Children's rights and citizenship:

A perspective for inclusive and democratic education and care for young children

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Kinderrechten en burgerschap: een perspectief voor een inclusieve en democratische pedagogiek
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Chapter 1

General introduction and theoretical demarcation

"*Universal human rights, however fragile, are an overarching normative framework in which people, including children and young people, have the right to be different in every way. That normative framework, in addition to the necessary social and psychological tools, is the most important weapon against indifference and moral exclusion*" (De Winter, 2011, p. 141; translated from Dutch by the author of this dissertation)

Societal challenges and transversal skills

Institutions, systems and policies reflect societies' economic, social, cultural and moral norms and beliefs. Education is no exception and can be attributed two faces in this regard. On the one hand, in its institutionalized forms, it tends to perpetuate the main culture and status quo of norms and values in society. Also, transcending issues such as inequality, poverty, segregation, superdiversity and polarisation enter pedagogical institutions such as child care centres and schools as well as the communities they work with - whether we like it or not (Crul, 2016; Davies, 2008; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). On the other hand, education is often considered for holding the key to generate the societal change necessary to meet these challenges. Questions are raised about what transversal skills and attitudes are needed to further democratic citizenship, to stimulate inclusion, solidarity and responsibility to bridge differences and inequalities; and about relevant ethical and moral criteria in this regard (Biesta, 2015; De Winter, 2011). An increasing evidence base supports the premise that it pays off, both at the individual level and for society at large, to start an institutionalized form of (care and) education early in a person's life (Heckman, 2011; Melhuish et al., 2015; Reynolds et al., 2011). However, Skopek et al. (2017) concluded that policies combating inequalities require a robust empirical understanding of when and how social gaps in early skills and abilities are emerging; and how institutional settings and educational systems compensate or, conversely, amplify these inequalities by shaping opportunities but often also constraints for children's development – again reflecting the two faces of education. These considerations are even more relevant today, with ever growing numbers of young children entering formal centre-based early childhood, preschool and afterschool care and education services. Globally, enrolment rates for preschool have at least doubled over the last three decades to 62 percent (uis.unesco.org). In the Netherlands, the numbers of children in formal daycare (age 0 to 4), preschool (age 2.5 to 4) and afterschool (age 4 to 12) care and education centres have risen from around 468,000 children in 2007 to over 893,000 in 2019, of which around 38 percent is cared for in daycare, 10 percent in preschool and 52 percent in afterschool care (www.cbs.nl). Countries struggle with the question how to address the opportunity of increased enrolment rates in relation to the need for transversal skills and societal transformations (Sylva et al, 2014). What skills are to be learned, when, and how, and what are essential pedagogical principles for this purpose to be reflected in national quality frameworks, guidelines for practice and teaching methods - which we will generally refer to as *curricula* - for young children? A curriculum framework in this regard is "*a set of values, principles, guidelines or standards which guides the objectives, content and pedagogical approach to children's care and learning*" (EC Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care, 2014).

Also, since about twenty years now, discussions are on-going about what the concept of *citizenship* implies for education and its goals, programmes, and activities. There are various perspectives on citizenship; some are more directed towards socialization (Nolas, 2015), while others are more directed towards integration and may come down to an assimilation approach as opposed to a multicultural approach (Mattei & Broeks, 2016; Romijn et al., 2021). At the same time, there is increasing awareness that children already participate as citizens: they play an active role in society even at an earlier than school age, i.e., from birth onwards. This notion is enhanced by the child rights movement and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). To learn to participate meaningfully in various environments and systems, democratic citizenship and so-called life skills are considered essential attributes, and these skills have to be learned, as democratic citizenship is not self-evident and does not create or replicate itself spontaneously (De Winter, 2011; Doornenbal, 2012; EC, 2014; EU, 2002). Also, principles, values and associated attitudes and skills, are transferred at an early age. Already in the 1940s, the importance of being aware of this was demonstrated by the famous doll-experiment (Clark & Clark, 1947; Dweck, 2009). For this study, children of colour aged 3 to 7 years were tested about their racial perceptions by using coloured dolls. A majority of these children preferred the white doll and assigned positive characteristics to it, making the Clarks to conclude that prejudice, discrimination, and segregation created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem already at an early age – having life-long impact. Research has also demonstrated that the roots of underachievement in education are also associated with factors related to socio-economic status (SES), and to historical and current patterns of discrimination and marginalization in pedagogical institutions and the wider society (Cummins, 2013; Emmen et al., 2013; Pulinx et al., 2015).

These issues and the debates they trigger around (democratic or global) citizenship and child rights meet at the level of education and care. Child centres - as settings where many children come together often at a very young age and with all their diversities - can be considered to provide unique opportunities to practice a democratic way of life and associated transversal life skills (De Winter, 2006, 2011; Moss, 2007). The question is, to what extent we really use these early opportunities and how we can optimize them for children and their communities to reap the benefits of these efforts. In their essence, child rights and democratic citizenship do not fully overlap and present different angles – the one a universal legal and ethical perspective, the other a more practical focus on socialization processes. However, as we will explore in this dissertation, the two angles are strongly interrelated and have central characteristics in common at the level of policy and practice.

Aim of the research

Regarding early childhood education and care (ECEC) and afterschool care, formal discussions are often about the system, regulations or financing issues, rarely taking values and values-based content as point of departure (Leseman et al., 2021). In this dissertation, through four interrelated studies, we aim to contribute to filling this gap. This research was conducted between September 2017 and early 2021, and has been carried out in the context of early childhood, preschool and afterschool care and education (in short: ECEC) targeting children between 0 and 12 years of age. We assessed what essential pedagogical principles, standards and curricula based on child rights and citizenship theory may increase opportunities for children, their families and communities, with a focus on – and from the perspective of - the people whom it concerns in the first place: young children and their communities. It is our hypothesis that it pays off at all levels –from the micro to the macro and vice versa - to give children a voice as our youngest citizens and as primary beneficiaries of pedagogical interventions. We will explore to what extent a rights-based perspective to their citizenship can be a supportive framework in this regard. Our purpose is to add to a discourse of children as active agents in their own development and the development of their communities – leading to empowerment of children as an important preventive measure against inequalities in education in particular, and society at large. The general aim is to contribute to a social and educational environment for children to thrive, and to further children's participation while protecting them at the same time.

Policy, design, implementation and day-to-day practices regarding pedagogy in ECEC are the empirical focus of research, targeted at identifying essential and effective characteristics of a child rights based democratic citizenship pedagogy and the opportunities in this regard for child care organizations and practices – in fact, from the macro to the micro-system. Our central questions therefore are: *What are essential characteristics of a pedagogy based on child-rights and democratic citizenship for young children in ECEC and afterschool care; to what extent are these characteristics represented in formal and implemented pedagogies and curricula; and how do these ultimately relate to outcome quality, in particular child well-being, involvement, agency and belongingness?*

This dissertation is structured following the curriculum framework of Goodlad (1979) focussing on different types of pedagogy – the ideological, formal, operational or implemented, experienced and perceived curriculum. An innovative aspect of this dissertation is the inclusion of young children's voices (children aged 3 to 6 years old) to capture their views on well-being and inclusion in their child centres full of diversities.

In this chapter we will first set the scope of this research by exploring ECEC from the perspective of child rights and citizenship, as well as the background of Dutch child care – as Dutch ECEC will provide the setting of the empirical research of this dissertation. Following to this, we will further define the overarching conceptual framework and discuss the structure and logic of this dissertation.

Approaches towards shaping education and care systems

Internationally and historically, ECEC systems, policies and practices are shaped by different and sometimes conflicting images of and discourses around the young child (Kamerman, 2006; Moss, 2010; Woodhead, 2006; Woodhead & Moss, 2007). Woodhead (2006) identified four rudimentary perspectives to approach ECEC that may be useful for understanding the different images. The first one is a mainly cognitive-psychological developmental perspective. It emphasises universal mechanisms and uniformities in young children's physical and psychosocial development in early childhood, often with arguments based on constructivist theory (i.e., learning as an active process of acquiring and constructing knowledge) and Piaget's theory of cognitive development: each child goes through a series of consecutive and more or less fixed developmental stages (Verhofstadt-Denève et al., 2003). Typically, this perspective focuses on children's dependencies and vulnerabilities during the foundational years of their lives (Woodhead, 2006). The second perspective is defined as a political and economic perspective. This perspective is informed by developmental principles, and translated in social and educational interventions underpinned by economic models of human capital (Hanushek & Woesmann, 2007, 2012; Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Heckman, 2011). Typically, from this perspective, ECEC-interventions are motivated by their potential contribution to the school-readiness of children, and by the opportunities they provide for levelling the playing field and promoting social justice in society in the long term. Sometimes, this perspective is also informed by labour market policies to stimulate (female) workforce participation, and sometimes this is substantiated by macro-economic models of countries' economic development and demands for (future) human capital, as also furthered by the Worldbank (see for example Denboba, 2014). Thirdly, Woodhead (2006) identified the social and cultural perspective, acknowledging that early childhood is a constructed status with diversities in ways it is understood and practised depending on the sociohistorical context. This perspective is undoubtedly different from the first perspective of developmental stages as being normative, more or less static, and universally applicable. This third perspective is informed by the work of Vygotsky (1896-1934) and social-constructivist theories, assuming a child's development is as much social and cultural as it is natural, and depending on - or negotiated in accordance with - the child's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Leseman & Slot, 2014; www.isotis.org). And fourthly, extending this third paradigm of social constructivism, Woodhead states that ECEC can be approached from a child rights perspective by reframing the three aforementioned perspectives in ways that fully respect "*young children's dignity, their entitlements and their capacities to contribute to their own development and to the development of services and communities"* (Woodhead, 2006; Lansdown, 2005). This child rights perspective acknowledges the tensions between universality and 'respecting diversities' and offers an integrative perspective: regardless which perspective is foregrounded, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires all children from birth to eighteen to be respected as persons in their own right (UNCRC, 1989; General Comment no. 7, 2005).

In this dissertation, we will explore if, and in what way, realizing these rights requires a shift in the image of the child prevailing in society, and asks for paradigm changes in policies, procedures and practices towards involving (young) children. Woodhead (2005) suggests in this regard that a child rights perspective implies an alteration in focus from 'needs' towards 'entitlements', an integration of an individualistic vision with collectivist values, and implementation of participatory rights based on three principles: the child's right to be consulted in matters that affect the daily life of children; the right to express views and feelings; and the obligation of all with responsibilities towards young children to listen to their views and respect their dignity. This approach is rarely taken, and little empirical research into its benefits can be found. Therefore, the present research will approach and analyse ECEC, including afterschool care, from a rights-based perspective, and aims to contribute to a child rights based discourse informing theoretical debate and policy development, and to an empowered status of the child within ECEC services. Moreover, the present study aims to fill the gap in the empirical evidence for the possible added value of a child rights perspective for children and their communities.

Further delineation of the UNCRC as a foundational approach to pedagogy

Since the near unanimous adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989, and the first global education conference on Education for All in Jomtien, 1990, over thirty years of global education reforms within the context of promoting human and child rights have passed. A lot of progress has been made to provide access to provisions, however, especially a child rights perspective and its relevance for early childhood education still stand out as often overlooked - let alone as a combined and integrated set of reforms. In 41 articles, the UNCRC provides a vision on children, based on the recognition that all children are individuals with their own rights, entitlements and responsibilities (UNCRC, 1989). It can be considered a normative framework, that is applicable to all practices concerning children from birth up to eighteen years of age (Alderson, 2008). UNCRC's guiding principles are based on four core articles, which will be briefly summarized: Article 2, regarding non-discrimination and equality: *all children are entitled to the same rights without any discrimination of any kind*; Article 3, regarding the best interest of the child: *all actions concerning children will take into account the best interest of each individual child or group of children as the primary consideration – the interests of others (parents, community, state) should not be the overriding concern*; Article 6, concerning the inherent right to life, survival and development: *the State has the responsibility to ensure children's survival and development to their full potential to the maximum extent possible*; and Article 12, on participation and inclusion: *children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and their opinions are given due weight in* *accordance with their age and maturity of the child*[1]. Despite valid arguments of the supposed weaknesses inherent to the UNCRC as a legal framework, and with recognition of the tensions the framework may bring in relation to the sovereignty of countries and their various cultures, histories and geographies (Liebel et al., 2012; Quennerstedt et al., 2018), we value the wide consensus the child rights framework has raised and will apply the framework in this dissertation for its potential to inform early years pedagogy, and for being internationally the most discussed, agreed upon, ratified and acknowledged normative framework with a clear view on childhood, children and their citizenship.

Relevance for ECEC practices

The UNCRC is relevant for ECEC in three ways: it stipulates the overall right *to* education, including early education, describes various rights to be respected *in* education, and appoints empowering rights that can be obtained *through* education (Verhellen, 1993; Lundy, 2012). Firstly, following Article 29 of the UNCRC, ECEC in general is a children's right by itself. This concerns the right *to* education and early childhood education and care as part of that (Doek, 2004). Secondly, *within* ECEC as a provision, all child rights principles apply and concern the balance between the characteristics and interests of the provision itself, and the protection and participation rights of the children (Hammarberg, 1990). Following from this, young children are not just passive recipients of care and education, but active agents in the process of their own development: *"A child begins as a citizen with rights as a rights-holder, and – through its interactions with others – young children participate and exercise these rights on a daily basis: all rights are universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and therefore require a holistic approach to children and their development"* (Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 7, 2005). The mutual enforcement of protection and participation rights is emphasised and also integral to the model of children's citizenship (Invernizzi & Williams, 2008). Thirdly, regarding the right *through* ECEC, the use of the concept 'citizenship' in the UNCRC is closely connected with notions of participation, empowerment and democracy. In this regard, democracy is rather meant as a way of living together - at the level of family, (school) community, society - rather than a political system (Van Keulen, 2013). Democratic citizenship, combined with, or as part of, individual child development ('personal growth, being and becoming'), can be considered as the resume of the pedagogical and educational goals of the UNCRC; and the image of the child as a democratic citizen is strongly emancipatory by nature (Willems, 2005; Moss, 2010a). Current *well-being* is important, and contributes to *well-becoming*, i.e., future well-being, defined as the possibilities to participate fully, to the best of one's ability, in society as a democratic citizen (Ben-Arieh, 2010; Moser et al., 2014; Moss et al., 2010b). This empowering vision is consistent with the child image that underlies the UNCRC. Therefore, applying child rights principles *through* ECEC as an instrument would lead to the recognition of children as participating and democratic citizens. This is core to the identity-forming right through the instruments of education in general and early childhood education and care services including afterschool care in particular, which is the focus of the current dissertation.

