

Supporting Children's Transition from Preschool to the Leisure Time Center

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Abstract

The leisure time center is an important arena for families and children in school. However, there is a lack of knowledge about the leisure time center's role in children's transition from preschool to school. Research has shown that transitions are a critical event which often involves discontinuities. Therefore, this article investigates how children's transition from preschool to the leisure time center in school is organized and conducted, and how the leisure time center can construct and provide a sense of continuity for children in this transition. The leisure time center can be understood as an arena at the intersection between other educational settings. By cooperation and sharing information with teachers in other school forms, the teachers in the leisure time center can provide important support for children in transition. By arranging priming events, teachers can help children to create security and meaning in the transition as well as before the actual entering into the setting.

Key Words: transition, continuity, leisure time center, preschool, priming events,

1. The context – Swedish children's transition from preschool to school

"Simon is 5 years old and attends a group of 20 children in a small preschool. Three preschool teachers are working in Simon's group. Simon is comfortable and enjoys preschool. After the summer holidays he will attend the preschool class. He looks forward to this transition, but he is also nervous. Twenty eight children will attend his preschool class. He does not know most of them or the new teachers. It feels a little scary. Simon's preschool class is located in the school building. Before and after school he is going to be enrolled in the leisure time center, which is also located within the school. The leisure time group Simon will belong to consists of children from all preschool classes. There will be between 70-80 children in the setting every day. His two preschool class teachers will work in the leisure time group, but there will also be three new leisure time teachers he does not know. Simon is nervous about all that is new and how he can get to know all the new children and teachers. He does not really understand what the leisure time center is all about. He is also worried about that school seems so big and there are many different classrooms and leisure time groups."

Although the above introduction is fictional, it is not far from the everyday life of many five- and six-year old children in Sweden. Each year, a large number of children leave a well-known preschool to enter the unknown preschool class and leisure time center. In Sweden, children begin compulsory school when they are seven years old, but 96% of them enter the school context when they enter into the preschool class at the age of six years (National Agency for Education, 2015). The preschool class is most often located on school premises and occupies only part of the day (3-4 hours). Children spend the rest of the days on the leisure time centers. This means that when children make the transition from preschool to school they enter two new pedagogical arenas; both the preschool class and the leisure time center.

The leisure time setting is the first pedagogical arena most children meet after the summer holidays, usually a few weeks before the semester has formally begun.

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This transition often means entering into an arena that is mostly unknown for many children. Children are usually well prepared for the transition between preschool and the preschool class, since they often visit the school premises to meet their future classmates and preschool class teachers a few times before the summer holidays (Ackesjö, 2013). However, international and national research about how children are prepared for entry into leisure time settings, how this transition is organized and managed, and how the leisure time setting can provide continuity for children in the transition from preschool, is sparse. There also seems to be a lack of understanding and appreciation of the role the leisure time centers play in children's and families' life's (Cartmel & Grieshaber, 2014). The leisure time setting, as an arena for play and everyday activities, is an important place for children in the transition from preschool to school. Therefore, the focus in this article is placed on how children are prepared for the transition from preschool to the leisure time centre.

1.1 The Swedish leisure time center

All 6-12 year old children in need of before and after school care, because of their guardian's employment or studies, are offered a place in leisure time center. The Swedish leisure time centers pedagogical arena with more children enrolled than the secondary school. 83% of the 6-9-year-old children are involved in leisure time settings and the number of children is increasing steadily (National Agency for Education, 2015). The leisure time setting can be described as a borderland in the education landscape, something that is able to connect the home, the preschool and the elementary school (Pálsdóttir, 2012). Being a borderland suggests that the setting relates to the various expectations from the surrounding school forms (Falkner & Ludvigsson, 2016). The setting has an explicit school supplementary emphasis, and is integrated with school. Its mission is to stimulate learning and development by offering children meaningful care and activities before and after the school day, to promote play and creative work and informal learning in this social community (National Agency for Education, 2011). The leisure time center also serves as a complement to compulsory school (National Agency for Education, 2014). The majority of children spend time at the leisure time setting during several of their first years in school. Thus, this is an arena that runs in parallel with compulsory school for many of the early school years. While children may change teachers and classrooms each year in school, the leisure time setting can provide children with a sense of continuity and belonging which can help them through these changes (Dockett & Perry, 2016).

