, approximately 40–50% of ECEC is privately provided, in almost half of Finland's municipalities, private services are not available (Lahtinen & Svartsjö, 2020). Private services are available especially in larger urban municipalities which have decided to support private provision. Mostly, these services are centre-based, although there is also some private family day care. Providers of private centre-based ECEC vary from small local entrepreneurs to non-profit providers and large for-profit chains (see FEEC, 2020). The present study considers the responses of informants who lived in municipalities where, at the minimum, one private ECEC centre was located, to ensure that the informants had at least a theoretical option to choose a private ECEC centre.

Previous research suggests that in highly privatised and marketised ECEC systems, availability of services is poorer in neighbourhoods of lower socioeconomic status than in better off neighbourhoods (Noailly & Visser, 2009; Penn, 2011; Cloney, 2016). In more deprived areas, ECEC provision is mainly a public responsibility (Brennan, 2016). In Finland, the only study (not peer-reviewed) that has compared locations of ECEC centres observed no differences in average household income between the neighbourhoods of public and private ECEC centres (Ruutiainen, 2018). Moreover, Finnish parents using private ECEC may be somewhat more willing to manage longer transportation distances than parents who use public ECEC (Sulkanen et al., 2020, see also Kosunen, 2014). In the USA, especially middle-income parents have shown preference for childcare characteristics other than convenient transfer distance (Kensinger Rose & Elicker, 2008). Thus, it might be expected that the possible differentiation of service users cannot be explained only by the nearby availability of private ECEC.

Affordability of services

The affordability of ECEC services understandably determine their accessibility, especially for low-income families (Meyers & Gornick, 2003; van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; West, 2006; Archambault et al., 2020). This is because low-income families' ECEC decisions and participation in general are restricted by prices (Japel & Friendly, 2018; Early & Burchinal, 2001). This association remains statistically significant after controlling for mothers' employment situation and parents' nationalities, which might reflect cultural values concerning ECEC (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015). Where public and private options are available, low-income families tend to more often select public ECEC (West, 2006; Ghosh & Dey, 2020) or schools (Bosetti, 2004) where tuition is lower than in the private settings. In Germany, there is a strong positive association between the customer fees set by individual providers and the SES of their clientele, which increases the stratification of ECEC service users (Mierendorf, Ernst & Mader, 2018). In countries where universal ECEC provision and income-tested customer fees are available, household income has less impact (Petitclerc et. al, 2017; Stewart et al., 2014).

In Finland, municipalities have a legal obligation to provide ECEC services for local families. Fees for public ECEC are income-tested, ranging from 0 to 290 euros per month (Act on ECEC Fees, 1503/2016). The public sector also grants demand-side subsidies for families using private ECEC services. Private day care allowance (PDA) is available for all families using private childcare or ECEC services, and its value varies between 174€ and 320€, depending on household income. On top of the PDA, around 36% of municipalities pay a municipal

supplement (MS), which is usually a flat rate or partially income tested. Moreover, roughly 36% of municipalities grant income-tested vouchers for purchasing private ECEC (Lahtinen & Svatsjö, 2020). The use of vouchers (12.2% of children attending ECEC at 2019) has increased over the last decade, and the use of the PDA (6% in 2019) has decreased respectively[1] (FEEC, 2019). The main difference between the two-subsidy systems relates to the fees that are left for parents to pay. Especially with income-tested vouchers, customer fees in the private sector are relatively close to those in the public sector. The less flexible PDA (+ potential MS) system, on the other hand, entails that the customer fee in the private sector is about the same for every family. Previous research indicates that between 1997 and 2009, the PDA was mainly used by higher SES families (Räsänen & Österbacka, 2019). A Swiss study, in turn, showed that income-testing of customer fees is positively associated with the ECEC participation of low-income children (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015). Therefore, it may be assumed that income-tested vouchers allow families in diverse financial situations to select private ECEC, whereas the less flexible PDA system might favour families who would anyway have to pay the maximum fee in the public sector.

Family socioeconomic status

A large body of research has used family SES characteristics as independent variables when examining parental ECEC or school decisions (e.g., Petitclerc et al., 2017; 2015; Ball et al., 1996; Vincent & Ball, 2006; Sibley et al., 2015; Bosetti, 2004; Grogan, 202; Vandenbroeck et al., 2008; Coley et al., 2015). Usually, SES is measured by household income and parental education level. In this study, the same measures are used. As described, household income level is related to the affordability of ECEC services, especially if customer fees are high. In Finland, there is no research on private providers' customer fees. However, it can be stated that the customer fees of services that accept vouchers are often a little higher than those that don't, and the customer fees of services that accept the PDA are often a higher again (see Ruutiainen et al., 2020; 2021).

In addition to SES, parental education level also indicates their class position and available cultural and social resources (see Jæger & Karlson, 2018; Xie & Ma, 2019). It is well-documented that parents make use of such resources when making decisions about their children's education (Benson et al., 2014; Kosunen & Carrasco, 2014; Goldring & Phillips, 2008; Kosunen & Rivière, 2018; Kampichler et al., 2018; Ball et al., 1996). Middle class (high SES) parents' valuations, tastes and ability to distinguish differences between different settings tend to differ from those of working-class parents, and they are therefore more likely to engage in choice-making in ECEC markets (Vincent & Ball, 2006). Highly educated middle-class parents orient deliberatively to ECEC choice in ECEC markets and invest cultural and financial resources in finding ECEC solutions beyond the mainstream that are ideal from the perspective of children's individual development. Working-class parents with lower education, on the other hand, appear to be less selective in their choices and search for ECEC from within mainstream solutions primarily on the basis of tangible criteria (Kampichler et al. 2018). Thus, in addition to the observation that highly educated parents are more likely to consider quality in their ECEC decisions (Grogan, 2012; Johansen et al., 1996), their perceptions of ECEC quality appear to differ as well (Kampichler et al., 2018). In public-private decisions, this becomes

[1] Municipalities can purchase ECEC services straight from private sector. Purchased services are, however, left out of this examination, because they do not promote parental choice in the same way as demand-side subsidies.

visible in the way that highly educated, educationally aspirant parents prefer private preschools, which they believe better prepare their children for school (Ghosh & Dey, 2020). Moreover, ECEC providers' access policies can favour the children of highly educated parents (Vandenbroeck et al., 2008, van Der Werf et. al., 2021).

Also in a school context, highly educated middle-class parents appear to actively seek school options and eventually select private options (Bosetti, 2004; Ball et al., 1996). Especially middle-class parents appear to prefer schools with class and ethnicity compositions similar to their own (Benson et al., 2014; Rønning Haugen, 2020). The same kind of social segregation is also observed in the ECEC context (Becker & Schober, 2017). Even in Sweden, where customer fees and the quality of private services are regulated, higher educated parents appear to choose private ECEC more often (Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Vamstad, 2007).

Attitudes and beliefs

Parental attitudes and beliefs appear to be one component shaping their ECEC decisions (Sylva et al., 2007). Parents with progressive beliefs about childrearing – who favour self-directed child behaviour – consider quality and practical aspects in their ECEC decisions more than parents with traditional childrearing beliefs that emphasise adult directives. This relationship seems, however, to be moderated by family SES, since it is observed only among low-income parents (Grogan, 2012). Moreover, parents with a child-centred orientation appreciate safe and well-supervised environments, children's autonomy and self-sufficiency. Parents with a school readiness orientation, in turn, value ECEC's contribution to children's learning skills and social relationships with peers and teachers (Gamble, Erwing and Wilhelm, 2009).

Support for public ECEC provision has been shown to be especially strong among working mothers and lower SES parents. Moreover, national ECEC policies correlate with parental attitudes towards public ECEC provision: the larger and the more positively assessed current public childcare provision is, the more it is supported (Chung & Meuleman, 2017). Those parents whose children are in state schools and those with lower SES are less willing to exercise school choice. This has been suggested to stem from their attitudes, namely belief in the value of public education and the idea that every school should be able to accommodate the learning needs of every child (Bosetti, 2004).

In Finland, parents who use private ECEC reason their choice differently than parents whose use public ECEC. The former emphasise the specialisation and values of ECEC, diverse pedagogical activities, home-likeness, and group size. The latter more often value flexible opening hours and suitable location (Sulkanen et al., 2020). This indicates differing attitudes and orientations towards the role of ECEC among public and private service users. However, it is not known whether these attitudes, beliefs and orientations vary according to family SES. Therefore, in this study, possible interrelationships between parental attitudes, the ECEC provider and family SES are examined.