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[1] https://www.unicef.org/sowc2012/pdfs/SOWC-2012-The-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child.pdf

According to the UNCRC, the aims of education - *beyond* schooling and in general terms - are defined as: 1) the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to the fullest potential; 2) the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; 3) the respect for the child's cultural identity, language and values, and for civilisations different from his or her own; 4) the preparation of the child's responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes (i.e., diversity); and 5) the development of respect for the natural environment (Article 29, UNCRC, 1989). Education from a child rights perspective implies the process that helps to translate the right to education into holistic and inclusive education aiming to realize the full potential in all children (Doek, 2004). In 2001, General Comment number 1 was issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (responsible for monitoring the global implementation of the Child Rights Convention), explaining in more detail that education goes beyond formal schooling – implying it also includes non-formal and informal education in care and in family settings – and should be empowering through fostering life skills, learning about human rights and human rights values. It addresses the response to challenges and tensions, like between the global and the local; the individual and the collective; tradition and modernity; long- and short-term considerations; competition and equality of opportunities; the expansion of knowledge and the capacity to assimilate it; and the spiritual and the material (Delors Commission, 1996; Doek, 2004; General Comment number 1, 2001). And it explains**:** "*Basic skills not only include literacy and numeracy, but also life skills such as the ability to make well-balanced decisions, to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner, and to develop a healthy life-style, good social relationships and responsibility, critical thinking, creative talents, and other abilities, which give children the tools needed to pursue their options in life*" (General Comment number 1, 2001). The overall objective for education, also for ECEC, as per the UNCRC, is to maximise the child's ability and opportunity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society, i.e., the child's *agency*. Following from this, young children are not just passive recipients of care and education; rather, a child is born as a citizen with rights as a rights holder, and – through its interactions with others – young children participate and exercise these rights on a daily basis (General Comment no. 7, 2005; Alderson, 2008). Children are neither adult or parental property nor noble causes, but worthy persons with rights of their own that are independent of their parents or the State (Knutsson, 1997).

Balancing protection and participation rights in and through ECEC-provisions

As emphasized, all child rights in the UNCRC are universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing - balancing protection and participation principles. This balance is important to ensure they do not work counterproductive or undermine the agency of the child. The need for child protection and associated protection rights is evident (Gunning, 2011); one only has to look at statistics with regards to various injustices done to children (Alink et al., 2018). However, a narrow view limited to child protection only, without seriously taking participation rights into account, means the child is actually disempowered (Lansdown, 2005). The other way around, focussing on having children participate and taking their views into account without actually protecting them, may also result in disempowerment by reproducing existing societal inequalities and injustices (Nolas, 2015). Moreover, with child participation high on the list as a buy-in, children are at risk of being treated as 'clients' or 'consumers' only, either to support views of adults or provide input on pre-selected decisions (Hart, 1997) or as a means to create or support a certain market (Sikkema, 2005; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

Against these backdrops, an integrated vision is needed that relies on the capabilities of children as agents to be consulted on issues that affect them directly - despite the fact that the consultation process itself may be complicated with practical barriers such as time restraints, language obstacles, immaturity of particular skills, especially regarding younger children (Alderson, 2008). In Article 12 of the UNCRC, the additive of 'in accordance with the age and maturity of the child'[2] risks overseeing young children in early childhood services (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006). With a focus on provision, participation and protection, Alderson (2008) argues for greater involvement of, and consultation with young children in private and public spheres to ensure their needs and interest are adequately represented. Also, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2004, 2005) discussed early childhood as a critical period of realising children's rights, and stresses young children's empowerment using a participatory method with practical and real experiences of claiming their rights and undertaking responsibilities. The concept of *evolving capacities* has been explored in this regard as opposed to more classical views, including theories based on developmental stages, depicting children as moving through a gradual and somewhat passive process of acquiring maturity according to pre-determined biological and psychological forces. Instead, the evolving capacities view pictures children as actively attaining increasing understanding of their world (Lansdown, 2005). Presumptions of children as immature learners have led to a failure to value or witness the behaviours they exhibit that testify to their active participation in shaping their own lives and that of others around them (James, 1993; Lansdown, 2005). The essence of the notion of *evolving capacities* of the child in that sense recognizes the changing relationship between adults and children, and focuses on capacity and competencies rather than age or stage as the determinant in exercising children's rights.

Organizations, programmes and practices have a role in supporting children in the process of developing their identity as rights holders whilst learning to respect the rights of others and appreciating the interdependencies of belonging to a group (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006; Pauw, 2013; Vucic, 2014). In addition to respecting these rights, it is also important to recognize the issue of where the responsibility lies for exercising these rights (Lansdown, 2005). This involves the gradual transfer of responsibilities, again, in accordance with children's evolving capacities. Howe and Covel (2010) studied 'responsibility' inherent to the concept of rights, concluding that they correlate, both being a necessary component of a healthy democratic and rights-respecting society: '*Such a society rests on the willingness of people to cooperate in fulfilling their citizenship responsibilities so that the society will endure'*. However, they stress that to be effective, education requires the central focus being on rights and that children are given the opportunity to discover for themselves the connection between rights and responsibilities. In general terms, education involving child rights is a form of citizenship education where children learn about their rights *and* their responsibilities (Howe & Covell, 2005).

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[2] Article 12: States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (United Nations, 1989).

Framing democratic citizenship for ECEC and afterschool care

There are various views on what democratic citizenship means, and also regarding the question to what extent certain norms related to democratic behaviour and participation can or need to be educated. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identify three conceptualisations of democratic citizens in this context, representing various levels of involvement and community orientation: the personally responsible citizen, feeling responsible to support or contribute to a certain cause; the participatory citizen, feeling responsible to support, contribute and collaborate; and the social-justice oriented citizen, feeling responsible to relate challenges to root-causes of overarching or underlying processes of injustice, and address these. Opinions differ with regard to the question to what extent these concepts need to be included in education. Based on their examination of the goals of citizenship education, Veugelers and Leenders (2004) define competencies relating to individualistic citizenship (i.e., valuing discipline and independence over social involvement); adaptive citizenship (i.e., valuing discipline and social involvement over independency); and critical democratic citizenship (i.e., valuing independence and social involvement over discipline). For the present research, all three levels of democratic citizenship are relevant, as well as the notion of critical democratic citizenship as purpose of education, assuming that autonomy and agency are both important goals to be pursued.

Ideally, to work towards these goals and competencies, pedagogical practices and activities are directed towards both bonding and bridging of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Social capital in pedagogical contexts concerns the norms, values, social networks, and relationships between adults, adult-led institutions, and children - also including the relationships amongst peers - that are important for children and their development. Bonding social capital in this regard concerns aspects of binding people (e.g., the commonalities that make groups, teams, or tribes). Bridging social capital concerns networks of people of different backgrounds and networks of different groups. In a diverse democratic space or system, both bonding and bridging practices are needed; however, bridging is more difficult to realise (De Winter, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). These kind of inter-group networks are characterized by weaker ties and require more open, outward-looking and inclusive attitudes. This appeals to citizenship beyond personal responsibility, i.e., participatory and justice-oriented citizenship. A child centre provides a unique opportunity for creating this bonding and bridging social capital, by bringing together children and families from different backgrounds for common, recognizable goals, in particular the well-being and support of their children. Including (elements of) democratic citizenship in curricula for ECEC and afterschool care could serve as a framework for implementing child rights, if it is based on principles of holistic child development (concerning all areas of child development – physical, cognitive, socio-emotional and moral or spiritual), participation, and social justice (Van Keulen, 2013). This connects with the empowering notion of child rights *through* practices of early childhood and education and care.

Citizenship programmes for education and care can have different points of departure. According to Lawy and Biesta (2006), it is important to distinguish between *citizenship-as-achievement* (a status to attain in the future) and *citizenship-as-practice* (a process, including value-based skills and attitudes to practice in day-to-day situations), and, relatedly, between a vision of children as human *becomings* (again, a status to be achieved) versus children as human *beings* (participating today). The viewpoint of *citizenship-as-practice* and children as human *beings* fits the child rights approach to citizenship (see also General Comment number 7). Qvortrup (1991) opposes citizenship education as a matter of children as human *becomings*. As an alternative, Qvotrup advocates *citizenship from below*. While citizenship education is about learning for future citizenship, ‘citizenship from below’ refers to the empowerment of children as human *beings* in their present lives, recognizes their already existing positive contribution to the community, and defines their needs, interests and rights as based on their everyday lives and practices. Envisioning children as human *beings* indeed implies more attention to the actual citizenship situation of children in the present and gives rise to the question *what* democratic citizenship entails in daily practices of education and care (Biesta, 2011). De Winter (2011) argues that it is not primarily about specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that need to be transferred (thus *what* is educated), but rather *how* democratic citizenship is practiced in education and care settings, that is, how children as human beings are enabled to enact citizenship competencies.

In The Netherlands, democratic citizenship is one of the six core goals for the Dutch education system (as from 4 years of age, to be educated in kindergarten, primary education and up[3]). Four social tasks for children and young people were defined: acting democratically, acting responsibly, dealing with conflicts and handling diversities - with concomitant measurable competencies at age twelve per task in terms of knowledge, attitudes, skills and reflection (www.slo.nl; Van Dam et al., 2010). Recently, the learning goals of citizenship education have been further elaborated and its curriculum refined into details (www.curriculum.nu), resulting in a new law on citizenship education per August

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[3] The Dutch education system provides for 8 years of primary education: 2 years of universal kindergarten - groups 1 and 2 - for children aged 4-6, and 6 years of primary education (groups 3-8) for children aged 6-12 years old. Children from working parents have access to subsidized afterschool services.

2021 (www.rijksoverheid.nl). However, for the younger years, no curriculum or pedagogy is prescribed and implementation is considered a choice of the (pre)school or child centre (Pauw, 2013). Based on a child rights approach to citizenship and the notion that children are playing a role as a citizen in society regardless of their age, and considering the child centre as a unique place to practice citizenship skills (General Comment no. 7, 2005; Moss, 2010; Van Keulen, 2013), further goal-setting is timely in this regard and at least minimum benchmarks or indicators should be set regarding rights based citizenship for ECEC, because "*the best preparation for life in a democracy is the actual experience of democracy*" (Dewey, 1916).

Current building blocks of ECEC pedagogy in The Netherlands

The Netherlands ratified the UNCRC in 1995 and has been subject to this Convention ever since. ECEC in The Netherlands takes place within normative frameworks in which values, standards, and learning and developmental goals are formulated on the basis of developmental theories and good practices. However, no formal direct linkage has been made with the UNCRC. In children's groups, children learn democratic values like sharing, helping each other, and working together to resolve conflicts; children also learn to deal with diversities, taking each other into account and behave well in a group (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2008). It is acknowledged that in early childhood the foundations are laid for the ability to self-regulation, basic social and emotional skills such as empathy, and intrapersonal competencies as important conditions for developing the competencies to perform the social tasks of citizenship (Riksen-Walraven, 2002). However, apart from stipulating by law that early childhood education and care services are to fulfil the four pedagogical aims of providing physical and emotional safety, and of promoting the development of personal and social competencies, and to further socialization through the "*transfer of norms and values and the culture of society*", moral and ethical issues like a pedagogical vision and the culture to be transferred never really were subject of discussion for ECEC in The Netherlands - which is in stark contrast to the discussions that are now being pursued for higher levels of education (www.curriculum.nu; Nieuwelink et al., 2017; Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2020; Krijnen et al., forthcoming). Informally, there is a generally accepted but non-committal pedagogical framework, referring to foundations of the UNCRC, democratic values, the four pedagogical aims, child development theories, and systematized practical knowledge (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2008). However, formal quality standards are still mainly measured by structural quality indicators such as group size, staff-to-children ratio, staff training level and several detailed regulations to ensure physical and emotional safety. And while there are initiatives to also include process quality indicators in quality monitoring, moral and ethical discussions are still avoided (GGD GHOR Nederland, 2014; LKK, 2017; Hay, forthcoming). Since 2006, and in addition to the official quality monitoring of child daycare and afterschool care by the municipal Health Authorities, periodic sample-based quality measurements have been conducted by the sector in collaboration with scientific institutions. After a significant dip in 2005, the Dutch ECEC sector is nowadays scoring generally rather high on emotional quality characteristics, such as emotional safety, relational aspects and sensitivity of the professional (NCKO, 2012; Slot et al., 2018, 2019), though considerably lower on the stimulation of peer interaction and educational practices including citizenship education (Slot et al., 2018, 2019). With the introduction of the Dutch National Child Care Quality Monitor [LKK] in 2017, additional outcome quality indicators measured at the level of the child have been included. These indicators measure the quality of children's experience, such as their well-being and the intensity of their experience through their involvement (Slot et al., 2018, 2019; Laevers, 2016).

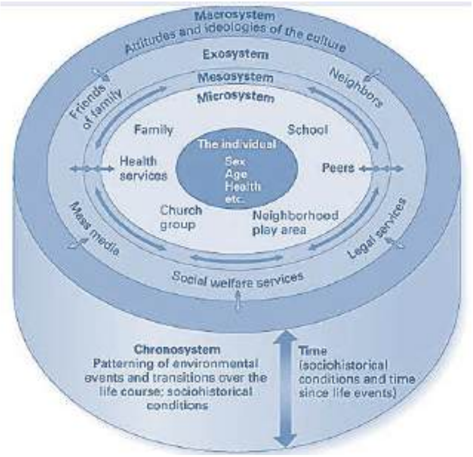
When children in the younger years of life learn about democratic citizenship concepts like participation and having a voice, solving problems together, dealing with diversity, taking responsibility, and making choices - and learn that they are being heard and taken seriously – this may form the foundation for later learning, understanding and behaviour (Alderson, 2000, 2008; Cooke et al., 2019; Moss, 2008; Oates et al., 2013). More and more research points to the importance of early learning to brain development, self-control and social-moral development (Shonkoff et al., 2012; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013), also in this pre-conventional stage of their moral development (Kohlberg, 1969; Oates et al., 2013). In their review study, Tomasello and Vaish (2013) conclude that in particular interaction during play *in groups* and the need for mutual coordination of actions between peers is the basis of early moral awareness, pro-social behaviour and empathy, rather than imitation of and direct instruction by adults. In this regard, optimising group-based care is to be regarded as an opportunity in a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective. However, to date, there are only a few examples available of the application of child rights guiding principles to pedagogical settings for young children in The Netherlands. There is a notion of the child centre as a unique setting to practice democratic citizenship skills and values, and some projects and programmes are, or have been, implemented in ECEC such as the positively evaluated *'Peaceable School'* programme and the project '*Together for the Future*' (Pauw, 2013; Van Keulen, 2013). However, a systematic examination of how child rights and democratic citizenship principles are reflected in current ECEC and afterschool care programmes and how implementation of these principles could be strengthened, is lacking. While the ECEC system in the Netherlands is maturing, this dissertation is therefore also aiming to inform the national policy debate with a child-rights perspective on democratic citizenship.