To become a leisure time teacher in Sweden, one needs to take a three year specialization on the teacher education at university level. Even if the educated leisure time teachers are considered to be the ones with most expertise, preschool teachers are also qualified to work in this arena. Swedish research has shown that the preschool class and the leisure time center often share premises, material and teachers (Ackesjö, 2010). On the one hand, this makes that the spatial border between the pedagogical arenas unclear. For the children it is not easy to understand when one activity ends and the other begin. On the other hand, if we consider the leisure time setting as a kind of overlapping borderland between school forms, this setting can serve as a tool to provide continuity for children in the transitions between the school forms (Lago, 2014). However, how this can be managed is sparsely researched. This study can fill this gap of knowledge.

1.2 Educational transitions

Transitions are dynamic processes of both continuity and change (Dockett & Perry, 2015). Transitions between school forms can be presented as potential threats to children. As an example, Ecclestone (2009) claims that transitions are critical periods that must be handled carefully. Research has also shown that children may become worried and stressed by transitions (Kienig, 2006). According to these arguments, transitions should be constructed as "smooth". One way to smooth transitions is to construct continuity between the school forms (Fabian, 2002; 2007) – i.e. relate the different school forms to each other in order to offer recognitions.

Research has shown that relationships are at the core of positive transitions (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Transitions between school forms can however be considered as involuntary relationship-breaking processes and thus be perceived as complicated, and even threatening, if children do not feel that they belong to community (Ackesjö & Persson, 2014). From an early age children are expected to learn to adapt to new teachers, new environments and new children, which also results in recurring identity reconstructions and requires flexibility and adaptability. This makes transitions as continual both relationship-building and relationship-breaking processes, which create recurring social discontinuities.

Although children make transitions at the same time, they continue on different paths on their way to the different school forms (Ackesjö, 2014; Lago, 2014) when they are placed in different classes and different leisure time groups.

The leisure time setting, as a borderland in the educational landscape, has the opportunity to offer stability in children's transition from preschool to school. There are benefits to be gained for children when all teachers from the surrounding school forms cooperate in arranging and supporting opportunities for children to experience continuity in transition. When educators work collaboratively, a web of support is created for children as well as for families and educators (Dehnæs Hogsnes & Moser, 2014; Dockett & Perry, 2016). The leisure time setting can provide children with a sense of continuity and belonging which can help them through other changes in school (Dockett & Perry, 2016). The more precise aim for this study is therefore to gain knowledge about how children's transition from preschool to leisure time centers in school is organized and conducted, and how the leisure time setting can construct and provide a sense of continuity for children in this transition.

2. Theoretical framework

The transition from preschool to the leisure time center is viewed as an educational transition. Children move from being preschoolers to becoming students in school (Dockett & Perry, 2007) as well as members of the leisure time center's community. This involves a process of both continuity and change. Different school forms place different demands on children and intrusions the children meet new social contexts and the need to find new ways to act (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Fabian, 2007).

In this study, these theoretical starting points are connected to Wenger's (1998) theory communities of practice. This theory has its roots in socio-cultural perspectives and provides concepts for understanding the importance of transitions and trajectories between different locations and settings as a system of meaning making. Communities of practice are based on shared actions, and according to Wenger's (1998) definition, focused on maintaining a mutual commitment to common activities. In this study, the leisure time center is considered to be a new community the preschool children are about to enter. Hence, how the teachers support children in their meaning making in the transition to this new community becomes important.