Other factors

Finally, previous research has suggested other potentially differentiating factors regarding the use of private ECEC. Ruutiainen et al's (2021) interview study with Finnish private ECEC providers suggests that children with immigrant backgrounds may be under-represented within private services. This observation is supported by research conducted in other contexts (Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014; Schober & Spiess, 2013; Scholz,

Erhard, Hahn & Harring, 2018; van der Werf et al., 2020). The study also suggests that hours of ECEC used per week and the need for flexibly scheduled ECEC are factors in private providers' customer selection (Ruutiainen et al., 2021). Therefore, immigrant background, the child's weekly attendance hours in ECEC, and the need for flexibly scheduled ECEC are controlled for in the present study.

Research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate whether the service users of public and differently subsidised private ECEC services differ in their socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model of the research. The research questions (RQs) are as follows:

RQ1: How do service users of public ECEC and service users of private ECEC, provided with vouchers or private day care allowance, differ in their socioeconomic background?

RQ2: How do the attitudes of service users of public ECEC and service users of private ECEC, provided with vouchers or private day care allowance, differ?

RQ3: Does the linkage between the ECEC provider (public or private) and parental attitudes vary according to family SES?

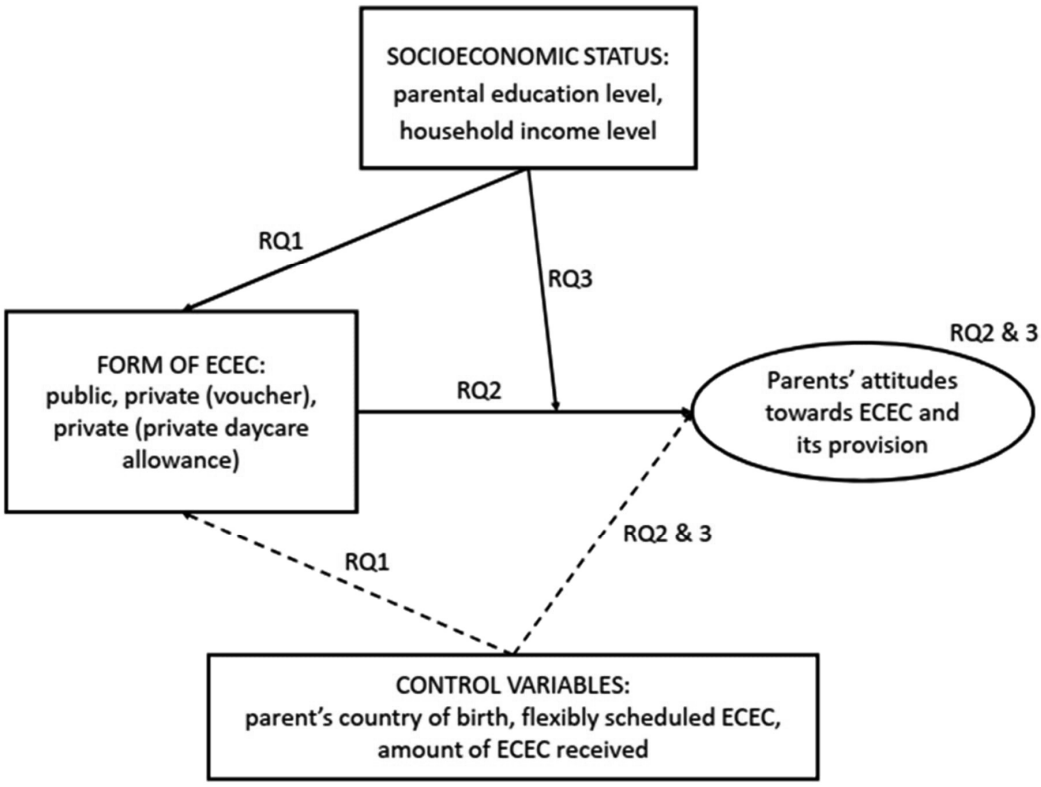

Figure 1. The conceptual model of the research. The continuous arrows refer to actual research questions (RQ) and the dashed arrows refer to variables to be controlled for.

Method

Data collection and participants

The present study utilises cross-sectional survey data collected for the CHILDCARE research project in 2019. The project is a collaborative effort between the Universities of Jyväskylä and Tampere, and the National Institute of Health and Welfare, and it has been financed by the Strategic Research Council Program, 'Equality in Society' (2015–2021) at the Academy of Finland (SA 293049 and SA 314317). The Ethical Committee of the University of Jyväskylä has approved the research protocol.

The survey was sent to 7764 parents of 4081 children living in 13 Finnish municipalities[2]. The parents all had a child who was born between 1 October 2014 and 30 September 2015. At the time of the survey, the focal children were approximately four years old. Altogether 1871 parents (response rate 24%) of 1458 children (35.7%) participated in the survey. In this research, only the responses of those parents whose four-year-old child was in public or private ECEC centre were used, which meant 1416 parents of 1109 children. For 307 of these children, both parents had responded. Examination of the data's representativeness based on the Chi-

[2] The survey was a follow-up study for the majority of the parents. The first wave of data collection was conducted in 2016 in 10 of the 13 municipalities included in the present data collection. Because many families had moved since the first data collection, there were respondents from 71 Finnish municipalities.

square goodness-of-fit test[3] showed that mothers, highly educated parents, employed parents, upper-white-collar employees and managers, lower income households and families living in the capital area were overrepresented among the participants ($p < .001$). Moreover, as seen in Table 1, families whose child was in public ECEC and families that received vouchers were slightly underrepresented, whereas families receiving the PDA were overrepresented ($p < .001$) (see FEEC, 2019).

Table 1. Shares of different forms of ECEC in the research data and Finland

Form of ECEC	Research data (%)	Finland (%)
Public	79.4	81.1
Voucher	10.7	12.2
PDA	9.9	6.0

Measures and Variables

The *form of ECEC* was investigated by asking 'what childcare or early childhood education arrangements do you have in place for your 4-year-old'. The respondent was asked to choose from 13 options including 'municipal day care centre' and 'private day care centre'. Moreover, parents were asked to choose between nine options concerning which childcare subsidies they received. The options included service vouchers and PDA. The form of ECEC was coded into three categories: 1 = public ECEC, 2 = private ECEC + voucher and 3 = private ECEC + PDA.

Family socioeconomic status was measured by *parental education level* and *household income level. Parental education level* was measured by asking for the respondent's highest level of education (1 = no vocational education, 2 = vocational course or equivalent, 3 = vocational school or other vocational qualification, 4 = post-secondary non-higher vocational qualification, 5 = lower university of applied sciences degree, 6 = higher university of applied sciences degree, 7 = lower university degree, 8 = higher university degree university degree). The responses were categorised into a dummy variable: 0 = primary/ secondary education (options 1–4) and 1 = tertiary education (options 5–8).

Household income level was measured by asking for the household's net income per month using twelve response options: *1 = less than 500€, 2 = 500–1000€ to 11 = 7000–8000€, 12 = more than 8000€*. To increase the families' comparability, the income level is reported as equivalent income, which takes into account family composition (SF, 2021). The middle point of the income range was used in the calculation. Households were grouped into three income-categories: low-income, middle-income and high-income. A dummy variable was formed from each category (in each 0 = no, 1 = yes). The high-income group served as a reference group. Following EUROSTAT (2020a), low-income threshold was set at 60 percent of median equalised disposable income. For defining high-income households, there is no established threshold (Atkinson & Brandolini, 2013). However, EUROSTAT (2020b) has used thresholds of 130, 140, 150, 160 percent of median equalised disposable income. Of those, the 140 percent threshold was used in this study[4].