Overall conceptual framework

The conceptual core of this research project is based on the bio-ecological model of Urie Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and takes a systemic perspective, framing the studies within the various ecological systems (the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-system) in which individuals develop through reciprocal interactions with their environment (Figure 1.1). Bronfenbrenner's model assumes that social and environmental factors are of influence on a person's socio-emotional functioning and personal development. If the environment changes, the individual changes as well. Interactions within a person's immediate environment are referred to as *proximal processes*. These involve the interactions of a person with the physical, social and symbolic structures that are embedded in the micro-system and are influenced by personal biological characteristics (e.g., sex, temperament, age, health), social agents (e.g., parents, teachers) and the practices with tools and symbol systems that have evolved over human cultural history (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Figure 1.1

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model of human development.


Macrosystem
Attitudes and ideologies of the culture
Exosystem
Mesosystem
Microsystem
Friends of family
Neighbors
Family
School
The individual
Sex
Age
Health
etc.
Health services
Peers
Church group
Neighborhood play area
Mass media
Legal services
Social welfare services
Chronosystem
Patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course; sociohistorical conditions
Time (sociohistorical conditions and time since life events)

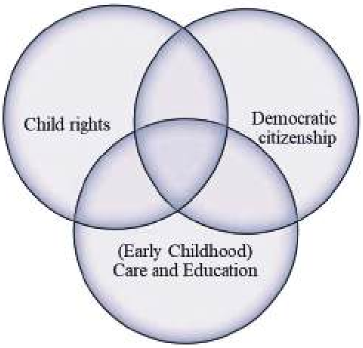
An individual participates in various microsystems, which together form the mesosystem. Social agents involved in a person's microsystem are connected to other social agents' microsystems through their respective mesosystems. These connections are referred to as exosystems (influencing a child's development without direct involvement of the child). Social services form part of it, as are neighbours, peers, media and other local stakeholders. All systems together are embedded in the macrosystem of institutions, (cultural) attitudes and ideologies of a society. The chronosystem, finally, addresses changes over time, referring both to the age or stage of transformation (evolvement) of an individual, as to the changing broader socio-historical circumstances in which interactions take place. Although this model is developed from a social-constructivist vision and fits a social and cultural perspective towards ECEC, it is also useful to inform a rights-based perspective, emphasizing that a child is not a passive subject in the centre of these system levels developing in reaction to changes in the environment only, but it is rather a subject who actively participates and influences its environment at all system levels as well. Another observation from a rights-based approach is that, in addition to the chronosystem, diversities in localities or settings may also be of influence on development, which is especially relevant for immigrant groups living in two (or more) 'worlds' or cultures. For example, the degree of integration of people with an immigration background depends on the ability of societies to maintain social cohesion; education can support immigrant children to acquire skills and provide an important contribution to their social and emotional well-being and thereby sustain their motivation to participate in the social and civic life of their new communities. However, ensuring that students with an immigrant background enjoy academic, social and emotional well-being implies these children are first to overcome the adversities associated with migration or displacement, socio-economic disadvantage, language barriers and the difficulty of forging a new identity – all at the same time (OECD, 2018).

Central theoretical notions regarding child rights and citizenship in child centres

Based on the pedagogical views inherent to the UNCRC, the vision of the child as a democratic citizen, the hypothesis of the child centre as a unique place to practice democratic citizenship from a young age, and the theoretical underpinnings of child development through reciprocal interactions in the context of its environment, we will further explore some central theoretical notions that are connecting child rights, democratic citizenship and child care provisions (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

Central and overlapping features of child rights, citizenship and (early childhood) care and education

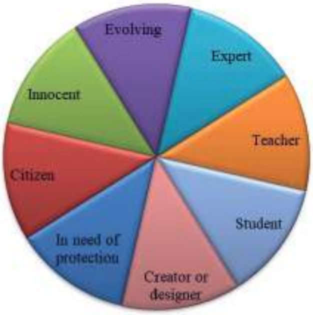


Central features to be considered are:

Child images – the child as a rights-holder and democratic citizen. Ever since the Enlightenment, debates about how to best raise and educate children reflect various and sometimes conflicting images of the child – pictured either as wild and in need of socialisation by, for instance, Hobbes (1588-1699), or as innocent and a blank page by Rousseau (1712-1778) and Locke (1632-1704). There is also the ongoing debate about nature and nurture since Kant (1724-1804). In recent years, the sociology of childhood is gaining more attention, including the perception that the child and childhood are social constructs (Moss, 2010a), implying that nurture and how these constructs are shaped and understood in society is of great importance. This coincides broadly with the rise of the child rights movement (Freeman, 1998).

Today, different child images exist side by side, however they are often singular and fragmented. A narcissistic conception of the child in current times exists besides the idea of neglected children: children are highly praised and appreciated (Brummelman, 2015), however they are at the same time ignored, neglected, victims of their environment or even – depending on the situation - depicted as 'the cause of ill' (Brinkgreve, 2005; Smith, 2015). As mentioned earlier, a rights-based approach promotes a vision of citizenship, in which citizens – including young children – are the holders of rights. This concept is based on the notion of holistic development and a multiplicity of images of the child (Smith 2015; Van Keulen, 2013), as is visualised in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3:
'Multiplicity of child(hood) images'



Note. Adapted from Youth Research Centre, Melbourne (Smith, 2015). Supplemented with the image of the child as a creator or designer (Blay & Ireson, 2009)

The child image stemming from the UNCRC is averse of overprotection, over-control, disciplining or behaviour control (Lansdown, 2001; Willems, 2005), but instead considers children as full of potential and evolving (UNCRC, 1989). The often-cited Loris Malaguzzi, the Italian pedagogue who founded the child care centres in Reggio Emilia in the post-war era, called this the image of the 'rich' child: '*rich in potential, strong, powerful, competent and, most of all, connected to adults and other children*' (Malaguzzi, 1993). This 'rich' child is an active learner, '*seeking the meaning of the world from birth, a co-creator of knowledge, identity, culture and values'; a citizen, the subject of rights not needs; and born with 'a hundred languages'* (Moss, 2010a). An analysis of the recent 'Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for ECEC', created by the EC Working Group on ECEC (2014), reveals that each quality statement is underpinned by a clear image of the child explaining how children should learn and grow up in society: "*Each child is unique and a competent* *and active learner whose potential needs to be encouraged and supported. Each child is a curious, capable and intelligent individual. The child is a co-creator of knowledge who needs and wants interaction with other children and adults. As citizens of Europe children have their own rights which include early education and care"* (EC Working Group on ECEC, 2014, p.7).

Values corresponding to this image of the child include openness (acceptance of ambiguity or uncertainty), diversity, subjectivity, dialogue, democracy, and experimentation (Moss, 2010b). Realizing these values requires support and guidance of children through experiences and attainment of sufficient skills within a culturally rich, diverse and democratic environment suited to their own local context and connected to child rights as a global pedagogical framework loyal to the child, rather than a political ideology (Van Keulen, 2013; Vucic, 2014).

Evolving capacities. This notion includes the recognition of the changing relationship between the child and its environment - initially mainly the child's caregivers as social agents – as they grow up. The notion captures changes and development over time (chronosystem) and refers to the stage of transformation or evolvement of individual children (including also the socio-historical or cultural circumstances in which interactions take place). The concept focusses on capacity rather than age as the determinant of the capability to exercise the human rights of children. Lansdown (2005) studied Article 5[4] of the UNCRC in this regard, and identified three separate but inter-linked dimensions that respectively needs to be fulfilled, respected and protected: 1) the developmental dimension, referring to the extent to which children's development, competence and emerging personal autonomy are upheld; 2) the participatory or emancipatory dimension, referring to respect for children's capacities and transferring rights from adults to the child in accordance with its level of competence; and 3) the protective dimension, acknowledging that because children's capacities are still evolving, they have rights to protection against participation in or exposure to activities likely to cause them harm, acknowledging that the levels of protection children need will decrease in accordance with their evolving capacities. Thus, the challenge is to understand how to build children's own capacities to take responsibility for exercising their rights (while protecting the rights of others) and not exposing them to unnecessary risks or excessive expectations (Lansdown, 2005).

Child agency (empowerment). Proximal processes in a person's microsystems are the drivers of development. These proximal processes can be considered with respect to *quality, quantity* and *content* (Leseman & van den Boom, 1999). *Quality* of proximal processes refers to the degree in which a person is allowed to initiate, shape and control his or her interactions in the micro-system to match personal characteristics and skill levels in an optimal way; *quantity* refers to the frequency, coherence and duration of proximal processes, also across the person's micro-systems; and *content* refers to the type of skills, knowledge, attitudes and other characteristics a person acquires through proximal processes (Leseman & Van den Boom, 1999). In line with this definition, for the present research, we will define the quality of proximal processes as the degree of allowing and fostering the child's *agency*: a high quality of proximal processes means the child is considered an active agent negotiating towards its own development and as having the (evolving) capacity to act independently and to make own choices rather than being 'in need' or a casual recipient of care and education provisions only. The degree of *agency* relates to the quantity (frequency, duration, coherence) and content (type of skills, knowledge and attitudes) of the child's proximal processes, and depends on the balance between protection and participation rights, that is, on the balance between the physical and emotional security and responsivity of the provided education and care on the one hand, and on the other hand the physical and psychological space allowed to children to explore the environment, initiate activities and take responsibility.

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[4] Article 5: States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, *in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child*, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention (UNCRC, 1989; italics added by the author).

Child participation (and the right to be heard in all matters affecting children's lives). The concept that children should have the opportunity to express their views and participate in matters that affect them, is an increasingly accepted point of view in early childhood education and care, and in frequently cited pedagogies of, amongst others, Reggio Emilia (Gandini, 1993) and Emmi Pikler (1902-1984). Also, child participation is more and more discussed when considering research and policy in the early years (Clark & Moss, 2005; Harris & Manatakis, 2013a; Koch, 2021; Mac Naughton et al., 2001; Sommer et al., 2010). However, children's participation is also a contested concept; and as a field of inquiry, child participation remains often disputed (Nolas, 2015; Theobald et al., 2011). Article 12 of the UNCRC, referring to children's right to participation, is still the least implemented and understood article; participation in terms of hearing children's voices is often implemented on terms and conditions set by adults or organizations (Hart, 1997; Percy-Smith, 2010; Vucic, 2014; Woodcombe, 1998). Alderson (2008) argues for a more meaningful consultation process between adults and children, also in education and care settings, to avoid adult-centric policies and exclusion of children from the decision-making process because of perceived lack of agency or capacity of young children. Potential benefits for children of providing them agency in consultation processes are reported, such as increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, friendships and conflict resolution, negotiation and decision-making skills (Aguiar & Silva, 2018; Kirby et al., 2003; Kirby & Bryson, 2002; Sinclair, 2004; Van Keulen, 2013).

For this thesis, we define child participation as part of the day-to-day interactions of children and adults and of children among themselves, characterized by a high degree of child *agency* in establishing and shaping social relationships in a democratic and authoritative manner. In line with Roger Hart (1992), we recognize five levels of child participation: 1) children are being assigned but informed; 2) children are invited to express an informed view and are being consulted; 3) children's views are taken into account leading to adult-initiated but shared decisions; 4) children are allowed to take initiatives and are main decision makers regarding these initiatives; and 5) children and adults jointly initiate and co-create decisions. Hart also identified three levels of non-participation, referring respectively to ‘manipulation’, when children have no understanding of the issues involved and hence do not understand their actions, or when children are consulted but given no feedback at all; ‘decoration’, when children are used by adults for an adult cause, they may be present but have little idea of what it is all about and no say in the organizing of the occasion; and ‘tokenism’, referring to those instances when children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

Bonding and bridging as part of inclusion and diversity. Child centres providing universal or targeted ECEC programmes can play a bonding role in society by bringing children and communities from varying backgrounds together while bridging diversities. Aspects of bonding and bridging are: recognizing and respecting different cultures, focusing on mutual learning and understanding, having attention for multilingualism, developing social competencies and recognizing the child centre as a space for practicing democracy, as well as bringing groups of varying backgrounds and communities together through outreach activities and the implementation of inclusive and intercultural curricula (Aguiar & Pastori, 2018; Slot et al., 2019). Recent research from the ISOTIS-project (2017-2019; www.isotis.org) revealed the perspectives of different groups of actors on educational opportunities, inclusiveness of society’s education and support systems, and preferred integration and acculturation strategies. A positive relation was found between, for example, preschool teachers’ multicultural practices and parents’ appreciation of the relationship with that teacher (Leseman et al., 2019). From this multi-method and multi-country research project, it was concluded that to strengthen the relationships of parents with ECEC provisions, the education system and society at large, an unconditional embrace of multiculturalism and multilingualism at (pre)schools is pivotal (i.e., *bridging* aspects), while at the same time it requires full commitment and support for children in learning the national language (i.e., an aspect of *bonding*). In this context, Romijn (2021) found a positive relationship between multicultural practices and parents’ preference for intercultural socialization of their children and encouragement of inter-ethnic friendships (bonding). Likewise, Francot (2021) found a positive relationship between multicultural integration policy of countries and parents’ preference for respectful integration (balancing maintenance of heritage culture and adoption of the new culture) and participation in society (bridging).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), besides various individual and civic rights, states that “*everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible”* (Art. 29), thus assuming mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence, while reconciling the sometimes-perceived contradiction between personal (human) rights and the community. The high value of 'community' and related socialisation goals in upbringing, education and care is traditionally regarded as characteristic of 'collectivistic cultures' (Hofstede, 1991) and often seen as contradicting individual child rights and child agency. However, in line with Art. 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is evidence from small-scale studies in England and Norway that supporting children's participation and agency in education and care settings – as compared to more directive pedagogical strategies - not only leads to less emotional disturbances, but also to more engagement with the community and better understanding of democratic systems in adulthood (Lansdown et al., 2014). When children are guided by rights, with an opportunity for exploration and cognitive provocation in areas of interest, the outcomes may bring an understanding of their own rights but may also create empathy for others and a sense of duty to act on behalf of the community (Howe & Lovell, 2010).).

The definitions and central notions of child rights and democratic citizenship discussed above are the starting point of our research on ECEC and afterschool care. In the next chapters, we will report how child rights and democratic citizenship are ideologically conceptualised in standard setting international documents and formally embedded (or not) in statutory (quality) frameworks for ECEC, to what degree child rights and democratic citizenship principles are implemented in practice, and how this relates to the experiences of children. In addition, we will report on case studies of an exemplary (early) education programme for democratic citizenship, focusing on the experiences of children, parents, teachers and other stakeholders, in order to identify the possibilities of implementation of a rights-based participatory citizenship approach to ECEC and afterschool care on scale.