Transitions, such as the one between preschool and school, are focal points for discussions of continuity and discontinuity. Transitions can also be considered as obstacles for continuous development and learning (Broström, 2003) or as border crossings and processes where new learning can take place (Wenger, 2000; Ackesjö, 2014). Dewey (1916/1999) describes the basic principle of continuity as opposed to dualism, limitations and breaks. Thus, the idea of continuity appears as a counterforce to borders and obstacles which may prevent experiences of coherence. Hence, transitions and continuity are complex concepts, intertwined with opportunities for continued learning. It is not possible to equate "smooth transitions" and continuity between school forms (Ackesjö, 2014). Continuity and change are integral to educational transitions, and even if continuity often is cited as the rationale for transitions, this also ignores the importance of challenges in transition processes (Peters, 2010). Discontinuities in transitions can in fact be considered as positive opportunities for change for those involved (Ackesjö, 2014; Dockett & Einarsdóttir, in press). Discontinuities in transition can also make borders visible and highlight the encounter with something new (Ackesjö, 2014).

Dewey's principle of continuity provides a basis for understanding how children's transition from preschool to leisure time centers in school can be organized and conducted, and how the leisure time setting can provide a sense of continuity for children in this transition. The educational transition process involves a process of continuous growth (Dewey, 1916/1999). According to Dewey, it is when previous experiences are challenged and when new experiences are created that learning can take place - the essence of knowledge is that every experience is preparing for the next experience, which then can become deeper and more expanded than before. Dewey (1938/1991) terms this process as the principle of continuity of experience (p. 19). Continuity is thus a basic principle of all knowledge building.

Based on this theoretical anchoring, the starting point for the analysis in this study is to examine how continuity can be constructed in transitions. In the context of education, continuity may be described as “the way one school form relate to and build upon another school form, to the benefit of the children” (Mayfield, 2001:416). This definition implies that continuity is an ongoing process and can be created at various levels, for example:

- how different settings are organized in relation to each other (organizational continuity)
 - how policy in different settings relate to each other (curriculum continuity)
 - how children’s relations can be maintained or not in transitions (social continuity)
 - how different philosophies are active in different settings (philosophical continuity)
 - how the teaching in different settings relate to deepen the learning (educational continuity)
- (Fabian, 2002; 2007; Mayfield, 2003; Ackesjö, 2014)

In the present study, these different forms of continuity become important analytical concepts.

3. Sample and analysis

A web-based questionnaire was designed with questions of relevance to this transition. A survey was a well suited instrument for a structured approach and to construct data from a larger number of respondents (Cohen et. al., 2005; Wilson & McLean, 1994). A link to the electronic questionnaire, which was “clickable”, was sent via e-mail to principals and coordinators in 35 municipalities in five mid-sized counties in Sweden. Those who received the e-mail were asked to distribute the questionnaire to the teachers who were working with the youngest children at the leisure time centers in their schools. Answering the questionnaire, and by this participating in the study, was voluntary. Along with the link to the questionnaire, information about the purpose of the study was provided together with information about how the teachers’ responses were going to be analyzed, presented and published. The respondents were promised anonymity in publications and presentations. However, in the questionnaire they were asked to enter the name of the school. The reason for this was that it would be possible to ascertain how many schools were represented in the study. All teachers chose to fill in their school's name. In total, the results consist of responses from 93 individual teachers in 66 different schools.

Most teachers who chose to answer the questionnaire, and thereby also agreed to participate in the study, were university educated leisure time teachers (68.5%) but the survey was also answered by a considerable number of preschool teachers (21.7%) in addition to primary school teachers (7,6%) and “others” (2,2%). The spread of respondents can be explained by the fact that many different categories of teachers can work with the youngest children in the leisure time centers in Sweden. Preschool teachers usually work in the preschool classes, and it is common that these also continue to work at the leisure time centers with the six year-olds during afternoons when the school day is over.