Parents' attitudes towards ECEC were investigated through 16 items. Eight of these assessed attitudes towards public and private service provision and the chargeability of ECEC, while

[3] Because there are no statistics available for Finnish parents whose child participates in ECEC, the research data is compared to Finnish parents who have a four-year-old child.
[4] The results' sensitivity to different threshold values (130% and 150%) is discussed in the conclusion.

eight concerned ECEC quality (see Table 2). The response scale for all items was 1 = strongly disagree … 5 = strongly agree.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Variables	%	*M* (*SD*)
The form of child's ECEC		
Public ECEC centre	79.4	-
Private ECEC centre + voucher	10.7	-
Private ECEC centre + private day care allowance	9.9	-
Parental education level		
primary or secondary education	24.3	-
higher education	75.7	-
Household income level		
Low	19.6	-
Middle	61.1	-
High	19.3	-
Parents' attitudes related to public and private ECEC provision and the chargeability of ECEC		
1.1. My municipality offers a sufficient choice of day care services (e.g., provision at municipal and private day care centres and family day care)	-	3.75 (1.18)
1.2. Municipal ECEC is of higher quality than private provision	-	3.05 (0.95)
1.3. Private ECEC services should be more readily available	-	2.82 (0.93)
1.4. Private ECEC offers a more diverse range of activities than municipal	-	2.68 (0.92)
1.5. Municipalities should invest more in municipal ECEC provision than in subsidising private service	-	3.68 (0.96)
1.6. Municipal ECEC providers are better in meeting children's special needs than private providers	-	3.16 (0.86)
1.7. ECEC should be free of charge for all children	-	3.16 (1.35)
1.8. ECEC should be free for five-year-old children	-	3.63 (1.19)
Parents' attitudes related to the quality of ECEC		
2.1. Children do not receive sufficient individual attention in ECEC	-	2.57 (0.96)
2.2. The child's need for support is adequately considered in ECEC	-	3.73 (0.71)
2.3. Day care group sizes are too large.	-	3.94 (0.92)
2.4. ECEC provides the stimulation that children need.	-	4.12 (0.63)
2.5. ECEC is unable to secure lasting relationships.	-	2.72 (0.97)
2.6. Children learn necessary social skills in ECEC.	-	4.43 (0.59)
2.7. High-quality ECEC requires highly trained personnel.	-	3.82 (1.04)
2.8. Adults cannot spend enough time with children and/or listen to them in ECEC	-	3.23 (0.97)
Parent's country of birth (0 = Finland, 1 = other)	88.6, 11.4	-
The amount of ECEC received (0 = 0-27h/week, 1 = over 27h/week)	18.7, 81.3	-
Flexibly scheduled ECEC (0 = no, 1 = yes)	96.3, 3.7	-

Note. Percentages (%) are presented for categorical variables and means (*M*), and standard deviations (*SD*) are presented for continuous variables. *N* = 1375–1416.

The *control variables* included the parent's country of birth (0 = Finland, 1 = other), the amount of ECEC received (0 = 0–27h per week, 1 = over 27h per week), flexibly scheduled ECEC (i.e., a need for ECEC at evenings, overnight and/or at weekends, where 0 = no and 1 = yes).

Data analysis

Analyses related to RQ1 were conducted with Stata 17. Missing data was imputed using a multiple imputation procedure with 20 imputations (Schlomer, Bauman & Card, 2010). Analyses related to RQs 2–3 were conducted with Mplus software (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). The Full-Information-Maximum-Likelihood (FIML) procedure was used to account for missing data (Enders, 2010). In all analyses, the hierarchical nature of the data (i.e., both parents had responded for 307 children) was considered by estimating unbiased standard errors.

Differences in the SES characteristics of service users of different ECEC forms (RQ1) were investigated via multinomial logistic regression analysis. The form of ECEC was used as a dependent variable. Each form was used as a reference category in turn. Parental education level and household income level were independent variables. The parent's country of birth, amount of ECEC received and flexibly scheduled ECEC were controlled for. To examine relative over- or underrepresentation of a certain service user group between different ECEC forms, the group comparisons were first conducted via relative risk ratios (RRR) and their 95% confidence intervals (CI) (StataCorp, 2021). RRR values under 1 mean that the relative risk that serves as the numerator (e.g., the probability that a child of a low-educated parent is in public ECEC, divided by the corresponding probability for a child of a highly educated parent) is greater than the relative risk that serves as the denominator (e.g., the probability that a child of a low-educated parent is in private voucher subsidised ECEC, divided by the corresponding probability for a child of a highly educated parent). Using the examples in parenthesis, a RRR over 1 indicates that a relatively larger proportion of public ECEC service users are low-educated, while a relatively larger proportion of voucher subsidised private ECEC users are highly educated. RRR values under 1 indicate the opposite. The RRR is statistically significant if its CI does not include value 1. The RRR allows for inducing the relative proportions of service users, but the measure of effect is misleading and difficult to interpret (see Niu, 2020; Breen, Karlson & Holm, 2018). Therefore, as recommended (Niu, 2020), the effect sizes of are presented as average marginal effects (AME) and their 95% CI. If the 95% CI does not include value 0, the result is considered to be statistically significant. For binary variables, AME measures the change in predicted probability when the value of the independent variable changes from 0 to 1. For categorical variables, the AME is relative to that variable's reference category (Niu, 2020; Breen, Karlson & Holm, 2018). AMEs are presented as percentage points.

Analyses for RQs 2 and 3 were conducted within the exploratory structural equation (ESEM) framework (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2009; Marsh et al., 2009), as it can integrate the EFA measurement model (here, the attitude dimensions) within the traditional confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)/structural equation modelling (SEM) framework. This increases the validity of the results, as the associations of the measurement-error-corrected latent variables of the parents' attitudes with the SES characteristics and ECEC form can be examined while controlling for the parent's country of birth, the amount of ECEC received and flexibly scheduled ECEC.

The overall goodness-of-fit of all models related to RQs 2-3 was evaluated with the χ^2 test, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and standardised root mean square residuals (SRMR). The χ^2 p value should be greater than 0.05, whereas values smaller than 0.06 for RMSEA and 0.08 for the SRMR, and values higher than 0.90 for both the TLI and the CFI were considered representative of an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). Due to the large number of parameters estimated, TLI and RMSEA, which correct for parsimony may be particularly

important in ESEM (Marsh et al., 2009). However, since research regarding the adequacy of the abovementioned criteria for ESEM is still lacking (Arens & Morin, 2016), in this study, the criteria are used rather as a guide than as strict rules in model evaluation, as suggested in other ESEM studies as well (Arens & Morin, 2016; Marsh et al., 2009).

Prior to the main analyses related to RQ2, the structure of parents' attitudes was examined via exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Due to some skewness in the attitude variables, the robust MLR estimator was used. Moreover, oblique rotation was chosen, because it allows the attitude dimensions to correlate. The dimensions of parents' attitudes were identified based on eigenvalues-over-one criterion (Kaiser, 1960), the interpretability of the solution (Gorsuch, 1983), and goodness-of-fit indexes. Furthermore, items that cross-loaded (i.e., loadings of 0.32 or higher; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013) on two or more factors were excluded from the final solution. Finally, the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for each dimension of the final factor structure was examined. The results are shown in Appendix 1.

Then, differences in attitudes towards ECEC's provision and quality across users of different ECEC forms (RQ2) were examined by comparing the means of the attitude dimensions across the three service user groups. The fit of the constrained model (i.e., the means of the attitude dimensions constrained to be equal across the service user groups) was compared to that of the model in which the means of the attitude dimensions were estimated freely across the groups using the χ^2 difference test (Satorra & Bentler, 2001). A statistically significant test result suggests that the free model fits the data better than the constrained model. Given that the χ^2 difference test is sensitive to large sample size (N = 1416 in our study) and non-normality of the variables, plus it does not accommodate the effects of model complexity, the free models always fit the data better than more constrained models. Therefore, we also inspected the changes in TLI (Marsh et al., 2009), CFI, and RMSEA (Chen 2007; Cheung and Rensvold 2002). A change of −.01 or less in TLI (Marsh et al., 2005) and CFI (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002) and a change of +.015 or less in RMSEA (Chen, 2007), indicate reasonable support for the constrained model. Pairwise comparisons of the service user groups were conducted via Wald's χ^2 test (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Prior to the mean comparisons, the measurement invariance of the structure of parents' attitudes across the forms of ECEC was investigated and found to be satisfactory (see Appendix 2; Marsh et al., 2009).

Interaction between the SES characteristics (analysed separately) and the form of ECEC on parents' attitudes (RQ3) was examined by following a similar procedure as for the analysis in RQ2 for mean comparisons. In both analyses, the attitude factors served as dependent variables, and they were regressed on the form of ECEC and the control variables. Differences in regression coefficients between the form of ECEC and the attitude factors were compared according to the SES characteristics. Furthermore, in the analysis including household income level, parental education was controlled for and vice versa.

Results

SES characteristics and the form of ECEC

Firstly, differences in the SES characteristics of users of different ECEC forms were examined, while controlling for the parent's country of birth, the amount of ECEC received and flexibly scheduled ECEC. The results based on relative risk ratios (RRR) in Table 3 show that compared

to public ECEC, relatively higher proportions of users of private ECEC (vouchers or PDA) are highly educated. Public ECEC has a relatively higher proportion of service users with lower education. The users of the two forms of private ECEC do not differ based on education. Moreover, it was found that children from high-income households are proportionally overrepresented in PDA subsidised private ECEC (henceforth PDA ECEC) compared to public ECEC, and children from low- and middle-income households are proportionally overrepresented in the public ECEC compared to PDA ECEC. It was also found that children from high-income households are proportionally overrepresented in PDA ECEC compared to voucher subsidised private ECEC (henceforth voucher ECEC), and children from middle-income families are proportionally overrepresented in voucher ECEC compared to PDA ECEC. Comparisons with low-income households, however, fall just short of statistical significance. No income-based differences were found between service users of public ECEC and voucher ECEC.