Structure and logic of this dissertation

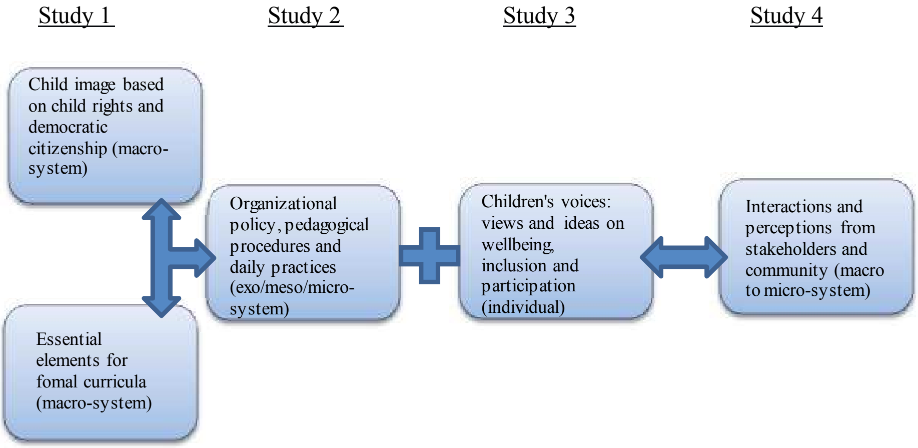
The current research project aims to contribute to a pedagogy of child rights-based democratic citizenship of young children in early care and education services in The Netherlands, with the purpose to add to a discourse of empowerment of (young) children as active agents in their own development and the development of their communities. Accordingly, the objective is to identify essential characteristics of such a child-rights based democratic citizenship pedagogy in child centres, and to determine how this relates to pedagogical views and policies, pedagogical procedures and practices. The research is structured as follows, with a focus on different types or levels of curricula as implemented in ECEC:

- the *ideological* and the *formal* curriculum, as construed internationally by the UN, OECD and EU, and nationally by The Government of The Netherlands – *Study 1 (Chapter 2)*;
- the *operational* (implemented) curriculum, as promoted in the ECEC and afterschool care sector in The Netherlands - *Study 2 (Chapter 3);*

- the *experienced* curriculum: what children actually tell they experience in the daily practice of an exemplary child rights and democratic citizenship programme - *Study 3 (Chapter 4)*;
- the *perceived conditions of implementation* of a curriculum based on child rights and democratic citizenship principles: what are, as perceived by key stakeholders, facilitators, possible barriers, conditions and key principles of a rights-based programme implemented on scale - *Study 4 (Chapter 5)*.

Figure 1.4

Schematic structure and assumed coherence between levels of curricula and empirical domains of this research


Study 1
Study 2
Study 3
Study 4
Child image based on child rights and democratic citizenship (macro-system)
Organizational policy, pedagogical procedures and daily practices (exo/meso/micro-system)
Children's voices: views and ideas on wellbeing, inclusion and participation (individual)
Interactions and perceptions from stakeholders and community (macro to micro-system)
Essential elements for fomal curricula (macro-system)

The structure and assumed coherence between the different levels of curricula, systems and empirical domains of this research is summarized and visualised in Figure 1.4. In general, the research methodologies adopted in these studies are characterised by: a critical examination of documents on the assumptions underlying values regarding the child and childhood; taking varying contexts and socio-cultural diversities into account; exploring children's own views and understanding of their environment, while meeting with children in their common daily settings and communicating with them as holistic persons with multiple and evolving capacities; the use of open questions in narrative, semi-structured interviews and surveys; and the analysis of data collected through standardized measurements and observation instruments.

More specifically, Chapter 2 reports on study 1, involving an analysis of international policy discourse (ideology) and trends therein over time on the basis of documentation from the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO, representing the UN) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), selected as standard-setting agencies for (early childhood) education and care. This study further refines the theoretical framework and our understanding of 'the young child as a democratic citizen' with rights, opportunities and responsibilities that fit the evolving capabilities of the child. Also, this study includes an analysis of European and Dutch policy for formal curricula in the light of this international standard setting context. The second study, addressed in Chapter 3, concerns an empirical assessment of the current situation of ECEC and after-school care in The Netherlands regarding the implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles based on nationally representative data collected under the National Child Care Quality Monitor 2017-2019 [Landelijke Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang, LKK]. The study assesses the degree of implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles in Dutch ECEC and afterschool care practices, and how this relates to aspects of outcome quality at the level of the child. Chapter 4 reports on a study, conducted in 2019, that attempted to include young children's own voices on their well-being and inclusion in ECEC and afterschool care by collecting data through a mosaic of tools embedded in daily pedagogical practices in an exemplary programme, considered 'good practice' in view of child rights and democratic citizenship principles. A particularly innovative aspect here is the participation of very young children in the age range of 3 to 6 years old, having them express their daily experiences at their daycare centres, preschools and afterschool care provision (Harris & Manatakis, 2013b). This chapter aims to complement the evidence base for the empowerment of (young) children as agents in their own well-being and development, and what this recognition can mean for pedagogical policy and practices. In Chapter 5, we report on the fourth study, conducted in 2018, concerning an in-depth case study of an identified good practice of rights-based democratic citizenship as an example of an approach currently implemented on scale in The Netherlands. We assessed democratically designed pedagogical practices for young children through the identification of characteristics of citizenship pedagogy regarding design (inputs), implementation (outputs) and results (outcomes), and identified facilitators, possible barriers, solutions, and conditions to make these programmes a tool to implement child rights in view of implementation on scale. Finally, in chapter 6, we will bring it all together and explore to what extent approaches of rights-based democratic citizenship can contribute to the quality of pedagogical policies, procedures and practices in general, and we will derive implications for policy development regarding child care provisions in The Netherlands in particular.

2

Chapter 2

Ideological discourse informing formal curricula: Understanding child rights and democratic citizenship in policy standards and formal curricula regarding ECEC

Author contributions: C.E., P.L. & M.B. designed the study. C.E. performed the data collection and data analysis. C.E. wrote the chapter. P.L. & M.B. guided the research and commented on Chapter 2.

Introduction and problem statement

In Chapter 1 we delineated the theoretical framework of the present dissertation. In this chapter, we aim to further articulate the *ideological curriculum* based on a child rights and citizenship framework and discuss central elements arising from it, that could be relevant for a formal pedagogy in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), including also afterschool care. This chapter is based on the results of two consecutive document analyses. The first analysis examines international standard setting with regard to early childhood education and care, respectively based on documentation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), exploring the evolving discourse on child rights and democratic citizenship therein over time since the 1990s. Thereafter, we will compare identified central characteristics of this discourse with current policy documentation of two selected governing bodies – respectively the European Commission (EC) and the Government of the Netherlands (GoN) – to assess how these more ideological characteristics in standard setting are framed (or not) into a *formal pedagogy*, that is, in curriculum guidelines and quality frameworks as sets of values, principles, guidelines and standards which guide the objectives, content and pedagogical approach to children's care, education and learning (EC Working Group on ECEC, 2014). By doing so, we will deepen our understanding of what a more ideological child rights and citizenship discourse may entail for formal pedagogy. Finally, this study will highlight what elements we should consider for further empirical study in the Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of this thesis.

The four agencies, UNESCO, OECD, EC and GoN, were selected to represent respectively the global community (UN), international partnerships (OECD), a supranational (EC), and a national (GoN) perspective, as well as different perspectives on ECEC respectively based on human rights (UN), human capital (OECD), and combined, including socio-cultural and child development perspectives (EC and GoN). In the following, we will further explain the agenda regarding ECEC of these agencies and define the research questions of this study.

Brief contextual background regarding standard setting bodies on ECEC

As a fundamental human right, education is protected through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and many other international human rights instruments - conventions, declarations, recommendations, frameworks for action and charters. Specific dimensions of the right to education are also covered by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC, 1966), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965). In the early 1990s, the United Nations launched a global movement for education (Education for All, EFA), creating momentum and mobilizing governments, civil society, educationalists and private sector organizations to recognize education as essential for human development. A World Declaration on Education for All and a Framework for Action to meet Basic Learning Needs was adopted at the global level (1990), with a vision and agenda-setting, and aims and priorities that were to be reached by the year 2000. In 2000, the EFA aims were combined with the broader Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which also addressed more general social equality issues including gender, health and sustainability (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000), and after 2015 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to create leverage for reaching global education goals in relation to a broader socio-economic and political agenda towards the year 2030. The current Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG4) states to "*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*"; and beyond that, every goal in the 2030 Agenda requires education to empower people with the knowledge, skills and values to live in dignity, build their lives and contribute to their societies (UN, 2019). Target 4.2. concerns ECEC specifically: "*By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education*"[5]. The SDGs are officially adopted by 193 countries, and UNESCO is the agency responsible for coordinating international efforts to achieve SDG4 through brokering partnerships, policy guidance and capacity development, monitoring and advocacy[6].

UNESCO defines early childhood as the period from birth to eight years old, and recognizes that during this stage, children are highly influenced by their environment and the people that surround them. It recognizes that early childhood care and education is not just preparation for primary school, but should aim at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and well-being[7]. Following to this, UNESCO is committed to ECEC activities that focus on promoting holistic and high-quality pre-primary education for all children over the age of three years, ensuring the use of developmentally appropriate pedagogies and emphasizing the linkages with primary education as well as health and social services. Standard setting for the broad policy area of Early Childhood Development (ECD) for children under 3 years of age is assigned to the UN specialised agency UNICEF. Until the 2000s, early childhood education as a stand-alone theme as such did not receive much attention in UNESCO policy documentation but was considered an integral part of Education for All (EFA). From 2000 onwards, UNESCO has increasingly advocated the importance of ECEC and published a series of evidence-based periodical policy briefs on ECEC (UNESCO Policy Brief on Early Childhood), prepared by independent scientists aiming to inform member states, policy makers, educators, and the public, on a variety of ECEC issues. These reflect developments in international ECEC policy and pedagogy, and provide examples of national practices or highlight thematic aspects related to ECEC, such as governance, non-public actors, and inclusion of children with disabilities. This attention for ECEC cannot be seen as separate from the effective advocacy around the UNCRC at that same time, in particular after General Comment no. 7 was issued in 2005, on implementing child rights in early childhood.

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[5] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4
[6] https://en.unesco.org/themes/education
[7] https://en.unesco.org/themes/early-childhood-care-and-education

Whereas UNESCO is the agency responsible for coordinating international efforts to achieve global education goals, including access to high quality ECEC for all children, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) works on establishing evidence-based international standards for ECEC (and a range of other social and economic issues). The OECD collects and provides data, analysis, and advice on public policies regarding economic performance, employment, and education systems. The OECD was founded in 1960 "*to promote policies to achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment; to contribute to sound economic expansion; and to contribute to the expansion of world trade on a multilateral, non-discriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations*" (OECD Convention, Article 1, 1960). As part of the task to promote sustainable growth, the OECD initiated a series of comparative studies on the quality of the education systems and youth' educational achievement in the OECD member states. In the course of the 1990s, the OECD increasingly also paid attention to ECEC as a stand-alone area of analysis, resulting in defining policy standards articulated and published in a series under the title *Starting Strong* in the 2000s. With this series, the OECD aimed at providing cross-national information and analysis to improve policy making in early childhood education and care in all OECD countries, with a holistic approach to children's early development and learning. The OECD defines ECEC as "*all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content*" (OECD, 2001).

These definitions and perspectives regarding ECEC of both UNESCO and OECD will be examined in more detail in the first part of the results section of this chapter, particularly with reference to elements associated with a child rights and citizenship approach as the first part of this study.

From standards to policy making regarding ECEC

The way ECEC is designed, planned and administered has evolved over time and across cultures. Systems often reflect family and community structures as well as gendered economic, social and cultural roles (UNESCO, 2006). This has led to differences between states and countries in governance and the level of policy-making authority (e.g., national or local), the national administrative department (social welfare, education, health, or differently), the targeted age-group, horizontal (same-age groups) or vertical arrangements (e.g., combining ages 0-4), the provision of universal and/or targeted programmes, accessibility for all or for working parents only, funding strategies, parental contributions, delivery strategies, parental involvement, and specific programme philosophies (Kamerman, 2001). Keeping these differences in mind, the second part of this study will analyse how the ideological discourse, based on international standards as identified in the first part of this study are currently reflected in EC and GoN policies and formal curricula.

According to the European Commission (EC), early childhood education and care refers to "*any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, regardless of the setting, funding, opening hours or programme content – and includes centre and family day care; privately and publicly funded provision; preschool and pre-primary provision"* (EC Working Group on ECEC, 2014). The EC acknowledges that high quality early childhood education and care lays the foundations for accomplishments later in life in terms of education, well-being, employability, and social integration, and emphasizes that this could be especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In that sense, the EC combines multiple perspectives - developmental, economic, social and cultural – on ECEC.

Even at national levels, diversified systems may exist. In The Netherlands, subsidized child care for working parents exists side by side with targeted language support programmes for children in need, often from low SES or immigrant backgrounds. The Government of The Netherlands defines ECEC as: *"On a commercial basis or otherwise than free of charge, caring for, educating and contributing to the development of children"*, i.e., including daycare and afterschool care during primary school age *(Child Care Act, 2005).* The daycare system was originally designed as a labour market instrument enabling mothers to enter the workforce. Increasingly, the government recognizes the sector as important for the (cognitive and social-emotional) development of young children as well. In this regard, policy is still evolving (BKK, 2017; Commissie Kwaliteit, 2014; IKK, 2018; SER, 2016; Van Rozendaal & Vaes, 2015). Targeted preschool education programmes [voor- en vroegschoolse educatie, VVE[8]] are available for children at risk of language delays since 2000. The effectivity and quality of these programmes has been subject of national and international research with mixed but overall promising findings (Fukkink et al., 2017; Leseman et al., 2017; Leseman & Veen, 2016; Van Huizen & Plantenga, 2015; Veen et al., 2017). And despite recent attempts to merge these two systems, there are structural issues related to market differentiation and programme specialization towards targeted groups that are contributing to the risk of social segregation in society and unequal access to quality (Van der Werf, 2020a). Currently, universal access to ECEC for all children is again high on the Dutch political agenda (SER, 2021; VNG et al., 2020).

Research questions of this study

In this study, we will further assess the perspective of the young child as a democratic citizen - with rights, opportunities and responsibilities that fit the age and maturity of the child, as we started to explore in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. This is done on the basis of selected policy documents and publications of the identified key actors in the field of ECEC, including both standard setting (Part 1 - UN and OECD) and policy making bodies (Part 2 – EC and GoN). We expect this analysis to contribute to understanding of the discourse related to child rights and citizenship in ECEC, and the identification of essential principles and elements for further empirical study.

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[8] VVE: Early and Preschool Education: The aim is to better prepare toddlers at risk of (language) delays for primary school and to ensure that toddlers can go to grade 1 [groep 3] without falling behind. VVE is provided for 2-4 year old children in playgroups and daycare centres (mainly half-day programs), and for 4-6 year old children in universal Kindergarten [groep 1 and 2], which is included in the primary school system.