A starting point for this study is that transitions between school forms often involves discontinuity (Ackesjö, 2014), that transitions are critical periods that must be handled carefully (Ecclestone, 2009) and that children may become worried and stressed by transitions (Kienig, 2006). Therefore, the aim for this study was to develop knowledge about how the leisure time setting can construct and provide a sense of continuity for children in this transition. The questionnaire contained nine multiple choice questions which yielded quantitative data possible to compare (Cohen et.al., 2005; Wilson & McLean, 1994). These questions were formulated like: “*Do you prepare children for the transition to the leisure time center?*” along with a check box for yes/no. In addition, teachers’ comments were also requested by using ten open ended questions in order to gain knowledge about the arguments behind the statistics. These comments provided the study with qualitative data, and were formulated like: “*If you do prepare children for the transition, describe how!*” or “*What is the most important role for the leisure time center as children make their transition?*”

The responses were first analyzed quantitatively (as the responses were counted) and then qualitatively. Qualitative analysis was conducted in what Säfström (1999) has labelled an interpretive reading. The teacher’s comments was categorised on the basis of a meaning-interpretive approach. In this process, three enhanced themes were identified in the teacher’s comments; *Similarities and differences to handle in transition*, *Priming events and teacher cooperation*, and *The core of the transition work*. These themes were then used to illuminate organizational continuity, social continuity, philosophical continuity and educational continuity (Mayfield, 2003; Fabian, 2002; 2007; Ackesjö, 2014).

In addition, Wenger's (1998, 2000) theory communities of practice was used to understand how teachers support children as they are entering the leisure time center considered a new communities of practice.

4. Results

The aim for this study was to gain knowledge about how children's transition from preschool to leisure time centers in school is organized and conducted, and how the leisure time setting can construct and provide a sense of continuity for children in this transition. In this section, the three themes found in the empirical material will be presented in order to highlight the aim of the article. Each theme will be theoretically discussed after the descriptive presentation.

4.1 Similarities and differences to handle in transition

In this first theme, the teacher's descriptions of similarities between the preschool and the leisure time center in addition to descriptions of major differences that the children have to handle in the transition will be discussed.

4.1.1 Similarities between the settings

The teachers states that there are similarities between preschool and the leisure time center. These similarities offer children recognition in their transition:

The leisure time center is very similar to the preschool.

We have similar routines and approach [as in preschool]. Creative activities and play are common elements in both settings.

We share the same value base in both settings, as well as some common activities such as the excursions to the forest for example. We're out in the yard playing, we play together indoors, and we eat snacks together in the group and so on.

These comments imply that children have the possibility to recognize the activities, values and attitudes from preschool in the leisure time setting. Some of the teachers also state that even though the structure and routines in preschool and the leisure time setting are similar, the children's age plays a role in the activities offered:

Our structure is the same [as in preschool] but the children will meet different activities on the basis of their age.

The structure and teachers' approaches are the same, but the activities are at a bit more difficult level.

4.1.2 Differences between the settings

The teachers also described significant differences between the settings, and by this clearly marked a border that children have to cross in this transition. One difference that was presented frequently by many of the teachers was the number of children in the leisure time setting:

One major difference is the size of the groups of children, there are many children who shall be on the premises at the same time and this can be hard to get used to.

There are many more children in the leisure time groups ... This requires independence from the children because they cannot get as much help [as they are used to from preschool].

As a result of the larger groups of children in the leisure time setting, the teachers stressed that one major difference between preschool and leisure time centers was the amount of freedom for children. In the leisure time setting, children most often can chose to attend in activities offered. However, this also requires greater responsibility from the children:

I think the biggest difference is that there are more children and fewer adults in the leisure time setting, which requires that children must take more responsibility.

It is freer for the children to choose activities to a greater extent.

We place greater demands on children that they must take more responsibility.

There are lots of differences! Eating lunch in a large dining room, there are many children, you get to choose to a great extent what you want to do (or, if and when you want to go outside to play). Children have much more involvement in what is happening in the leisure setting and may influence the activities. They have to be responsible for bags and clothes etc themselves. It's a big step to come into the world of school!

4.1.3 Philosophical continuity and organizational discontinuity

When teachers describe similarities and differences between preschool and leisure time centers they put forward many arguments that can be related to the leisure time setting as a continuity constructing arena. Teachers describe how attitudes, values, activities, and to some extent the structure and routines in the preschool and the leisure time setting, are similar. This may be related to the existence of a kind of *philosophical continuity* (Fabian, 2007) between the two settings that children can recognize themselves in.