Table 3. Relative risk ratios (RRR) between family SES characteristics, control variables and the form of child's ECEC

		Private ECEC: voucher	Private ECEC: PDA	Private ECEC: PDA
		Reference group: Public ECEC		Private ECEC: voucher
		RRR [95% CI]	*RRR [95% CI]*	*RRR [95% CI]*
Socioeconomic characters				
Parental education level (0 = primary/secondary education, 1 = tertiary education)		**1.95 [1.18–3.21]**	**3.06 [1.61–5.84]**	1.57 [0.72–3.46]
Household income level	Low-income	1.10 [0.57–2.11]	**0.49 [0.25–0.95]**	0.45 [0.19–1.08]
	Middle-income	1.08 [0.65–1.78]	**0.57 [0.37–0.88]**	**0.53 [0.29–0.98]**
	High-income	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Control variables:				
Parent's country of birth (0 = Finland, 1 = other)		0.51 [0.22–1.19]	1.44 [0.82–2.54]	**2.84 [1.09–7.41]**
Amount of ECEC (0 = 1-27h/ week, 1 = 28h or more/ week)		1.22 [0.72–2.09]	1.26 [0.68–2.32]	1.03 [0.48–2.21]
Flexibly scheduled ECEC (0 = no, 1= yes)		0.18 [0.24–1.36]	0.21 [0.03–1.61]	1.18 [0.07–19.09]

Note. CI = confidence interval, Ref. = reference category. The result is statistically significant if *CI* does not include 1

The average marginal effects in Table 4 indicate that highly educated parents are more likely to select PDA ECEC than low-educated parents. Moreover, children in high-income

households are more likely to participate in PDA ECEC than children living in low- or middle-income households. Household income level does affect the likelihood of using public or voucher centres.

Table 4. Average marginal effects (*AME*) of family SES characteristics and control variables.

		Private ECEC: voucher	Private ECEC: PDA	Public ECEC
		AME (%) [95% CI]	*AME (%) [95% CI]*	*AME (%) [95% CI]*
Socioeconomic characteristics				
Parental education level (0 = primary/secondary education, 1 = tertiary education)		**4.8 [1.1–8.4]**	**7.1 [3.8–10.4]**	**-11.8 [-16.5–-7.2]**
Household income level	Low-income	1.7 [-4.4–7.7]	**-6.8 [-12.8–-0.8]**	5.1 [-2.8–13.1]
	Middle-income	1.4 [-3–5.8]	**-5.7 [-10.5–-0.9]**	4.3 [-1.8–10.4%]
	High-income	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Control variables				
Parent's country of birth (0 = Finland, 1 = other)		**-5.4 [-13.6–-0.6]**	4.4 [-1.9–10.6]	1.1 [-6.4–8.5]
Amount of ECEC (0 = 1-27h/ week, 1 = 28h or more/ week)		1.5 [-3–6.2]	1.7 [-3.1–6.4]	-3.2 [-9.5–3]
Flexibly scheduled ECEC (0 = no, 1= yes)		**-8.5 [-13.6–-3.4]**	**-7.4 [-12.9–-2]**	**15.9 [8.5–23.4]**

Note. CI = 95% confidence interval. The result is statistically significant if *CI* does not include 0. Ref. = reference category

Parental attitudes towards ECEC and its provision by the form of ECEC

Secondly, the attitudinal differences of parents using different forms of ECEC were examined. The items are shown in Table 2. First, the structure of parental attitudes towards ECEC and its provision was examined. As a result of EFA (Appendix 1), four attitude dimensions were formed. The first dimension expressing positive attitude towards municipal over private ECEC was named *Preference for municipal ECEC* (items 1.2–1.6 in Table 2). The second dimension, named *Cost-free ECEC*, expresses positive attitude towards cost-free ECEC (items 1.7, 1.8). The third dimension expresses a critical stance concerning the individual attention that children receive in ECEC, which was named *Individual attention* (items 2.1–2.3, 2.5, 2.8). The fourth dimension expresses ECEC's utility for individual children and thus was named *Individual utility* (items 2.4, 2.6). Measurement invariance of the structure of parents' attitudes across the service user groups was examined and found to be acceptable (Appendix 2).

The results (Table 5 upper part) show that most changes in fit indexes exceeded the cut-offs, meaning that evidence was found of attitudinal differences between service users of different ECEC forms. Pairwise comparisons (Table 6) found that parents whose children were in public ECEC had the most positive attitudes towards public ECEC provision, whereas parents whose children were in PDA ECEC were the least positive. Moreover, parents whose children were

in PDA ECEC had more critical attitudes towards ECEC's (in general) ability to take every child individually into account than parents whose children were in public ECEC. The form of ECEC did not differentiate parents in terms of their attitudes towards the chargeability of ECEC or ECEC's utility for individual child.

Table 5. Attitudinal differences between services users of different forms of ECEC and interaction between socioeconomic factors and the form of child's ECEC on parental attitudes

Estimated models	χ^2 value	*df*	Scaling correction	χ^2 difference test[a]	CFI	ΔCFI	TLI	ΔTLI	RMSEA (90% CI)	ΔRMSEA	SRMR	ΔSRMR
RQ2: Mean differences across service users of different forms of ECEC												
Equal means	1037.73	391	0.98		0.843		0.84		0.06 (0.056; 0.065)		0.103	
Freely estimated means	830.01	383	0.98	$\Delta\chi^2(8) = 174.16$***	0.891	-0.048	0.887	-0.047	0.05 (0.046; 0.055)	0.01	0.079	0.024
RQ3: Interaction with SES												
Household income level												
Constrained model	889.74	497	1.07		0.905		0.9		0.042 (0.037; 0.046)		0.069	
Free model	834.71	449	1.08	$\Delta\chi^2(48) = 53.70^{n.s.}$	0.907	-0.002	0.891	0.009	0.044 (0.039; 0.048)	-0.002	0.066	0.003
Parental education level												
Constrained model	600.77	299	1.13		0.922		0.909		0.039 (0.034; 0.043)		0.056	
Free model	591.13	275	1.12	$\Delta\chi^2(24) = 13{,}56^{n.s.}$	0.918	0.004	0.896	0.013	0.041 (0.037; 0.046)	-0.002	0.056	0

Note: [a]A reference model fits the data better if $p < .05$; Δ = change. [n.s.]$p > 0.05$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 6. Differences in attitudes across different ECEC service user groups.

Attitude dimensions	Compared groups	Wald test (*df* =1)	Group differences
Factor 1 *Preference for municipal ECEC*	PDA vs. public	**128.51*** **	public > PDA
	voucher vs. public	**33.92*** **	public > voucher
	voucher vs. PDA	**9.61***	voucher > PDA
Factor 2 *Cost-free ECEC*	PDA vs. public	0.26	
	voucher vs. public	0.18	
	voucher vs. PDA	0.004	
Factor 3 *Individual attention*	PDA vs. public	**4.00***	PDA > public
	voucher vs. public	2.30	
	voucher vs. PDA	0.20	
Factor 4 *Individual utility*	PDA vs. public	0.34	
	voucher vs. public	0.14	
	voucher vs. PDA	0.69	

Note. *$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.001$

The role of SES characteristics in the linkage between form of ECEC and attitudes

Thirdly, it was examined whether the relationship between the form of ECEC and parents' attitudes varies with family SES characteristics. The results presented in Table 5 favored the constrained model for both SES characteristics, suggesting that the relationship between the form of ECEC and attitudes towards ECEC and its provision did not vary with family SES characteristics. Hence, service users of different forms of ECEC appear to differ in their attitudes in the same way regardless of household income level or parental education level.

Discussion

This study examined the potential differentiation of private and public ECEC service users based on SES or attitudes concerning the quality and provision of ECEC in Finland. Moreover, the role of SES characteristics in the relationship between the form of ECEC and parental attitudes was examined. According to the results, the SES and attitudes of public and private ECEC service users do differ, but the attitudinal differences do not relate to family SES.