More specifically, we aim to answer the following questions:

1. *What are characteristics of a child rights and citizenship pedagogy in early education and care, as reflected in international standard setting policy documents regarding ECEC over the years (ideological curriculum)?*

By analysing standard-setting documents in a timeframe over the last three decades, we aim to reveal developments in discourse over the years. This should lead to further understanding of central elements of a child rights and democratic citizenship framework in international standard setting policy documents on ECEC that may be of influence on state level policy development and resulting curricula for ECEC. Therefore, an additional question is:

2. *How are these elements of child rights and citizenship in ECEC currently framed at the European and Dutch policy levels and included in formal curricula?*

This should help us to get insight in policy implications regarding ECEC as respectively proposed and enacted by the European Commission and the Government of The Netherlands. We will assess to what extent current formal pedagogies are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to what extent ECEC can serve as an instrument to implement child rights and promote the vision of children as rights-holders and democratic citizens. Finally, after relating and discussing our results, we will formulate recommendations regarding characteristics of a rights-based democratic citizenship pedagogy that may have the potential to become mainstreamed in a general ECEC curriculum in The Netherlands.

Methodology

The present study consists of an assessment of policy documentation on ECEC focusing on child rights and democratic citizenship concepts as discussed in the first chapter. A qualitative content analysis methodology was applied to selected UNESCO and OECD documents published as from 1990 (thus after the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force), and to EC and Dutch documents that embody the current status of formal curriculum frameworks at these governance levels. In the following, we will further explain the methods and tools, scope and coding procedures used to arrive at our results.

Analytical techniques to develop the coding scheme

Qualitative content analysis is defined as a *"research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use*" (Krippendorff, 2011). In our study, the context is formed by notions, as discussed, related to child rights and democratic citizenship, and the questions defined for this analysis. With a directed approach from the concepts identified based on theory in Chapter 1, we started our analysis with these key concepts as initial emergent codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A summary of these key theoretical dimensions is annexed in Appendix A, Table A2.1. Through piloting on a number of randomly selected documents from relevant international bodies[9], we composed an a priori coding scheme of categories and thematic elements (Bryman, 2016; Stemler, 1999, 2001). This extra step in the development of the coding scheme was included to increase the validity of the document analysis by ensuring the categories represent as adequately and accurately as possible our concepts (Schreier, 2014). The result of this step is annexed in Table A2.2. Finally, in an iterative process and with further inductive coding, a final comprehensive coding scheme was elaborated and finetuned (Mayring, 2014). This final coding matrix is included in Table 2.1.

The Table shows that the concept of *Democratic citizenship* was included as thematic element under the concept of *Participation/voices/views* to increase consistency and avoid overlap; the concept of *Whole child development* was included as part of the concept of *Empowerment/agency* and coded only if it was used as such. The *Right to education*, which was specific for UNESCO, was included under *Human rights* (as were other specifically mentioned human rights treaties or references to Human Rights) and *Community empowerment*, which was also specific for UNESCO, was merged with the thematic element of *Empowerment of parents/ families/ communities*. The thematic element of *Children's needs* as such was observed to be too broadly used to adequately reflect a rights-based and citizenship approach. Therefore, it was decided to link it to *Diversity* and *Diversity of the needs of children (general)* and only coded if it was used as such.

The final coding scheme was used as the framework to analyse the main discourses and trends over the years per organization, and to identify the elements that may be of influence on supranational (EU) and state level national (The Netherlands) policy development and resulting curricula for ECEC.

Scope

Scope and criteria of the selection of policy documents were: policy papers, policy reviews and policy recommendations from 1990, when the UNCRC came into force, to 2019. Documents were retrieved from publicly accessible sources: UN conventions were retrieved from databases on public websites; UNESCO documents from its extensive database (unesdoc.unesco.org); OECD publications from the online library and OECD documentation centre; and documents reflecting policy guidelines from the European Commission's document library (ec.europa.eu/education). Documents regarding Dutch national policy were retrieved from the central government website (rijksoverheid.nl, wetten.overheid.nl) and standard libraries.

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[9] UNESCO, UNICEF, WorldBank, OECD, EC

Table 2.1
Final coding scheme with concepts, thematic elements and sub-elements

Classifications		
Period	1990-2000 2001-2010 2011-2019	
Main focus of organization	Child rights / UNCRC, education, ECEC, democracy, governance, economic cooperation / development, social justice	
Child rights and democratic citizenship		
Relevant concepts, characteristics	Thematic elements	Sub-elements
Inclusion	Social inclusion: values, culture, purposes, approaches Inclusive education / pedagogy Inclusive practices (location) Inclusive system: policies, organization, services, facilities	
Diversity	Diversity in children's backgrounds Diversity as part of pedagogy Diversity among children as learners (specifically) Diversity of the needs of children (general) Diversity of practices	
Community role	Community engagement (involvement) Community outreach (reaching out to families/communities as part of services) Community-based services (local services) Community as setting (geographical or ecological s) Community as a group (cultural, linguistic, ethnic et cetera)	
Rights (to, in, through ECEC)	Children's rights Human rights (incl. Right to education, Rights of people with disabilities, Rights of vulnerable and minority populations) Parental and/or family rights Staff rights	- to - in - through
(Democratic) Participation / Voices/Views	(Democratic) Citizenship Child participation (views of org. on young children / early childhood, monitoring children's views). Not: attendance or retention rates Parental participation Staff participation Community participation	
Empowerment / Agency	Whole child development (holistic development and/or multiplicity of images of the child) Children's empowerment, agency Empowerment of parents / families / communities Staff empowerment, agency	

We included documents about the areas ‘Early Childhood Education and Care’, ‘preschool education’, and ‘pre-primary education’. Excluded were documents on education in general not specifically mentioning (relevancy for) early childhood, preschool or pre-primary education. It is important to note that the purpose of the current study was not to generate a complete overview of all policy documents, but to select representative documents of standard-setting agencies reflecting more or less each examined decade; and reflecting the current status of formal curriculum guidelines for the EU and The Netherlands. Relevancy of selected documents was verified with, and confirmed by informants from OECD, UNESCO, EC and The Netherlands. This resulted for UNESCO in four documents or *sampling units* (analysing the 46 policy briefs issued between 2001 and 2010 as one), for the OECD in five documents of the *Starting Strong*-series, for the EU in two documents, and for The Netherlands in four documents. Additionally, we used the report *Overview of European ECEC curricula* (Sylva et al., 2015) to provide more information on the European context, and the generally well-received but not formally endorsed *Pedagogical Framework 0-4 years* (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009) to provide more context on the Dutch context as well. Table A2.3 in the Appendix provides an overview of the selected documents included in this study.

Document coding procedures and analytical tools

As a first step, based on the identified concepts in the elaborated coding scheme (Table 2.1), we carried out a text search using NVivo12 pro on main codes (with stemmed words, like democracy/democratic). Retrieved documents were coded in concepts or themes, thematic elements and thematic sub-elements regarding child rights, citizenship and democratic pedagogy in order to make valid and replicable inferences from the data. For this study, we decided that the s*ampling units* are the main texts of selected policy documents (excluding tables, figures, references, et cetera); *context units* concern the paragraphs in which particular concepts are found; and *recording units* are the relevant child rights and citizenship categories regarding ECEC provision identified in the texts (Krippendorff, 2011). Actual coding of the *recording units* was based on inferences based on the *context units*: a selected item could be part of a sentence, a full sentence, or a couple of sentences. Some parts of the text could refer to more codes or sub-codes.

Analytics used to evaluate content were the absolute and relative frequency of codes (references to central and overlapping sub-codes or thematic elements of child rights and democratic citizenship). More specifically, we used: a) the absolute number of different codes (‘types’), to assess the development of the terminology around child rights and citizenship concepts; b) the percentage of coverage of *recording units* (coded references, ‘tokens’) as part of the *sampling unit* (main text), to assess the extent to which specific vocabulary denoting child rights and citizenship concepts was used in documents over the years, and to get insight in general emphasis on the identified themes; and c) the relative frequency of particular coded references compared to all other codes in a specific document or period (to assess developments and shifts within the concepts in a respective document or timeframe).

As a second step, in order to get a rough overview of the overall conceptual vocabulary used in standard setting over the years, and in order to assess the accents that co-created overall discourse, a word frequency query was run using NVivo12 pro of the 25 most frequently used words (nouns and adjectives including similar words and synonyms, but excluding general and expected terms and function words, verbs and grammatical morphemes) in the same *sampling units*. Around 20 topics per document emerged, that could be interpreted and categorized. For this analysis, we used the frequency of the words relative to the total number of words counted in a respective document. As a word may be part of more than one group of similar words, the software assigns a portion of the word's frequency (the weighted percentage) to each group in such a way that the overall total does not exceed 100%. The topics were then categorized in 6 overarching themes. We acknowledge the weaknesses of this analytical step, as we may be missing out on other meaningful themes and it may not do justice to the exact meaning of, or complexities within, specific concepts. However, this step provided additional information about the overall focus of the analysed documents and added to the discussion of the analysed results.

Validity

From the perspective of validity, we report on how the results were created. In this way, the analysis as well as the resulting conclusions are trackable (Schreier, 2014). To increase credibility, the process was double checked throughout. Other trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) included: dependability, by reviewing the data over time; and conformability by keeping objectivity and by being continuously reflexive. The analysis is mindful of positionality; and keeps in mind transferability (the potential for extrapolation) by describing the context in such a way that this can be used to review the findings in relation to other or similar organizations in the field of ECEC.

Results

In Part 1 of this section, we will first seek to analyse the child rights and citizenship discourse regarding ECEC as reflected in international standard setting policy documents over the years, which we termed the *ideological curriculum* (Goodlad, 1979). What are, according to these international standard setting policy documents regarding ECEC, characteristics of child rights and citizenship, and how are these reflected in these documents over the years? First we will assess UN-discourse as used in selected UNESCO documentation, followed by an analysis of discourse used in the OECD *Starting Strong* document series. This will then provide us with the lens through which we will assess in Part 2 of this section the current discourse for formal curricula as per EC and GoN.

Part 1: Discourse on child rights and citizenship in UN and OECD standards

UNESCO documents

For UNESCO we coded a total of 4 *sampling units* (an overview of the selected documents can be found in the Appendix, Table A2.3). The decade from 1990-2000 was represented by the Education for All (EFA) Declaration and Framework for Action (Jomtien, 1990) and the successive Dakar Framework for Action (Dakar FoA, 2000). The 46 policy briefs issued between 2001 and 2010 - analysed as one - represented the next decade; and the comprehensive 2015 document *Investing against Evidence* was considered a key document for the last decade. As mentioned before, the sample of selected documents is not exhaustive to provide a complete overview, but the selected documents can be considered to reflect the most important standards for ECEC policy from the UN/UNESCO perspective over the years, and therefore are useful to contribute to our understanding of the discourse.

Regarding the conceptualisation of child rights and democratic citizenship, the assessed documents all cover the identified concepts of *rights*, *inclusion*, *diversity*, *role of the community*, *participation/voices/views*, and *empowerment/agency* (Table 2.1). The 1990 and 2000 documents specifically address the right to education, as obviously the aim of these documents was to further the EFA-goals. Table 2.2 provides the absolute numbers of unique codes ('types') in the various documents, out of the total of 36 codes listed in Table 2.1. The increasing number of coded characteristics and thematic elements between 1990 and 2015 indicates that the discourse evolved, became further crystallized and more specific over the years, refining the concepts especially during the 1990s - the decade when the UNCRC was rapidly ratified by most countries, and when international and national standards and policies were increasingly developed.

Table 2.2

Number of unique codes ('types') referring to child rights and citizenship concepts per publication period (out of 36 possible codes and thematic (sub)elements)

Year of publication	No. of coded concepts
1990	17
2000	33
2001-2010	31
2015	30

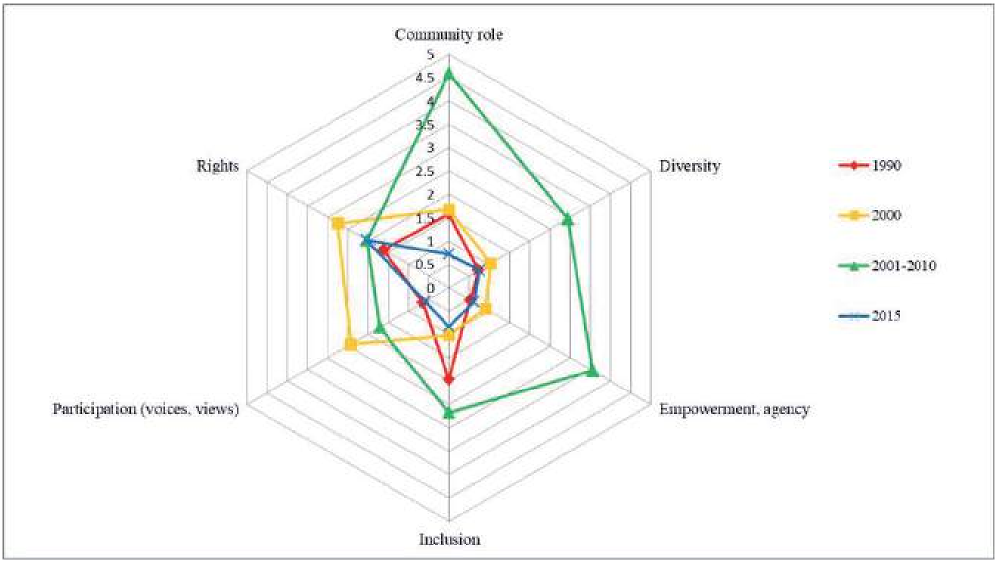
More understanding of this evolving discourse regarding child rights and democratic citizenship as addressed by UN/UNESCO, can be provided by comparing the coded characteristics and the shifts in emphasis of these characteristics over the years. This will be explained below.

Equilibrium between rights-based citizenship concepts in UNESCO-documents

In order to assess the extent to which related conceptual elements are reflected in the texts, we analysed the frequency of *recording* units, i.e., the coded references, as percentage of the *sampling unit,* the main text of a document, per period. A summarizing visualisation of the results is presented in Figure 2.1. below. The numerical results can be found in the Appendix, Table A2.4.1. From the radar (Figure 2.1), we can observe that a discourse based on child rights and citizenship (as defined by the identified six main concepts; left column in Table 2.1.) was most prominently used in the 2001-2010 documentation (i.e., the collection of policy briefs specifically on ECEC). In particular, the emphasis was on *role of the community*, diversity, *inclusion* and *empowerment*; whereas the *rights* and *participation* concepts were more prominently addressed in 2000 (in the context of Education for All). Furthermore, it is noticeable that the 2015 document proportionally pays less attention to rights-based citizenship characteristics, while most (30 out of 36) of the concepts and thematic elements are addressed. This could mean either a decrease in attention for child rights and participation issues, or indicate a shift from access towards quality issues around implementation of ECEC services while the right *to* ECEC is now assumed self-evident.