However, even if this transition offers continuity it also requires major changes. Differences between the settings are described, which challenge the philosophical continuity. For example the group size, the freedom presented to the children and children's own accountability emerged as major differences. These differences may be related to *organizational discontinuity* (Mayfield, 2003). The size of the groups seems to be the basic areas on why children are assigned greater responsibility and more freedom since the groups of children at the leisure time centers are larger than in preschool. This discontinuity can be regarded as both positive and negative. Positive since greater freedom and more independence can contribute to children feeling "big" and competent. However, one can also assume that greater freedom and the need for more independence also can be experienced as a too big change for some children. Thus an organizational discontinuity emerges in this transition, where more children and fewer adults seems to be the most clear continuity breaking difference. This discontinuity may affect how teachers plan and manage the transition.

4.2 Priming events and teacher cooperation

The teachers seem to be well aware that the transition from preschool to the leisure time center is a big step for children to take. As shown above, this transition is surrounded by a kind of organizational discontinuity even if there also is a philosophical continuity between settings present which children can identify with. The leisure time teachers try to manage this by starting to prepare children during early spring. The aim for these priming events (Corsaro, Molinari & Rosier, 2000) seems to be to provide children with a sense of security and confidence for the upcoming entering into the leisure time center.

4.2.1 Priming events

67% of the teachers indicated that they were actively working to prepare the preschool children in different ways in order give them a good start in school. Most of these teachers reported that children visited the leisure time setting a few times during spring term. Nearly half of these teachers (47.3%) reported that the visit to the leisure time setting was done in connection to the children visiting the preschool class. However, others (31.9%) invited children to special visits to the leisure time center:

We arrange visiting-days during spring to which the five year old children from preschool are invited. . .

All five year olds are offered activities in the leisure time center together with all the older children here. This is our way to invite them into the setting and also for them to get to know both the other children and all the new teachers.

In May each year, we have an induction period where children and their guardians are given the opportunity to meet the other children in the leisure time center, but also get to know both the premises and the teachers. Usually, the children visit us five times.

We want to be a link between the settings. The teachers in the preschool class visit the children in preschool during the spring. The preschool teachers bring the preschool children to school to visit our premises and to have lunch in the dining room once. Before it's time for summer holidays, the preschoolers are inducted into our setting. First, preschool teachers come with all children to us at the leisure time setting so that we can eat snack together one afternoon. After the snack, the guardians come to collect their children. The next day, the guardians leave their children at the leisure time center, and we eat breakfast together. Then the preschool teachers collect all children. This back and forth-work will continue for a week until the children have got to try all the elements in the leisure time setting.

4.2.2 Cooperation between teachers in different educational settings

Several of the teachers stated that they cooperate with other teachers in the other settings (like the preschool and the preschool class). However, a relatively high percentage (39.1%) indicated that there was no cooperation at all. Those who did cooperate to plan and conduct the transition started preparing for the priming events early during the spring semester:

We try to cooperate both with the teacher in the preschool class and with the teachers in the preschools that are located in the area. For example, we plan the visiting-days and preparatory activities together.

We have joint meetings when we discuss the group of children that we are receiving, and we plan all priming events together so that all teachers can attend.

The cooperation also included sharing information about the children between the teachers in the various settings. However, these handovers, and even the content of what is communicated, varied:

The handovers may involve who the children play with, what activities they like, things they are good at, things they need extra support with, information about parents, mother tongue, siblings...

We may get some brief information about the child's knowledge- and social development.

4.2.3 The leisure time center as a community of practice at an intersection

Based on Wenger's (1998) theory, the leisure time setting can be considered as a *community of practice*. The examples above show how leisure time teachers actively work to get the children to get to know the setting, the other children and the new teachers prior to the transition. Central to the teachers seems to be to help the preschool children to begin to feel a sense of belonging to this new community of practice early in the transition process, so that they after the entering into the leisure time center can achieve a more central position. The goal seems to be that children begin to create meaning as well as experience participation in the new community.