According to the findings, when compared to public ECEC and, to a lesser extent, voucher ECEC, high-income households are overrepresented in the clientele of PDA ECEC. Therefore, this study suggests that income-tested customer-fees and subsidies (public provision and vouchers) make public and private ECEC accessible also for low- and middle income-families. More inflexible subsidies (PDA) with unregulated customer fees appear to favour high-income families. The results are in line with previous research (e.g., van Lancker & Ghysels, 2016; Archambault et al., 2020; Japel & Friendly, 2018) indicating that the affordability of ECEC services plays an important role in how accessible they are for different families. The present results also support the view that the subsidy model is crucial in the affordability of services for families (Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014; Van Lancker, 2018; Abrassart & Bonoli, 2015).

In line with previous research (e.g., Kampichler et al., 2018; Garvis & Lunneblad, 2018; Ghosh & Dey, 2020; Vincent & ball, 2006), this study indicates that parents' decision between public and private services is related to parental education level. Those parents whose children are in

private ECEC are more likely to be highly educated than those whose children participate in public ECEC. Earlier research suggests that highly educated parents choose ECEC deliberatively, and their quality perceptions differ from those of less educated parents (Grogan, 2012; Kampichler et al., 2018; Vincent et al., 2008). Therefore, even though in Finland the public and private sectors are bound by the same quality standards and curriculum framework, it may be that highly educated parents view private and public ECEC differently (see also Vamstad, 2016). This conclusion is supported by previous research. Finnish parents with children in private ECEC have been found to be more likely to explain their decision with reference to the content of ECEC than parents with children in public services, who give more value to practical reasons (Sulkanen et al., 2020). Furthermore, the parents of school-aged children in Finland consider the reputations of different schools and classes when contemplating their decisions; entering a 'selective space', however, (rather than the local space of school catchment areas) requires social, cultural and economic resources (Kosunen, 2014). More research on how parents with different SES make sense of different forms of public and private ECEC, as well as the kind of 'hot knowledge' involved in constructing the reputation of different ECEC settings, is needed (see Vincent et al., 2008).

Previous research suggests that parents' SES shapes their attitudes and beliefs, which, in turn, relate to their ECEC decisions (Grogan, 2012; Bosetti, 2004). We found four dimensions of parental attitudes towards the quality of ECEC and its provision in general: *Preference for municipal ECEC*, *Cost-free ECEC*, *Individual attention* and *Individual utility.* Parents whose children were in private ECEC showed less preference for municipal ECEC provision (i.e., more preference for private). Moreover, compared to parents using public services, parents receiving PDA had more critical attitudes towards the ability of ECEC (in general) to take children individually into account. Hence, this study supports previous research insofar that parental attitudes are related to the form of ECEC used. However, these differences did not vary by family SES. Due to the cross-sectional design of this study (see the limitations section below), the implications of this finding are only speculative. In general, service users of private provision may have less preference for municipal ECEC provision because they are satisfied with the ECEC they receive in the private sector, as suggested by earlier research (Saranko et al., 2021). Moreover, it is possible that PDA and voucher systems create qualitatively different kinds of ECEC markets. In addition to legislative regulation, municipalities obligate private voucher subsidised providers to follow the terms of local voucher contracts. With PDA systems there are no such contracts (see Lahtinen & Svartsjö, 2020), suggesting that a PDA system allows more diverse service provision than voucher systems. This speculative view is supported by earlier qualitative studies (Ruutiainen et al., 2020; 2021) indicating that Finnish municipal decision makers and private ECEC providers position voucher subsidised private ECEC as a part of the public service network and PDA ECEC as a separate sector complementing public provision. Moreover, it appears that large, more standardised ECEC chains provide services especially in municipalities that grant vouchers. PDA ECEC might be more diverse, including relatively more small local entrepreneurs and services that provide ideological alternatives (see Ruutiainen et al., 2020; 2021). Therefore, it is possible that especially in the PDA systems, a group of parents exist who are critical of public ECEC's ability to take children individually into account and who believe that private services can better meet their children's needs. Moreover, in the voucher systems, parents using private services, like municipal decision makers (Ruutiainen et al., 2020), possibly see private provision as a part of the public service network

This study has some limitations. First, due to its cross-sectional design, it is not possible to deduce the causality between parents' attitudes and their decision to use a certain form of ECEC. Thus, research with more suitable data is needed on whether parents' differing attitudes preclude and hence shape their ECEC decisions or whether their attitudes develop while the child is already in the private setting. Second, the results concerning household income level appear to be somewhat sensitive to the threshold chosen for the categorisation of high-income households. When analyses were conducted with 130 and 150 percent thresholds (in this study 140%), which were among the options suggested by Eurostat, it was noted that with the 130 percent cut-off value, the results were in line with those presented. However, with the 150 percent threshold, the income related differences between service users of different ECEC forms fell slightly short of statistical significance. Third, earlier research has suggested that the admission policies of private providers potentially exclude children with special educational needs (SEN) (Ruutiainen et al., 2021; Jones & Jones, 2021). Unfortunately, the data of this study did not allow controlling for SEN.

Conclusion

In the Nordic context, marketisation and privatisation has rather shaped the already existing ECEC systems than replaced one paradigm with another (Naumann, 2011; Author reference). The marketisation of ECEC has proceeded incrementally, and private provision has complemented the municipal preschool network without abolishing the public foundation of ECEC services (Westberg & Larsson, 2020; Ruutiainen et al., 2020). In Finland, the public responsibility of service provision and universalism are still at the core of the ECEC system, which manifests, for example, in children's universal right to ECEC, generous public subsidies and tight regulation. The regulation and subsidies are expected to ensure the selection of public or private ECEC for all families (Ruutiainen et al., 2020; 2021). However, as this research has shown, regardless of the ethos of free choice, service users of public and private ECEC differ as to their SES, attitudes and preferences (see also Sulkanen et al., 2020). The policy implication of this finding is that, as earlier research suggests (Lloyd, 2019), marketisation and privatisation of ECEC is hard to implement without increasing social segregation. Even when financial barriers are mainly removed (Voucher ECEC), increasing parental choice and competition through demand-side subsidies appear drive such segregation. Therefore, if the private sector is to involved, it is suggested that, to improve access, rather than providing demand-side subsidies, it may be justified to support supply directly (Lloyd, 2019; Penn & Lloyd, 2014), which means privatisation without marketisation (see Van der Werf et al., 2021). It appears that the differentiation of ECEC service users due to combination of marketisation and privatisation extends processes of educational and social distinction also into early childhood (see Kosunen, 2014, Dovemark et al., 2018; Ball et al., 1996; Forsberg, 2018). It is important that the future research turns its gaze to the implications of such distinctions and segregation.

Acknowledgements

The research is part of CHILDCARE -research project funded by Strategic Research Council of Finnish Academy

Authors' contributions

VR was in main responsible for research design and writing the manuscript. VR and ER correspondent the data analysis. MA attended writing, data analysis and research design. All authors read and approved the final manuscript

Funding

VR co-authored this article with a grant from the Emil Aaltonen Foundation

Availability of data and material

The dataset of this study is governed by CHILDCARE -project. The requests should be appointed to MA.

Competing interests

There are no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

ECEC: early childhood education and care; PDA: Private Day Care Allowance; MS: Municipal Supplement for the Private Day Care Allowance; Voucher ECEC: Private early childhood education and care subsidized with vouchers; PDA ECEC: Private early childhood education and care subsidized with Private Day Care Allowance

References

Abrassart, A., & Bonoli, G. (2015). Availability, Cost or Culture? Obstacles to Childcare Services for Low-Income Families. *Journal of Social Policy, 44(4), 787–806*. doi:10.1017/S0047279415000288

Arens, K., & Morin, A. (2016). Examination of the structure and grade-related differentiation of multidimensional self-concept instruments for children using ESEM. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 84(2), 330–355*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2014.999187

Archambault, J., Côté, D., & Raynault, M-F. 2020. Early childhood education and care access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Using a framework to guide intervention. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 48(3), 345-352*. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-01002-x

Asparouhov, T., & Muthén, B. (2009). Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling, Structural Equation Modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 16(3), 397-438*. DOI: 10.1080/10705510903008204

Atkinson, A. B., & Brandolini, A. (2013). On the Identification of the Middle Class. In Gornick, J. C. & Jäntti. M (ed.), *Income Inequality: Economic Disparities and the Middle Class in Affluent Countries*. Standford University Press.

Ball, S., Bowe, R., & Gewirtz, S. (1996). School choice, social class and distinction: the realization of social advantage in education. *Journal of Education Policy, 11(1), 89-112*. DOI: 10.1080/0268093960110105

Barrett, P. (2001). Assessing the reliability of rating data – Revised March 2001. available http://www.pbarrett.net/rater.pdf. Retrieved 2.3.2021.