Figure 2.1

Coded references to rights and citizenship concepts (% of references as part of the main text) per document/year – UNESCO



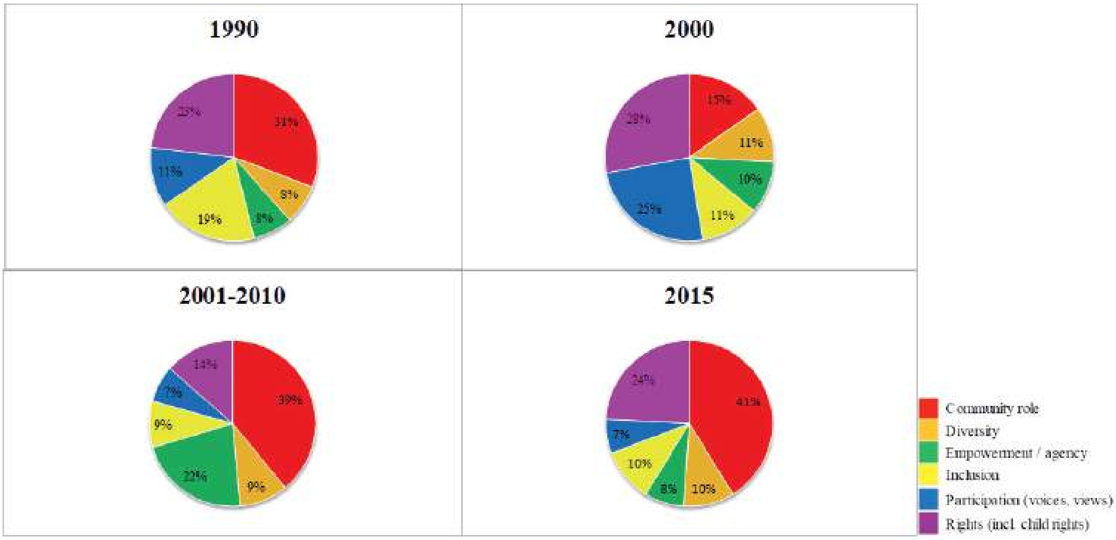
To further our understanding of the implications, we assessed the composition of the main characteristics through analysing the sub-codes, that is, the thematic elements and sub-elements. This will be further elaborated below.

The evolving meaning of concepts in UNESCO documents over the years

Figure 2.2. summarizes shifts in emphasis on rights and citizenship concepts by the relative frequency of codes ('tokens') specifically referring to the six main codes (left column in Table 2.1.) divided by the number of all other codes per time period revealing the shifts in discourse as reflected in respective documents. To explain how the meaning of the conceptual elements of a child rights and citizenship pedagogy developed over the years, we describe below the main themes (*rights, participation/voices/views, community role, empowerment/agency, inclusion* and *diversity*) by their respective thematic elements and sub-elements, including some qualitative interpretations and identified trends.

Figure 2.2

Rights based citizenship concepts compared by number of coding references in documents per period/year (UNESCO)



Rights - In 1990, specific references to *rights* concerned mainly *human rights*, the *right to education*, and to a lesser degree *staff rights* and *child rights* (see Table A2.4.1. in the Appendix). Ten years later, a broader range of rights was mentioned in more detailed references, also taking into account the rights of vulnerable and minority populations and the rights of persons with disabilities. *Child rights* here, could in some cases be assigned to 'rights *through* ECEC' – relating ECEC to, for example, the broadening of opportunities and promoting in citizens an awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and therefore considering ECEC as a tool for furthering rights. Also, rights *in* ECEC were addressed, mentioning that at all stages of life, children should be provided with high quality, comprehensive and integrated care and education. Moreover, services were to be child-centred, family-focused, community-based, and based on holistic care and education of preschool children, recognizing that this is essential for securing the well-being and rights of all children, and should be supported by national policies and sufficient funds. This should be the result of synergistic partnerships between families, communities, civil society, NGOs and the government. At the same time, the documents appeal to the right *to* ECEC as a provision. In the time-period between 2001 and 2010, most of the references to *rights* actually referred to the right *to* ECEC, followed by the rights *through* and *in* ECEC. Other rights mentioned were *human rights* (including rights of persons with disabilities), and *parental or family rights* - mostly in the sense that ECEC or preschool education should be available to all children as a child's right rather than as a parent or family right. UNESCO is not directly referring to staff rights in later documents.

Participation (voices, views) - In the 1990 and 2000 documents, the references to *participation*, e.g., the enabling and hearing of voices and views, mainly concerned *community participation* - which could mean possible joint actions with and between non-governmental organizations, participatory community assessments, household surveys, community dialogues, and other stakeholder voices. In the 2000 document, references were also made to *democratic citizenship* as a set of key skills for personal development, and as a basis for lifelong learning. This notion is built on the premise that participation (the voicing and hearing of views) builds self-confidence, citizenship and autonomy and *"education for democratic citizenship concerns not only the teaching of democratic norms but essentially the development of reflective and creative persons. It is based on the understanding that democracy is not fixed and immutable, but rather that it must be built and rebuilt every day in every society*" (Dakar Framework of Action, 2000, p. 65). Furthermore, it addresses *child participation*, *parental participation* and *staff participation*. After 2001, though in general there was less mentioning of participation issues, attention was particularly paid to *child participation* and *parental participation*, *democratic citizenship*, and *community participation*. While UNESCO recognizes teachers as catalysts of change, *staff participation* as the hearing of staff voices was least and hardly addressed.

Community role - Apart from a slight decrease in the number of references to the role of the community in the 2000 document (which was focussing most on *community engagement*- referring to community involvement and building on community strengths and resources), the *community role* increased in prominence within the vocabulary of UNESCO over the years. Regarding the references to the community role, there is ample mentioning of thematic elements such as *community-based services*, *community engagement, community as a group*, *community as a setting*, and slightly less to *community outreach*.

Empowerment or agency - The mentioning of issues regarding *empowerment or agency* in the documents was rather constant, but the content of the concept evolved over the years. In 1990, documents framed *community empowerment* as empowerment of individuals to respect and build upon the collective. In 2000, references also concerned the *empowerment of parents*, the *agency and empowerment of children* as learners, and specifically *whole child development* through dealing with children as learners in a holistic manner. Recognizing the child's holistic development is considered essential to support children's physical, social, psychological, affective, and cognitive development, of which the foundations are already present at birth. It was stressed that the focus should be on the child in the first place, and not on the social agent (service provider) or on the processes of care and education. The policy briefs published between 2001 and 2010 also concentrate mostly on *whole child development*, followed by *community empowerment* and *empowerment of parents*. The 2015 document, again, speaks of *agency and empowerment of children*.

Inclusion - In 1990, the concept of *inclusion* was addressed relatively frequently compared to other rights-based citizenship concepts and also compared to later years. This involved mainly *social inclusion*: education systems and services are to ensure the social inclusion of diverse groups and various stakeholders. In later documents, the concept of *inclusio*n was further refined and developed, and also addressed *inclusive systems*, *inclusive pedagogy* and *inclusive practices*. These refer to systems included within the national or sub-national planning frameworks in terms of supply and availability, and to interlinkages between ECEC and other relevant sectors such as primary education and health. Also, this implies ensuring that policies and legislation are supportive for all children, by formulating inclusive education policies and designing diversified curricula and education delivery systems in order to serve the population excluded for reasons of gender, language, culture, or individual differences.

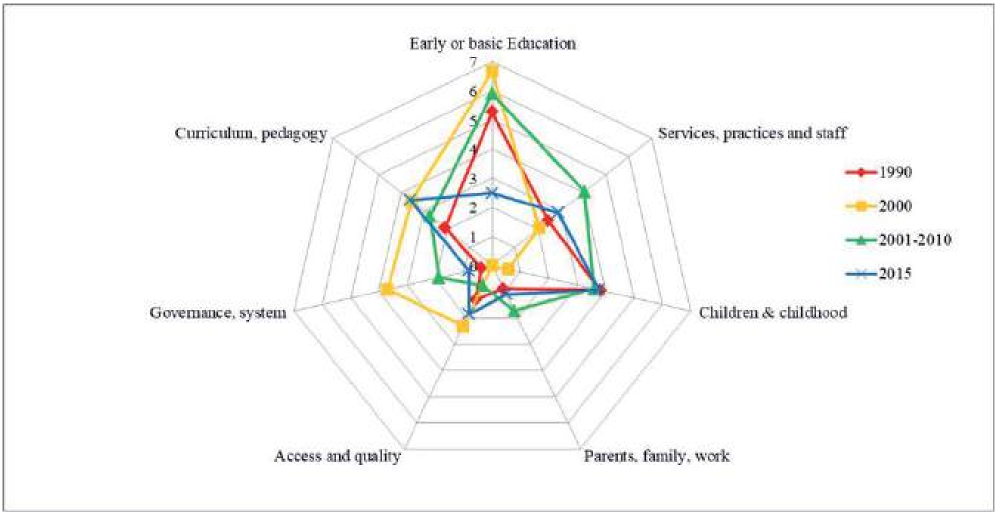
Diversity - In 1990, only few references were made to recognizing *diversity* - only once to *diversity among children as learners* (individual learning needs) and once to *diversity in children's backgrounds*, specifically mentioning migration. Attention for diversity increased over the years, enriching the concept. The 2000 document also paid attention to *diversity as part of pedagogy* (the knowledge, norms and values that are transferred, as specified in curricula) and *diversity of practices* (diversifying practices catering to the needs of a diverse group of children). Later, there was also attention for diversity in the needs of children - not only referring to individual learning needs but also to the need for protection against discrimination, the special needs of children with disabilities, the need for positive personal identities, and the need to be recognized as an active, competent agent with rights, ready to learn and develop holistically from birth.

General domains as context of the child rights and citizenship concepts

As a second step, to provide more general interpretative context to the above conceptual results and to enrich our discussion, we conducted a content word frequency count, including similar words and synonyms, of the UNESCO-documents over the years. Included were nouns and adjectives, and excluded were general and expected terms like UN, UNESCO, year, country, level (and function words, verbs and grammatical morphemes). Around 20 topics per document emerged, that could be interpreted and categorized into the themes of Early or basic education; Services, practices and staff; Children and childhood; Parents, family and/or work; Access, quality; Governance; and Curriculum, learning & preschool. This gives us a broad idea of the main themes addressed and emphasized in the documents. Figure 2.3 summarizes these results per theme.

Figure 2.3

Main themes addressed, based on weighted percentage of words most frequently used - UNESCO



Obviously, the radar visualizes the emphasis on early or basic education in the UNESCO-documents; for 2015 the radar suggests more emphasis on children, their development (through pedagogy and curricula) and social support services. Besides basic education, the 1990 document also focussed on children and childhoods, services and curricula. In 2000, the emphasis was more on the system-side: on providing access, and quality-related issues like results, outcomes and progress, governance and curricula - and less so on services and the people whom this all concerns (children, parents and staff). The policy briefs published between 2001 and 2010 concentrated more on the delivery-side and implementation of services related to early- and pre-primary education, addressing children and childhood – and parents, families or work-related issues to some extent. According to the radar, the 2015 document focussed less on governance issues and the system as main theme.

Overall, in the UNESCO documentation the concepts of child rights and citizenship were initially shaped in a context of system issues, with a shift later on to service delivery, and to curriculum and pedagogy.

OECD Documents

As explained earlier, for the analysis of the OECD discourse we explored the *Starting Strong*-series of ECEC reviews, published between 2001 and 2017 (an overview of the five selected documents can be found in the Appendix, Table A2.3). The documents *Starting Strong: Early Childhood education and Care* (OECD, 2001) and *Starting Strong II* (OECD, 2006) are general and rather complete overviews of ECEC in selected (2001) and most (2006) OECD countries. These two documents cover thematic reviews of ECEC policies from 1998-2006 and identified key elements and contextual factors of successful ECEC policies common to countries from different regions in the world; and they promoted data collection and analysis according to agreed definitions and procedures. The *Starting Strong III* (2012), *IV* (2015) and *Starting Strong 2017* publications were more technical and concentrated on enhancing ECEC quality. Hence, these five documents were selected to evaluate to what extent and how essential elements of child rights and citizenship discourses were reflected over the years from the OECD perspective.

Regarding the number of identified child rights and citizenship concepts, all assessed documents addressed the main concepts *rights*, *inclusion*, *diversity*, *role of the community*, *participation/voices/views*, and *empowerment/agency*. Table 2.3 provides a summary of the counted number of unique child rights and citizenship concepts ('types') coded in the documents, out of a total of 36 possible codes (see Table 2.1). These figures show that generally, there was ample mentioning of, and attention for, rights-based citizenship-concepts over the years. Also, these figures indicate that the elaboration of the rights-based citizenship discourse was slightly decreasing over the years, with an outlier down in the 2015 publication.

Table 2.3

Number of unique codes ('types') referring to child rights and citizenship concepts per publication / period (out of 36 possible codes and thematic (sub)elements)

Year of publication	No. of coded concepts
2001	36
2006	34
2012	31
2015	24
2017	31

To assess the implication of this trend, we analysed and compared the coded characteristics and the shifts in emphasis over the years. This is further elaborated below.

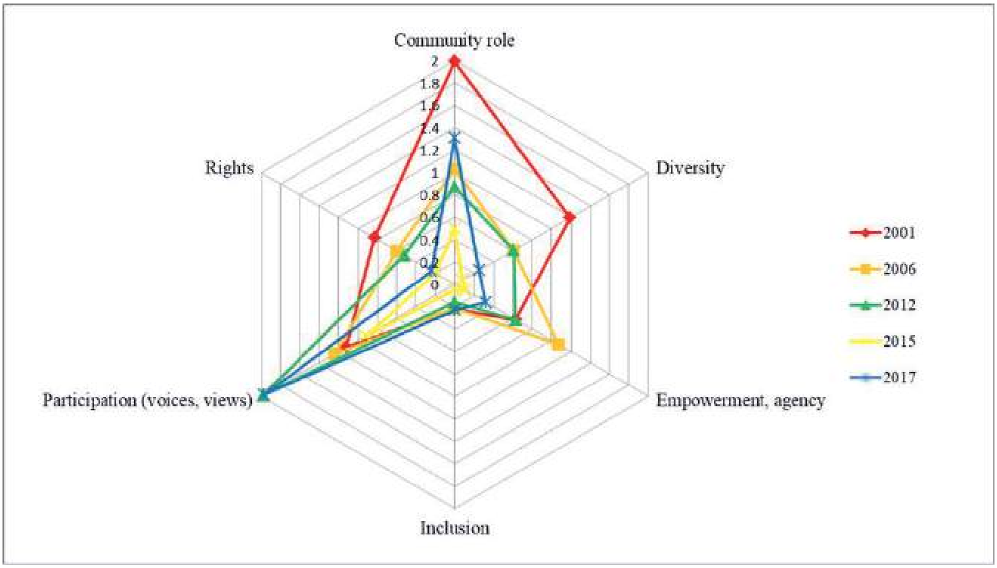
Equilibrium between rights-based citizenship concepts in assessed OECD-documents

In order to assess the extent to which related conceptual characteristics were reflected, we analysed the references as per their relative coverage in the main text. These results are visualized in Figure 2.4. below. The numerical results can be found in the Appendix, Table A2.4.2.