These priming events can be away to manage the organizational discontinuity between the settings. These priming back-and-forth-activities can also serve as examples of the positioning of the leisure time center as an intersection between home, preschool and compulsory school. The statement *we want to be a link between the settings* exemplifies this intersection. The leisure time setting can become a meeting place for children in transitions between different pedagogical arenas (Falkner & Ludvigsson, 2016) which, in turn, can create continuity in children's transitions. In order to accomplish this, cooperation between teachers in the different settings is required.

The teachers describe how they take joint responsibility for the organization and the planning of the transition. Since the teachers take note of what the children have been engaged within preschool, and even take note of children's abilities and challenges, they also get a head start in planning children's entry into the leisure time setting. This approach can illustrate that the teachers strive to construct what Ackesjö (2014) calls *educational continuity*, by using children's previous experiences from preschool when planning the activities in the leisure time center continuity can be constructed. This means working accordingly to Dewey's (1938/1991) principle of continuity of experience. For this to be reality, the teachers need to take joint responsibility for the transition which includes sharing information both about the children and about the activities in the previous setting, which thus implies constructing a web of support (see Dockett & Perry, 2016). Lack of communication and handovers between teachers can contribute to a lack of educational continuity – which in turn affects this community of practice.

4.3 The core of the transition work

The preparatory processes teachers present can constitute the core of how teachers can construct and provide a sense of continuity for children in the transition from preschool to the leisure time center. The aim for the teachers seems to be to make the transition to a safe and enjoyable process for the children. These ambitions also underpin their work when the children enter the setting after the summer holiday:

We ensure that children makes it into the [new] community, that they get new friends and feel safe in the leisure time setting.

It is important that children feel safe during their time at the leisure time center and the time here feels meaningful to them.

The teachers state that their priming work contributes to the children's feelings of security and confidence:

Since we have received so much information about the children, and since the children know the new teachers, the children and the premises, the transition will be smooth. Children and guardians have the opportunity to come to visit us at any time during the summer holidays. During the last weeks of the summer holidays [before the education in the preschool class begins] the children gets enrolled in their correct leisure time group [not the mixed summer group] for the continuity. At that time, it's just regular teachers working.

They have seen the premises, met the teachers and built relationships even before the summer holidays.

... Therefore it is important that only regular teachers, and not substitutes, are present in the setting when the child comes [after the summer holidays].

We are telling the families that we are available for them here at the leisure time center when the children arrive, to provide a sense of security. We are happy to provide additional visits to the setting before the school start.

4.3.1 Relations and social continuity at its core

What seem to unite the transitional preparatory work (visits, cooperation and sharing information) are, as mentioned before, efforts to create *educational continuity* (Ackesjö, 2014) as well as *social continuity* (Fabian, 2002; 2007). To be able to create a sense of continuity in children's transition, a careful preparatory work seems to be needed. This approach also lay the foundation for further work in the leisure time setting. To be able to get to know the children early and to get the children to meet and get to know the environment and the culture of the leisure time setting may be important cornerstones in the work to create continuity. To meet and get to know the children already in spring can be a key component in the teacher's construction of social continuity. It becomes clear that the teachers in this process, according to Wenger (1998; 2000), are working to enable for children to move from a marginal or peripheral participation in the community of practice to a more central participation during transition. In this work, belonging in, adjustment to and participation in, the community become central.

By preparing children, they aimed to create security within the transition process – maybe to counter the effects of the organizational discontinuity. Learning involves creating and negotiating meaning in a practice (Wenger, 1998; 2000). Relationships play a key part in this meaning-making process. Thus, the social and relational work seems to beat the core of teachers' work with children's transition from preschool to the leisure time center.

5. Discussion – Supporting children's transition from preschool to the leisure time center

The study has shown that the number of children per adult may be one of the organizational factors that leisure time teachers think might be the biggest difference in children's transition from preschool to leisure time centers. Children may experience more freedom in the leisure time setting than they are used to in preschool since they are able to choose activities to a greater degree than in the preschool. The leisure time center offers children participation in a less controlling and less adult-led setting than in preschool.