Becker, B., & Schober, P. S. (2017). Not Just Any Child Care Center? Social and Ethnic Disparities in the Use of Early Education Institutions With a Beneficial Learning Environment. *Early Education and Development, 28(8), 1011-1034*. DOI: 10.1080/10409289.2017.1320900

Benson, M., Bridge, G., & Wilson, D. (2014). School Choice in London and Paris – A Comparison of Middle-class Strategies. *Social policy & administration: 49(1), 24-43*. DOI: 10.1111/spol.12079

Bosetti, L. (2004). Determinants of school choice: understanding how parents choose elementary schools in Alberta. *Journal of Education Policy, 19(4), 387-405*. DOI: 10.1080/0268093042000227465

Breen R., Karlson, K, B., & Holm, A. (2018). Interpreting and Understanding Logits, Probits, and Other Nonlinear Probability Models. *Annual Review of Sociology, 44(1), 39-54*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041429

Brennan, D. (2016). The business of care: Australia's experiment with the marketization of childcare. In Miller, Orchard, L. (ed.), *Australian public policy progressive ideas in the neoliberal ascendency* (pp. 151-167). Policy Press, Bristol:

Chen, F. F. (2007). Sensitivity of Goodness of Fit Indexes to Lack of Measurement Invariance, Structural Equation Modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 14(3), 464-504*. DOI: 10.1080/10705510701301834

Cheung, G., & Rensvold, R. (2002). Evaluating Goodness-of-Fit Indexes for Testing Measurement Invariance, Structural Equation Modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 9(2), 233-255*. DOI: 10.1207/S15328007SEM0902_5.

Chung, H., & Meuleman, B. (2017). European parents' attitudes towards public childcare provision: the role of current provisions, interests and ideologies. *European Societies, 19(1), 49-68*. DOI: 10.1080/14616696.2016.1235218

Cicchetti, D., & Sparrow, S. (1981). Developing criteria for establishing interrater reliability of specific items: applications to assessment of adaptive behavior. *American journal of mental deficiency, 86(2), 127-37.*

Cloney, D. (2016). Accessibility and effectiveness of early childhood education and care for families from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in Australia. PhD thesis, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne . URL: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/112371

Cloney, D., Tayler, C., Hattie, J., Cleveland, G., & Adams, R. (2016). The Selection of ECEC Programs by Australian Families: Quality, Availability, Usage and Family Demographics.

Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 41(4), 16–27. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911604100403

Coley, R. L., Votruba-Drzal, E., Collins, M. E., & Miller, P. (2014). Selection into early education and care settings: Differences by developmental period. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 29(3): 319-332*, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.03.006

Dovemark, M., Kosunen, S., Kauko, J., Magnúsdóttir, B., Hansen, P., & Rasmussen, P. (2018). Deregulation, privatisation and marketisation of Nordic comprehensive education: Social changes reflected in schooling. *Education Inquiry, 9(1), 122–141*. DOI: 10.1080/20004508.2018.1429768

Dýrfjörð, K., & Magnúsdóttir, B. (2016). Privatization in early childhood education in Iceland. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 11(1), 80–97*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631062

Early, D., & Burchinal, M. (2001). Early childhood care: relations with family characteristics and preferred care characteristics. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16(4), 475-497*. doi: Doi 10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00120-X

Enders, G. (2010). Applied Missing Data Analysis. New York: THE GUILFORD PRESS.

EUROSTATa. (2021). Archive: Income poverty statistics. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Income_poverty_statistics&oldid=440992#At-risk-of-poverty_rate_and_threshold, retrieved 5.3.2021.

EUROSTATb. (2021). EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) methodology - distribution of income. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_statistics_on_income_and_living_conditions_%28EU-SILC%29_methodology_-_distribution_of_income#Description, retrieved 5.3.2021.

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, FIFHAW. (2020). Varhaiskasvatus 2019 [ECEC 2019]. https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/140541

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, FINEEC. (2019). Tilastoraportti varhaiskasvatuksen järjestämisestä [Statistical report on the organization of early childhood education]. https://karvi.fi/app/uploads/2019/09/Karvi_vaka_tilastoraportti_2019-1.pdf

Forsberg, H. (2018). School competition and social stratification in the deregulated upper secondary school market in Stockholm. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 39(6), 891-907*. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2018.1426441

Gamble, W., Ewing, E., & Wilhelm, M. (2009). Parental Perceptions of Characteristics of Non-Parental Child Care: Belief Dimensions, Family and Child Correlates. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 18(70), 70-82*. DOI: http://dx.doi.10.1007/s10826-008-9208-z

Garvis, S., & Lunneblad. J. (2018). Inequalities in Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Sweden. In Erhard, K., Scholz, A. & Harring, D. (ed.), *The Equal Access Study (pp. 30-34).* ICEC Working Paper Series – Volume 1.

Ghosh, S., & Dey, D. (2020). Public or private? Determinants of parents' preschool choice in India. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 14(3),16-32*. DOI: 10.1186/s40723-020-00068-0

Goldring, E., & Phillips, K. (2008). Parent preferences and parent choices: the public–private decision about school choice. *Journal of Education Policy, 23(3), 209-230*. DOI: 10.1080/02680930801987844

Gorsuch, R. (1983). Factor analysis (2nd ed.). Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Grogan, K. (2012). Parents' choice of pre-kindergarten: the interaction of parent, child and contextual factors. *Early Child Development and Care, 182(10), 1265-1287*. DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2011.608127

Haug, P. (2014). The public-private partnership in ECEC provision in Norway. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal: Disadvantage and Social Justice, 22(3), 366–378*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.912899

Holmes Erickson, H. (2017). How do parents choose schools, and what schools do they choose? A literature review of private school choice programs in the United States. *Journal of School Choice, 11(4), 491-506*. DOI: 10.1080/15582159.2017.1395618

Hu, L-T., & Bentler, P. (1999). Cutoff Criteria for Fit Indexes in Covariance Structure Analysis: Conventional Criteria versus New Alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6(1), 1-55.* DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Jæger, M. M., & Karlson, K. (2018). Cultural Capital and Educational Inequality: A Counterfactual Analysis. *Sociological Science 5, 775- 795.* DOI: 10.15195/v5.a33

Japel, C., & Friendly, M. (2018). Inequalities in Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada. in Erhard, K., Scholz, A., & Harring, D. (ed.), *The Equal Access Study* (pp. 30-34). ICEC Working Paper Series – Volume 1.

Johansen, A., Leibowitz, A., & Waite, L. (1996). The importance of child-care characteristics to choice of care. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58(3), 759-772*. doi: 10.2307/353734

Jones, A. P., & Jones, R. (2021). Constructing (Dis)ability through participation in early childhood markets: Preschool leaders' enrolment decision-making. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research, 10(1), 60-82.*

Kaiser, H. (1960). The application of electronic computers to factor analysis. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 20(1), 141–151*. DOI: doi:10.1177/001316446002000116

Kampichler, M, Dvořáčková, J., & Jarkovská. L. (2018). Choosing the right kindergarten: Parents' reasoning about their ECEC choices in the context of the diversification of ECEC programs. *Journal of Pedagogy, 9(2), 9-32.* DOI:10.2478/jped-2018-0009

Karlsson, M., Löfdahl, A., & Pérez Prieto, H. (2013). Morality in parents' stories of preschool choice: narrating identity positions of good parenting. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 34(2), 208-224*. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2012.714248

Kensinger R., K., & Elicker, J. (2008). Parental Decision Making About Child Care. *Journal of Family Issues, 29(9), 1161-1184*. doi:10.1177/0192513X07312103

Kline, R. B. (2016). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (4th ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Kosunen, S. (2014). Reputation and parental logics of action in local school choice space in Finland. *Journal of Education Policy, 29(4), 443-466.* DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2013.844859

Kosunen, S., & Carrasco, A. (2016). Parental preferences in school choice: comparing reputational hierarchies of schools in Chile and Finland. *A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 46(2): 172-193*. DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2013.861700

Kosunen, S., & Rivière, C. (2018). Alone or together in the neighbourhood? School choice and families' access to local social networks. *Children's Geographies, 16(2), 143-155*. DOI: 10.1080/14733285.2017.1334114

Krapf, S. (2014). Who uses public childcare for 2-year old children? Coherent family policies and usage patterns in Sweden, Finland and Western Germany. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 23(1), 25–40.* DOI: 10.1111/ijsw.12031

Lahtinen, J., & Svartsjö, M. (2020). Kotihoidontuen ja yksityisen hoidon tuen kuntalisät ja palveluseteli [Municipal supplements of child homecare and private daycare allowances, and vouchers]. Helsinki: Kuntaliitto [Association of Finnish Municipalities]. https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/julkaisut/2020/2089-kotihoidontuen-ja-yksityisen-hoidon-tuen-kuntalisat-ja-palveluseteli