The radar (Figure 2.4) indicates that the 2001 and 2006 documents most prominently discussed the rights and citizenship concepts compared to the documents of the later years, apart from *inclusion*, which was overall the least addressed rights and citizenship concept in the assessed OECD documentation. Over the years, a shift was noticed from referring to *rights*, *empowerment/agency* and *diversity*, to attention for *participation (voices/views)*, with the exception of the 2015 document. Also, there was less emphasis on the *community role* after 2001, however with some back-up again in 2017. In the 2017 document, most of the references were assigned to *participation (voices/views)*, and to *community role*; a smaller share was assigned to *rights*, *inclusion*, *diversity* and *empowerment/agency*.

Figure 2.4

Coded references to rights and citizenship concepts (% of references as part of the main text) per document/year - OECD



In sum, the results indicated a shift and partial return in focus towards *participation/voices/views* and *community role* (the latter after a period of proportionally less emphasis after 2001) and away from other rights-related characteristics, such as rights, diversity, and empowerment as from 2012 in *Starting Strong* III (2012), IV (2015) and V (2017). This can also be observed when comparing the number of coded references (Figure 2.5). Over the years, of all main concepts, the issue of inclusion was given the least attention. These observations will be further reviewed below, when looking at the meaning of these main characteristics.

Evolving meaning of concepts in OECD-documents over the years

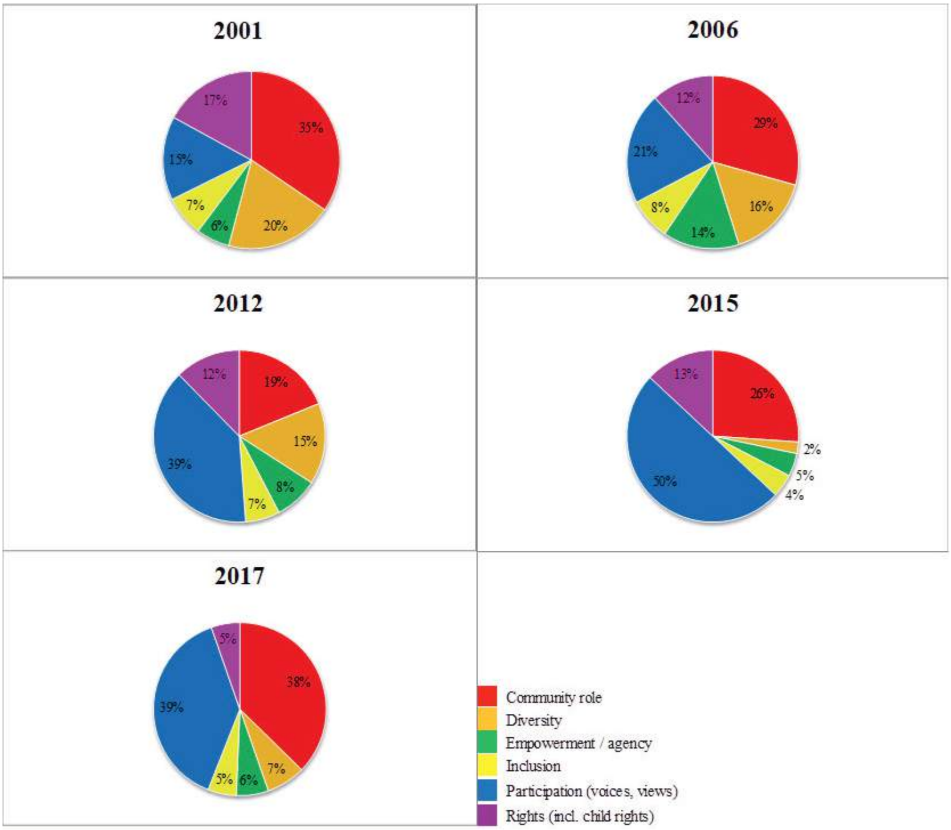
By looking at the concepts, characteristics and thematic elements, constituting the context of interpretation, several shifts in meaning appeared (see Figure 2.5; the numerical results can be found in the Appendix, Table A2.4.2).

Rights - Over the years, most references to *rights* concerned *child rights* (Table A4.1.). This was followed by *parental or family rights*, *staff rights* and *human rights* in general. In the 2006 and 2017 documents, no reference was found to *staff rights*. However, the main shift over the years lies within the child rights concept itself, and the frequency of references to child rights as furthered by increasing access *to*, supportive pedagogies *in*, and development *through* ECEC. The 2001 and 2006 documents referred to *child rights* in general, and to all specific elements of child rights *to, in*, and *through* ECEC. The latter element goes beyond the right to education and care, and acknowledges ECEC as an instrument to promote the rights of the young child to well-being and agency; it entails growth and development on the child's own premises. The first *Starting Strong* report (OECD, 2001) also made reference to seeing the child "*in the here and now*". However, as from the 2012 document, no reference was found to child rights *through* ECEC (considered in this dissertation as the most empowering element). This may be an indication of a narrowing scope of the use of the child rights concept. The 2012 and 2017 documents focus more on the rights *in* ECEC, the 2015 document speaks more of the rights *to* ECEC.

Participation (voices, views) - The share of references addressing participation in terms of voices and views in the documents– in comparison to the other assessed concepts – increased considerably over the years. In all documents, we observed ample references to *participation (voices and views)*, but looking at the sub-codes specifying this characteristic, we also observed a decreasing trend over the years with regards to participation for democratic citizenship, with noticeably no references to *democratic citizenship* at all in the 2015 document (Table A2.4.2.). At the same time, there was an increasing trend towards mentioning *child participation*, especially noticeable in the 2015 and 2017 documents. Another important sub-category is *parental participation*, recognized as equally important over the years as child participation, with a slight decrease in 2006. Other themes the OECD focuses on are *community participation*, fluctuating slightly in the frequency of references over the years and with no reference in 2015 (further analysed below regarding *community role*), and *staff participation*, with a small but steady share of references over the years.

Figure 2.5

Rights based citizenship concepts compared by number of coding references in documents per period/year (OECD)



Community role - Addressing the role of the community in the documents over the years - in comparison to the other assessed concepts – increased considerably. Taking a closer look at how this community role was defined over the years, we see fluctuations in focus. Sometimes, the *community* is referred to as a (geographical*) setting*, sometimes as a (cultural, ethnic, economic or migrant) *group*, sometimes as the institutional embedding of the service (i.e., *community-based services*), and sometimes as *community engagement* (involving the community) and *community outreach*. *Community outreach* was the least addressed in the documents, even not at all in 2012 and 2015. In the 2006 document, the community role was conceptualised in the broadest sense including all thematic elements (Table 2.1.). In the 2015 document the focus was narrowest and mostly directed on the *community as a setting* and on *community-based services* (and less on *community engagement*, which corresponds with no attention for *community participation* as mentioned above).

***Empowerment or agency* -** Language used regarding *empowerment or agency* was present in all assessed *Starting Strong* documents. However, the frequency fluctuated. This aspect was most frequently referred to in the 2006 document, followed by the 2012 document. After that, there was a strong decrease of language referring to empowerment. When addressing the concept of *empowerment* or *agency*, in the 2001 document, the OECD referred mostly to *agency and empowerment of children*, followed by *holistic child development*, *empowerment of staff* and *empowerment of parents*. The 2006 document referred mostly to *holistic child development*, followed by *agency, empowerment of children* and *empowerment of parents*. The 2012 document paid equal attention to *holistic child development* and *agency, empowerment of children*, and also mentioned *empowerment of parents*. In contrast, the 2015 document referred hardly to this concept, but the 2017 document picked up on this theme again, by emphasizing *empowerment, agency of children* over *holistic child development* and *empowerment of parents*.

***Inclusion* -** *Inclusion* was the least addressed of the identified aspects of child rights and citizenship. It was most often mentioned in 2001 and 2006, with a focus on *social inclusion*, *inclusive system* and *inclusive practices*, and to a lesser extent on *inclusive pedagogy*. In 2012, the focus was slightly more on *inclusive practices*, followed by attention for *inclusive systems*, and also, but to a lesser extent, on *inclusive pedagogy*. In 2015, *inclusion* was hardly mentioned (once as *social inclusion* and once as *inclusive pedagogy*). In 2017, *inclusion* was mentioned more frequently again, with most references in generic terms, and if specified, it included *inclusive practices*, followed twice by *social inclusion* and once with reference to *inclusive pedagogy*.

***Diversity* -** The frequency the concept of *diversity* was addressed in the documents, followed more or less the same pattern as *empowerment/agency* and *inclusion*: mostly, both in absolute and relative terms, this theme was addressed in the 2001 and 2006 documents, with a decrease in 2012, nearly absent in 2015, and a slight increase again in 2017 half-way up to the level of 2012. The scope of the concept was broadest in 2001, 2006 and 2012. *Diversity of practices* and *diversity in children's backgrounds* were the most referred to sub-themes, followed by *diversity of children's needs*, *diversity among children as learners*, and *diversity as part of pedagogy*. The 2015 document made one reference to *diversity in children's backgrounds*. The 2017 document also referred to *diversity in children's backgrounds*, and additionally to *diversity of children's needs*, to *diversity as part of pedagogy*, and to *diversity among children as learners*.

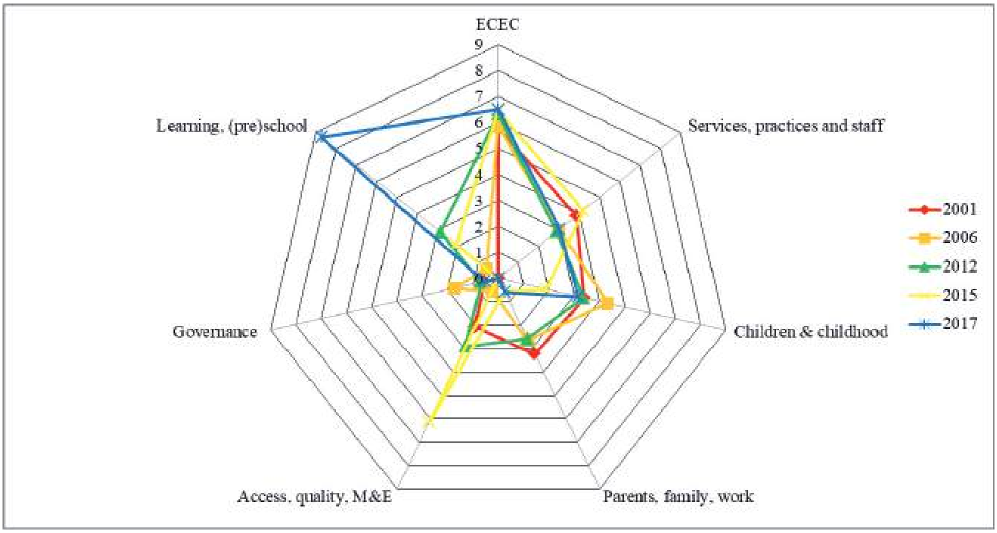
General domains as context of the child rights and citizenship concepts

As a second step, in support of our analysis and to provide more context to these understandings, we conducted a word frequency count of the 25 most frequently used content words including similar words and synonyms. Similar to the UNESCO-count, around 20 relevant words per document emerged. These could be interpreted and categorized per broad topic into ECEC; Services, practices and staff; Children and childhood; Parents, family, work; Access, quality, monitoring and evaluation;

Governance; and Learning, preschool. These broad categories were about the same as in the UNESCO documents, with minimal differences in accent (e.g., no references to basic education but consistently to ECEC; less focus on curricula/pedagogy, more on learning and preschool; more emphasis on monitoring and evaluation as quality aspects). This gave us a broad idea of the main themes addressed and emphasized. Figure 2.6 summarizes these results per theme as listed in Table 2.1 and visualizes the changing emphasis on main themes over the years.

Figure 2.6

Main themes addressed, based on weighted percentage of words (and related terminology) most frequently used - OECD



The radar confirms that besides the obvious theme of ECEC, the 2015 document focused on access, quality, monitoring and evaluation, and the 2017 document on learning and preschool (transitions to preschool). Indeed, in these years the *Starting Strong* publications were more technical reviews focussing on these domains. Besides that, all documents rather equally addressed services, practices and staff issues. Attention for children and childhoods fluctuated a bit more and was most prominently mentioned in the 2006 publication and least in 2015. Over the years, the category Parents, family and work life became less prominently addressed; the system and mechanisms of service delivery, however, were being discussed more often. Governance issues were most prominently discussed in 2006, least in 2015, but this concept was overall least emphasized.

Over the years, the system, and terminology like educators and schools were being discussed more often than the situation of children, parents and their families. In addition, democratic citizenship and empowerment/agency were central concepts in the 2006 document, however both concepts were no longer mentioned in 2015, when overall the focus of the document was on monitoring and measuring results.

In sum, core elements as discussed in this first part of the Results section regarding conceptualizations of a child rights and citizenship approach in ideological curricula of standard setting agencies as UN/UNESCO and OECD, are indeed *rights*, *inclusion*, *diversity*, the *role of the community*, *participation/voices/view*', and *empowerment/agency*. The discourse became increasingly refined especially until 2010. Overall, a mixed picture emerges regarding the extent to which child rights and democratic citizenship concepts are used. Over the years, most noticeable regarding UN/UNESCO were a decrease in attention to participation (voices, views) and fluctuations in emphasis on empowerment/agency. We also observed an increase in attention for the role of the community as the base for services. With regard to the OECD, initially the discourse was predominantly child-centred, with attention for parents, families and communities as important stakeholders as well. The 2006 document is infused with references to child rights and to democracy and democratic citizenship as benchmarks or norms for quality ECEC. Afterwards, this emphasis was left behind, and the discourse shifted to participation in terms of hearing voices and views. Further analysis of the meaning of this concept over the years, revealed that especially attention for parental participation increased. Emphasis on community participation, in terms of hearing community voices, however, strongly decreased.

Part 2: Policy implications for formal curricula

The second research question of this study is: *how are these elements of child rights and citizenship in ECEC (as identified in Part 1) currently framed at European and national policy levels for formal curricula?* To answer this question, we examined how concepts relating to child rights and citizenship pedagogy in ECEC have entered the policy discourses at the supranational European level and the Dutch national level.