Large groups of children facilitate certain activities and relationships while restricting others. In the Swedish preschool there are fewer children per adult than in the Swedish leisure time centers, which is a big difference that can affect children's agency in the leisure time setting. The transition into this setting and the variety of relationships that the large groups of children offer can therefore be a challenge for children.

Four forms of (dis-)continuities in children's transition from preschool to leisure time centers emerged from the teachers' perspective in this study:

The teachers expressed that it exists a *philosophical continuity* between preschool and the leisure time center. Both settings have similar structure and routines, and reflect similar values. Teachers in both settings share similar attitudes towards children and learning, and the activities are similar. This allows for children to recognize the framing of the setting after entering the leisure time center.

Several of the teachers focused on preparing children for entry into the leisure time center. Important aspects of the preparatory work are cooperation between the teachers in preschool and leisure time center, information handovers and preparatory visits.

These activities can be linked to a desire to create *educational continuity*, which means that opportunities are created for children to be prepared for entry into the new community of practice - but also for leisure time activities to be related to and based on preschool activities for the benefit of the children's further development.

However, the transition seems to be surrounded by a clear *organizational discontinuity*. This is mainly characterized by there being more children and fewer adults in the leisure time center than in the preschool. As a result, children are required to take greater personal responsibility in the new setting. This also allows the activities in the leisure time center to be framed by greater freedom - children can more often than in preschool choose what they want to do in the setting, where they want to spend their time and with whom.

Even if this discontinuity can be perceived as a positive change by children, most teachers stated that the bigger groups of children, compared to preschool, is a big difference and obstacle for children in transition.

As a way to help children manage the organizational discontinuity, many teachers state that they are working as siduously to create a kind of *social continuity*. Since children and teachers have met before in the priming events such as preparatory visits, a kind of relationships constructing process has begun. At children's entrance into the leisure time setting, teachers attach great importance to the continued relationship-building working different ways. Social continuity is created through regular meetings and hard work before and after the actual transition, which also can help children to deal with the organizational discontinuity.

In the beginning of this article, Simon's thoughts about the transition from preschool to preschool class and the leisure time centers were described. For Simon, this transition is associated with concerns. He is worried about the large groups of children and the new relationships with new friends and teachers he has to create. But he is also puzzled about the leisure time setting and what it is all about. One indication from the result so this study could be that the organizational discontinuity overrides the leisure time teacher's preparing for children's entering into the setting. The teachers in this study express awareness about that this entering can be a big step for children and that children need to be prepared in different ways. For Simon, these preparatory activities can become crucial to how he handles this transition.

Teachers repeatedly describe the importance of the new children getting to know the older children who is already attending the leisure time center. This reflects Wenger's (1998; 2000) notions of constructing continuity and coherence in the transition by helping the children to feel at ease with the setting, with the older children and with the new teachers. If we consider the leisure time center as a community of practice, relationships become important to children's identity constructions and creation of meaning (Wenger, 1998; 2000). With this in mind, preparatory visits and other priming events becomes important in the process of creating continuity in transitions.

Dewey (1916/1999) describes that a basic principle of continuity is that it is opposed to dualism, limitations and breaks. In other words, the idea of continuity as a counter force to borders and obstacles which may prevent experiences of coherence appears. Hence, continuity can be described as the creation of consistency or coherence, which in this study is presented by philosophical and educational continuity. The teachers in this study state that they can draw from children's earlier experiences from preschool in preparing for coming experiences in the leisure time center, which then can become deeper and more expanded than before. This reasoning can stand as an example of Dewey (1938/1991: 19) principle of continuity of experience.

The transition from preschool to leisure time center is, based on these results, a process characterized of continuity, discontinuity and change. However, through priming events teachers can support children in transition by helping them to create security, a sense of belonging and to create meaning in the leisure time center. The study has shown that this arena can be a well-known community of practice for children already prior to the actual entering. In this way, the leisure time center can be an arena between settings, where continuity in transition is constructed.

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