Laki varhaiskasvatuksen asiakasmaksuista [Act on Early Childhood Education Fees]. 1503/2016. https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2016/20161503

Lloyd, E. (2019). Reshaping and Reimagining Marketised Early Childhood Education and Care Systems. Zeitschrift für Pädagogik. 65(3), 89-106. https://doi.org/10.3262/ZPB1901089

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*. DOI: 10.1177/0958928712449776

Marsh, H. W., Muthén, B., Asparouhov, T., Lüdtke, O., Robitzsch, A., Morin, A. J. S., & Trautwein, U. (2009). Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling, Integrating CFA and EFA: Application to Students' Evaluations of University Teaching, Structural Equation Modeling. *A Multidisciplinary Journal, 16(3), 439-476*. DOI: 10.1080/10705510903008220

Meyers, M. K., & Jordan, L P. (2006). Choice and Accommodation in Parental Child Care Decisions. *Community Development, 37(2), 53-70*. DOI: 10.1080/15575330609490207

Meyers, M., & Gornick, J. (2003). Public or Private Responsibility? Early Childhood Education and Care, Inequality, and the Welfare State. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 34(3), 379-411*. DOI: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41603889

Mierendorff, J., Ernst, T., & Mader, M. (2018). Embedded internationalisation and privilege in german early years provision. In Maxwell C., Deppe U., Krüger H. H., & Helsper W. (ed.). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59966-3_8

Milfont, T., & Fischer, R. (2010). Testing measurement invariance across groups: Applications in cross-cultural research. *International Journal of Psychological Research, 3(1), 111-121*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21500/20112084.857

Morris, R., & Perry, T. (2019). Private schools for free? Parents' reasons for choosing a new Free School for their child. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 49(5), 535-552*. DOI: 10.1080/0305764X.2019.1571561

Muthén, L. K. & Muthén, B. O. (1998–2017). MPlus user's quide (8th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.

Naumann, I. 2011. Towards the marketization of early childhood education and care? Recent developments in Sweden and the United Kingdom. *Nordic Journal of Social Research, 2(2), 37–53*. DOI: 10.15845/njsr.v2i0.109

Niu, L. (2020). A review of the application of logistic regression in educational research: common issues, implications, and suggestions. *Educational Review, 72(1), 41-67*. DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2018.1483892

Noailly, J., & Visser, S. (2009). The Impact of Market Forces on Child Care Provision: Insights from the 2005 Child Care Act in the Netherlands. *Journal of European Social Policy*, *38(3), 477–498*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409003109

Nunnally, J. (1978). Psychometric theory. 2nd Edition, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Pavolini, E., & Van Lancker, W. (2018). The Matthew effect in childcare use: a matter of policies or preferences? *Journal of European Public Policy, 25(6), 878-893*. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2017.1401108

Penn, H. (2011). Gambling on the market: The role of for-profit provision in early childhood education and care. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 9(2), 150–161*. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1476718X10387999

Penn, H., & Lloyd, E. (2014). How Can Government Ensure that Early Care and Education is of High Quality in a Market System? Learning from international experience. In Wolfe, T., (Eds.), Childcare – Business or profession? (pp. 13–52). Dublin: Start Strong.

Petitclerc, A., Côté, S., Doyle, O., Burchinal, M., Herba, C., Zachrisson, H. D., Boivin, M., Tremblay, R. E., Tiemeier, H., Jaddoe, V., & Raat, H. (2017). Who uses early childhood education and care services? Comparing socioeconomic selection across five western policy contexts. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 11(3), 1–24.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-017-0028-8

Ruutiainen, V. (2018). Kotitalouksien keskitulot yksityisten ja julkisten päiväkotien lähialueilla: tapaus Helsinki [Average household income in the vicinity of private and public kindergartens: the case of Helsinki]. Tutkittua varhaiskasvatuksesta -blog, https://tutkittuavarhaiskasvatuksesta.com/tag/ville-ruutiainen/

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2020). Rationalising public support for private early childhood education and care: the case of Finland. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 41(1), 32-47.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2019.1665497

Ruutiainen, V., Alasuutari, M., & Karila, K. (2021). Selectivity of clientele in Finnish private early childhood education and care. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 7(2), 91-105.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2021.1911161

Räsänen, T., & Österbacka, E. (2019). Voimistaako lasten yksityisen hoidon tuki julkisten ja yksityisten varhaiskasvatuspalveluiden eriytymistä? Konference presentation, Presented at the annual Social policy conference, Joensuu, October 24-25.

Rønning Haugen, C. (2020). Teachers´ experiences of school choice from ´marginalised´ and ´privileged´ public schools in Oslo. *Journal of Education Policy, 35(1), 68-94*. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2019.1587519

Satorra, A., & Bentler. P. (2001). A scaled difference chi-square test statistic for moment structure analysis. *Psychometrika, 66(4), 507–514*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02296192

Schlomer, G., Bauman, S., & Card, N. (2010). Best practices on missing data management counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 57(1): 1-10.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018082

Scholz, A., Erhard, K., Hahn, S., & Harrin, D. (2018). Inequalities in Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Germany. in Erhard, K., Scholz, A., & Harring, D (ed), *The Equal Access Study* (pp. 24-29). ICEC Working Paper Series – Volume 1.

Sibley, E., Dearing, E., Toppelberg, C., Mykletun, A., Son, Z., & Daae, H. (2015). Do increased availability and reduced cost of early childhood care and education narrow social inequality gaps in utilization? Evidence from Norway. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 9(1)*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40723-014-0004-5

Stahl, J. F., Schober, P. S., & Spiess, C. K. (2018). Parental socio-economic status and childcare quality: Early inequalities in educational opportunity? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 44, 304-317*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.011.

StataCorp. (2021). mlogit — Multinomial (polytomous) logistic regression. https://www.stata.com/manuals/rmlogit.pdf, retrieved 14.6.2021.

Statistics Finland. (2021). Equivalent income. https://www.stat.fi/meta/kas/ekvivalentti_tu_en.html, 2.3.2021.

Stewart, K., Gambaro, L., Waldfogel, J., & Rutter, J. (2014). Common challenges, lessons for policy. In Gambaro, L., Stewart, K., & Waldfogel, J (ed), *An equal start? Providing quality early education and care for disadvantaged children* (pp. 219-243). Bristol: Policy Press, 219–243.

Sylva, K., Stein, A., Leach, P., Barnes, J., Malmberg, L-E., & FCCC-Team. (2007). Family and child factors related to the use of non-maternal infant care: An English study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 22(1), 118-136*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.11.003.

Tabachnik, B., & Fidell, L. (2001). Using multivariate statistics. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Ünver, Ö., Bircan, T., & Nicaise, I. (2018). Perceived accessibility of childcare in Europe: a cross-country multilevel study. *ICEP, 12(5)*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-018-0044-3

Vamstad, J. (2016). Bottom-up childcare in a top-down welfare state: explaining cooperative organization among Swedish parents. *International Review of Sociology, 26(1), 69-81*. DOI: 10.1080/03906701.2016.1148345

Vamstad, J. (2007). Governing Welfare : The third sector and the challenges to the Swedish Welfare State. Doctoral dissertation, Mid Sweden University.

Vandenbroeck, M., & Lazzari, A. (2014). Accessibility of early childhood education and care: a state of affairs. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 22(3), 327-335*. DOI: 10.1080/1350293X.2014.912895

Vandenbroeck, M., Visscher, S., Nuffel, K., & Ferla, J. (2008). Mothers' search for infant child care: The dynamic relationship between availability and desirability in a continental European welfare state. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 23, 245-258*. DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.09.002.

Van der Werf, W. M., Slot, P. L., Kenis, P. N., & Leseman, P. P. M. (2021). Inclusive practice and quality of education and care in the Dutch hybrid early childhood education and care system. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 15(1)*: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-020-00079-x

Van der Werf, W.M., Slot, P.L., Kenis, P., & Leseman, P.P.M. (2020). Hybrid organizations in the privatized and harmonized Dutch ECEC system: Relations with quality of education and care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 53, 136-150.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.03.006.

Van Huizen, T., & Plantenga, J. (2018). Do children benefit from universal early childhood education and care? A meta-analysis of evidence from natural experiments. *Economics of Education Review, 66, 206-222.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.08.001.

Van Lancer, W. (2018). Reducing Inequality in Childcare Service Use across European Countries: What (if any) Is the role of Social Spending? *Social Policy & Administration, 52(1): 271-292.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12311

Van Lancker, W., & Ghysels, J. (2016). Explaining patterns of inequality in childcare service use across 31 developed economies: A welfare state perspective. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 57(5), 310-337*. doi:10.1177/0020715216674252

Vincent, C., Braun, A., & Ball, S. (2008). Childcare, choice and social class: Caring for young children in the UK. *Critical Social Policy, 28(1), 5–26*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018307085505

Vincent, C., & Ball, S. (2006). Childcare, Choice and Class Practices Middle Class Parents and their Children. London: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780203012413

West, A. (2006). The pre-school education market in England from 1997: quality, availability, affordability and equity. *Oxford Review of Education, 32(3), 283-301*. DOI: 10.1080/03054980600775516

Westberg, J., & Larsson, E. (2020). Winning the war by losing the battle? The marketization of the expanding preschool sector in Sweden. *Journal of Education Policy*, DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2020.1861338

Xie, C., & Ma, Y. (2019). The mediating role of cultural capital in the relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement in 14 economies. *British educational research journal, 45(4), 838-855*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3528

Appendix 1: The structure of parental attitudes towards ECEC and its provision

The structure of parental attitudes towards ECEC and its provision was examined using explorative factor analysis (EFA). The initial results of EFA showed poor fit and some very low factor loadings in different factor solutions. The analysis proceeded iteratively so that items with the lowest factor loading were removed one by one. This procedure was repeated twice until all factor loadings were sufficient in every estimated factor solution. As a result, items 1.1 and 2.7 (see Table 2) were removed from the final analysis. After these modifications, the Kaiser criterion suggested a four-factor solution. The model fit for the solution was mostly acceptable: $\chi^2(41) = 272.26$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.85, RMSEA = 0.06 [90% CI = 0.06; 0.07], SRMR = 0.03. Since this solution was reasonable with regards to the content, and all items loaded statistically significantly to one factor only, this was selected as the final solution.

The four-factor solution is presented in Appendix Table 1. Items 1.2–1.6 loaded on factor 1, which was labelled *Preference for municipal ECEC.* Items 1.2 and 1.6 reflected this dimension most strongly. Items (1.3, 1.4) that expressed preference towards private provision loaded negatively on this dimension and thus indicated the preference towards municipal ECEC.

As shown in Appendix table 1, only items 1.7 and 1.8 loaded on factor 2. The loadings were positive and somewhat equal. The second dimension was labelled *Cost-free ECEC.* Factor 3, related to items 2.1–2.3, 2.5, 2.8, was named *Individual attention*. Items 2.1 and 2.8 reflected the third dimension most strongly. Item 2.2, that was the only item expressing positive attitude towards the quality of ECEC loaded negatively on the dimension of *Individual attention*. Therefore, this dimension expresses a critical stance on ECEC's ability to take children individually into account. Factor 4 was labelled *Individual utility* and items 2.4 and 2.6, which formed it, reflected it somewhat equally.

Correlations between the attitude dimensions were mainly weak (Appendix table 1). Only *Individual utility* had moderate positive relationships with *Preference for municipal ECEC* and *Individual attention.* The reliability of attitude dimensions *Preference for municipal ECEC*, *Cost-free ECEC* and *Individual attention* can be considered adequate (Nunnally, 1978, Barret, 2001) while reliability of the fourth dimension*, Individual utility*, can be considered from good (Cicchetti & Sparrow, 1981) to inadequate (Barret, 2001).

Appendix table 1. EFA solution based on 13 items of parental attitudes towards provision and quality of ECEC ($N = 1401$)

Items	**Loadings**				**Residual variance**
	Factor 1 *Preference for municipal ECEC*	**Factor 2** *Cost-free ECEC*	**Factor 3** *Individual attention*	**Factor 4** *Individual utility*	
Cronbach's alpha	0.71	0.78	0.75	0.61	
1.2. Municipal ECEC is of higher quality than private provision	**0.76**	0.00	-0.05	-0.10	0.45
1.3. Private ECEC services should be more readily available	**-0.44**	0.19	-0.10	-0.10	0.74
1.4. Private ECEC offers a more diverse range of activities than municipal	**-0.51**	0.05	0.04	-0.11	0.69
1.5. Municipalities should invest more in municipal ECEC provision than in subsidising private service	**0.46**	0.03	0.23	0.09	0.72
1.6. Municipal ECEC providers are better in meeting children's special needs than private providers	**0.68**	0.04	-0.01	-0.15	0.57
1.7. ECEC should be free of charge for all children	-0.00	**0.82**	-0.02	-0.02	0.32
1.8. ECEC should be free for five-year-old.	0.01	**0.77**	0.04	0.06	0.39
2.1. Children do not receive sufficient individual attention in ECEC	-0.04	0.04	**0.67**	-0.13	0.46
2.2. The child's need for support is adequately considered in ECEC.	0.07	-0.00	**-0.46**	0.17	0.70
2.3. Day care group sizes are too large.	0.07	-0.01	**0.58**	0.17	0.70
2.5. ECEC is unable to secure lasting relationships.	-0.04	-0.01	**0.56**	-0.08	0.65
2.8. Adults cannot spend enough time with children and/or listen to them in ECEC	0.04	-0.03	**0.74**	0.01	0.46
2.4. ECEC provides the stimulation that children need.	-0.03	-0.010	-0.07	**0.65**	0.55
2.6. Children learn necessary social skills in ECEC.	0.01	0.07	-0.02	**0.60**	0.62
Factor correlations	**F1**	**F2**	**F3**	**F4**	
F1 *Preference for municipal ECEC*	1				
F2 *Cost-free ECEC*	-0.03	1			
F3 *Individual attention*	-0.04	0.03	1		
F4 *Individual utility*	0.25*	-0.00	-0.32*	1	

Appendix 2: measurement invariance examination

The measurement invariance of parents' attitudes towards ECEC and its provision was examined across the three service user groups (Milfont & Ficher, 2010; Appendix Table 2). Strong invariance was obtained, suggesting that the groups exhibited the same meaning attribution regarding the ECEC attitude dimensions and that the response style between the groups was similar. This justified the comparison of the means of the attitude dimensions across the service user groups.

However, complete strict invariance was not obtained (Appendix Table 2). Residual variance of item 2.2 contributed the most to the misfit (modification index = 41.29 in private ECEC + PDA group). After freeing this parameter, partial strict invariance was obtained, suggesting that the measurement errors did not differ substantially between the groups. Finally, invariance comparison of factor variances/covariances revealed that ΔCFI slightly exceeded the cut-off. However, since the usefulness of TLI and RMSEA have been emphasised in previous ESEM studies (e.g., Marsh et al. 2009), and their changes did not exceed their cut-offs, the invariance of factor variances/covariances was accepted. This is important, given that in the analyses related to our second and third research questions, the attitude dimensions were regressed on the control variables.

Appendix table 2. Invariance tests of the dimensions of attitudes towards ECEC and its provision.

Invariance step		χ^2 value	*df*	Scaling correction	χ^2 difference test[a]	CFI	ΔCFI	TLI	ΔTLI	RMSEA (90% CI)	ΔRMSEA	SRMR	ΔSRMR
1	*Weak invariance (loadings)*	468.41	203	1.06	-	0.925	-	0.899	-	0.053 (0.047–0.059)	-	0.047	-
2	Strong invariance (loadings, intercepts)	506.94	223	1.06	Model 2 vs. 1 $\Delta\chi^2$ = 38.70**	0.92	0.005	0.902	-0.003	0.052 (0.046–0.058)	0.001	0.05	-0.003
3	Strict Invariance (loadings, intercepts, residual variances)	595.42	251	1.08	Model 3 vs. 2 $\Delta\chi^2$ = 86.39***	0.903	0.017	0.894	0.008	0.054 (0.049–0.06)	-0.002	0.069	-0.019
3p.	*P. strict variance* (loadings, intercepts, residual variances)	561.85	249	1.08	Model 3p vs. 2 $\Delta\chi^2$ = 55.23***	0.911	0.009	0.903	-0.001	0.052 (0.046–0.058)	0	0.06	-0.01
4	Loadings, intercepts, residual variances (p.), factor variances and covariances	620.81	269	1.08	Model 4 vs. 3p $\Delta\chi^2$ = 58.16***	0.9	0.011	0.899	0.004	0.053 (0.047–0.058)	-0.001	0.09	-0.03

Note: p. = partial invariance. [a]A stricter model fits the data better if $p < .05$, if ΔCFI ≤ .01, ΔTLI ≤ .01 and ΔRMSEA ≤ .015. **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$. Δ = change