Formal ECEC curriculum at European level: European quality framework and indicators

At the European level we analysed the *Proposal for key principles of a European Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* (in brief, EQF; Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood and Care under the auspices of the European Commission, 2014) and its elaboration in the document *Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care* (2018), which complemented the 2014 EQF with concrete verifiable indicators (Recommendations from ECEC experts, 2018). In the EQF, ECEC is referred to as "*any regulated arrangement that provides education and care for children from birth to compulsory primary school age, which may vary across the EU*". The EQF furthermore states that ECEC quality is a complex concept. Measures to achieve, improve and further develop quality are regarded as interdependent and should not be considered in isolation, and they are continuously evolving based on a growing evidence base (EQF, 2014). Also, it is recognized that quality is based on a child image, a view of how children should learn and grow up in society. Moreover, children's voices, parents and their participation are considered as underpinning principles.

To analyze the EU discourse on child rights and citizenship, as reflected in the EQF and its complement, we focused on the main texts and also specifically on the statements in the documents most relevant for the current purpose because they reflect a perspective of a rights-based citizenship framework. These are: Statement 2) *Provision that encourages participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity*; Statement 5) *A curriculum based on pedagogical goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way*; Statement 6) *A curriculum which requires staff to collaborate with children, colleagues and parents and to reflect on their own practice*; Statement 8) *Monitoring and evaluation which is in the best interest of the child*; and Statement 9) *Stakeholders in the ECEC system have a clear and shared understanding of their role and responsibilities, and know that they are expected to collaborate with partner organisations*. From the 22 indicators formulated for the 10 Statements, 10 indicators were identified as 'Core Indicators' in the document. From these 10, one indicator also seems to be 'core' from the perspective of child rights and democratic citizenship. This is indicator number 14) *The curriculum or other guiding documents requires staff to use feedback from children, parents and colleagues to systematically improve their practice*. Below, we will elaborate on the details of our analysis in accordance with the analytics of Part 1.

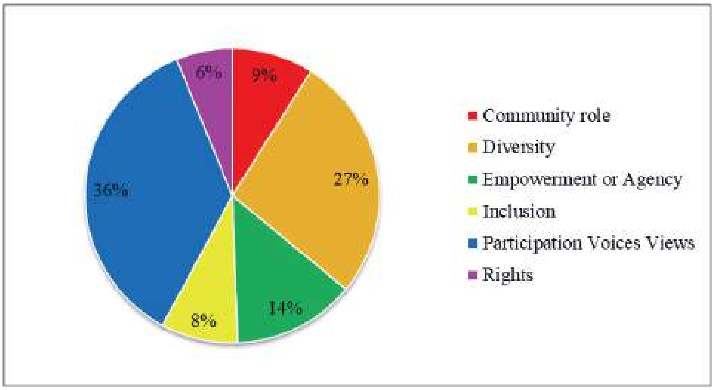
Presence and equilibrium between rights-based citizenship concepts in EC-documents

Both assessed EC documents include child rights and democratic citizenship principles addressing the concepts of *rights*, *inclusion*, *diversity*, *role of the community*, *participation (voices/views)*, and *empowerment/agency*. Out of the 36 unique codes through which we elaborated the child rights and citizenship framework (Table 2.1.), the EQF applied 28 and the complementing indicators document addressed 21. This suggests a less broadly elaborated vocabulary regarding child rights and citizenship. An overview of the breakdown in concepts, thematic elements and sub-elements can be found in the Annex in table A2.4.3. The combined results are visualized in Figure 2.7. The implications of this will be further elaborated below.

Both EU documents emphasize the value of children's rights, and also make mention of parental rights and staff rights; however, neither of the two documents refer much to human rights treaties as such. The EQF once refers to a curriculum based on a statement of principles and values that recognise the rights of the child as a competent human being (UNCRC, 1989) and respect for parents as the first educators of the child. The proposal with indicators, refers specifically to the right of access *to* ECEC within the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017). Principle number 11 covers that children have the right to affordable ECEC of good quality.

Figure 2.7

Rights based citizenship concepts compared by number of coding references in EC policy documents (2014, 2018)



Most emphasis in the documents is on *participation*, *voices, views* within a context of *diversity*, mainly meaning *diversity in children's backgrounds*. The *participation (voices and views)* of children is about equally often referred to as the participation (voices and views) of parents. *Staff participation* and *participation of community stakeholders* are also recognized. Engaging with voices and views of parents and staff in educational decision-making processes is considered important to support the co-construction of the curriculum, and therefore to create the conditions for sharing practices. The involvement of parents in decision-making processes regarding the curriculum is an explicit expression of the values of democracy and participation which stand at the core of the social function of ECEC services and are regarded as necessary conditions for inclusiveness (EQF, 2014). It is stated that the curriculum is to promote democratic values, and children are also referred to as *democratic citizens*. The need is recognized to involve them actively in decisions regarding daily practices.

Reflecting the diversity in the European context, the documents continuously refer to *diversity* in the national contexts and the need to take into account the diversity in the backgrounds of children and their families. There is also often specific reference to children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is most commonly addressed in the context of *social inclusion*. Also, the need for an *inclusive system* is mentioned, with arrangements to ensure all children are treated fairly and in accordance with their individual needs. Within a context that is set by the national, regional or local regulations, the family should be fully involved in all aspects of education and care for their child. Moreover, "*ECEC services should be designed in partnership with families and be based on trust and mutual respect*". Furthermore, *inclusive practices* and the need for an *inclusive pedagogy* are both addressed respectively in Statement 2 (Access) and Statement 6 (Curriculum) of the EQF.

Another rights-based citizenship characteristic pointed out in the documents, is the concept of *empowerment* or *agency*. This is mainly articulated by emphasizing the importance of a *whole child development* approach to ECEC. This approach is to be reflected in the image of the child, a curriculum based on pedagogical goals, values and approaches which enable children to reach their full potential in a holistic way (through a well-balanced combination of education and care that promote children's well-being, positive self-image, physical development, and their social and cognitive development), and is expected to be related to child outcomes. Regarding the *role of the community* and stakeholders, the EC documents mostly mention *community engagement* and *community outreach* within a context that can be set by national, regional or local regulations, by creating partnerships and opportunities for co-creation with families to improve the quality of services for children with their diverse needs and in respect to the diversity of contexts.

It is noticed that both the proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework document (2014) and the Complementing Indicators (2018) not often explicitly refer to human rights in general and children's rights in particular. However, the underpinning principles of the framework and the indicators are highly overlapping with the key principles of the UNCRC (1989). Moreover, by recognizing and defining the image and views of the child as empowering, as *being* and as *becoming,* underpinning each quality statement, the EC actually goes one step further. In addition to the competent image of the child, the EC also mentions the child as a European citizen making meaning of the world in co-creation, thus with agency, and emphasizes the importance of social, cultural and physical spaces with a range of possibilities for children to develop their present (EQF, 2014). Also striking is the ample attention for diversity, especially *diversity in children's backgrounds* as compared to lesser attention for matters of *inclusion*. The latter is mostly addressed in terms of *social inclusion* and attention for *inclusive systems,* and comparatively less in terms of *inclusive practices* or *inclusive pedagogy*.

The five dimensions of the ECEC Quality Framework and Indicators (Access, Workforce, Curriculum, Monitoring & evaluation, Governance & funding) largely overlap with the main general domains as identified in the UN (UNESCO) and OECD-documents. The EC emphasizes these five dimensions equally; each dimension is shaped by two corresponding action statements and for each statement a core indicator is formulated. Regarding a child rights and citizenship discourse, the importance of child and parent participation, and of empowerment and agency, in a context of diversity in backgrounds, is consistently emphasized. Less emphasis is on the role of the community, issues of inclusion, or factual references to human rights. The discourse, therefore, tends towards a rather individualistic 'child-centred' approach, especially when compared to the ideological standards according to UN/UNESCO and OECD that put more emphasis on the role of the community (but less on community participation, agency and empowerment).

Formal ECEC curriculum in The Netherlands: laws, decrees, the market and stakeholder involvement

After considering international standard setting around ECEC, child rights and citizenship, and after analysing how this has been elaborated at the European level – with only an advisory status, as ECEC and education in general are sovereign policy areas of the EU member states – we examined how rights and citizenship characteristics are reflected in legislation, the statutory quality framework and related decrees in the Netherlands, constituting formal ECEC pedagogy at the national level.

The Government of The Netherlands defines early childhood education and care as: *"On a commercial basis or otherwise than free of charge, caring for, educating and contributing to the development of children until the first day of the month on which secondary education for those children begins"* (Child Care Act, 2005), thus including in the Dutch context preschool care and education for 0 to 4-year-olds as well as afterschool care for primary school age. Specific laws and decrees concerning ECEC have been issued, however no formal curriculum framework or other leading steering document for ECEC was devised at the national level. A possible explanation is that the child care sector in the Netherlands is a liberalized market of private (for-profit and not-for-profit) providers where the demand of parents and the competition between organizations are regarded as the main mechanisms of guaranteeing quality. An additional explanation is the long-standing tradition in the Netherlands of freedom of education and freedom of choice of parents, guaranteed in the constitution, to have their children educated in accordance with their own pedagogical, cultural, religious or philosophical views (denederlandsegrondwet.nl). Regarding provisions for young children and their education and care, the final responsibility resides under two ministries. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is responsible for daycare for children aged 0-4 years old, and for afterschool care serving children aged 4-12. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences is responsible for the preschool system which offers education programmes for children aged 2-4 years of disadvantaged backgrounds with support needs regarding physical, language, cognitive, social-emotional and school readiness development. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for kindergarten education for 4 to 6-year-olds as part of the primary school system, however this is outside the scope of the current analysis.

The 2005 Child Care Act specifies the provisions under the law, and lays down rules with regard to allowances for child care costs and guaranteeing minimum quality conditions and standards. It does not refer to pedagogical, educational and developmental needs of children other than "*the owner of a child care centre organizes child care in such a way, provides the child care centre with such personnel and equipment in terms of quality and quantity, ensures such an allocation of responsibility, and implements such a pedagogical policy that this reasonably leads to responsible child care*". Only three Articles in the Child Care Act are considered of some relevance to child rights and citizenship principles (Article 1.55, Article 1.58 & Article 1.60). Therefore, the present analysis is descriptive only and not supported by extensive coding or a word frequency exercise.

Regarding *diversity in children's backgrounds*, Article 1.55 prescribes Dutch as the main language, but allows for the use of Frisian or other indigenous regional languages *"in live use"* [in levend gebruik] and "*another language may also be used as the main language, if the origin of the children makes this necessary in specific circumstances, in accordance with a code of conduct established by the holder of the child care centre*". Also, *parental participation* is embedded in the law under Articles 1.58 on the obligation of a centre to establish a parent committee, and Article 1.60 on the scope of the role of the parent committee, which is specified as 'advisory'. An important addition to the Child Care Acts, explaining what is meant by responsible child care, are the accompanying policy rules for quality child care, specifying four basic pedagogical aims that all child centres need to realize and stipulate in their respective locally developed 'pedagogical work plans' (Ministry of Social Welfare and Employment, 2004). These four aims concern physical and emotional security, stimulating children's personal competencies, stimulating children's social competencies, and socialization through the transfer of values and norms (Riksen-Walraven, 2000).

Over the years, the Child Care Act has been supplemented by additional legislation such as the *Developmental Opportunities through Quality and Education Act* (Wet OKE, 2010), the amending *Child Care and Preschool Harmonization Act* (2018) and the *Innovation and Quality of Child Care Act* (2018). The 2010 OKE Act regulated the inclusion of the formerly separate preschool system under the Child Care Act, with the aim of reducing financial barriers and increasing access for families and children from diverse backgrounds to preschool and daycare services, facilitating enrolment in quality language programmes financed by municipalities, and instituting an inspection framework for monitoring the quality of these preschool programmes (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2010). The Harmonization Act (2018) was issued to align quality, supervision and financing of child care and preschools more closely. This guideline for targeted preschool education [VVE] policy can be considered an overall emancipation and inclusion agenda, and it also provides more 'curriculum' in the form of standards for language-support programmes. However, from a child rights and citizenship perspective, we did not find in these successive Acts further leads or elaboration with regard to participation (voices, views of children, parents or communities), empowerment, agency, diversity or inclusion. The Innovation and Quality of Child Care Act (2018) is the latest legal reform focusing most directly on the quality of ECEC and afterschool care and includes further regulations to improve the quality and accessibility of child care. The policy rules for quality cover four domains: child development, safety and health, stability and pedagogical support, and professional development (Ministry of Social Welfare and Employment, 2020). The four basic pedagogical aims are re-affirmed and further elaborated towards a holistic view on child development (Besluit Kwaliteit Kinderopvang, 2017), in order to be finetuned locally in the respective pedagogical work plan of a child centre. The amending laws came about after an agreement between the government and sector organizations, trade unions and parents' associations (Akkoord Innovatie en Kwaliteit Kinderopvang, 2016). Regarding child rights and citizenship concepts reflected in this agreement, we found a few references that could be assigned to three thematic elements of the coding scheme (Table 2.1): *whole child development*, *parental participation*, and *addressing diversities among children as learners*. More specifically, this concerned further emphasizing of the role of the sector for child development and improving the system to monitor the individual development of children. With regard to parental participation, this concerned on the one hand the recognition of the role of parents in the development of their child, and on the other hand addressed the need to be involved in the development of the pedagogical policy of a child centre to work towards diversity among children as learners.

Regarding monitoring the implementation as per the law, the Government sets minimum standards regarding structural and process quality and an inspection system to be implemented at the local level. Structural and process quality are different dimensions of pedagogical quality, where process quality concerns the quality of the environment in the group and the interaction skills of the staff, and structural quality includes characteristics and criteria such as group size, professional-child ratio and the minimum professional training level of the teachers (Fukkink et al., 2017; Slot et al., 2018, 2019). The inspection system is mainly focussing on structural quality norms and discusses pedagogical quality with regards to social-emotional security and personal development along dimensions of an observational field instrument (GGD GHOR, 2014). Also, the Innovation and Quality of Child Care Act (2018) re-emphasized that the responsibility for elaborating the legal requirements in a more concrete and detailed pedagogical framework lies at the level of the provider of services, in consultation with parents. The outcome of these processes is currently thoroughly monitored at a national level through the National Child Care Quality Monitor for ECEC, non-familial home care and afterschool care (Landelijke Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang; www.monitorlkk.nl). The monitor applies a broad quality concept in terms of structural quality conditions, interaction process quality in the emotional and educational domain, child well-being and involvement, and the provision of a wide array of holistic development promoting activities. In addition, the monitor assesses parent and community involvement and outreach, inclusion of staff in organization’s decision making and staff professional development. A few indicators in the monitoring instruments relate explicitly to child rights and democratic citizenship (see also Chapter 3). However, the child care monitor does not represent an official statutory framework but is mainly informed by the research community.

We found minimal underpinning support for a child rights and citizenship pedagogy in the Child Care Act (2005), more specifically in three of the basic pedagogical objectives - related to personal, social and especially moral development and the furthering of the norms and values (of the culture) of society - that are stipulated in there. These four basic goals reflect a strong individualistic angle, in combination with a predominant protection approach. Although part of the basic aims are as such compatible with an individualistic interpretation of child rights and citizenship (e.g., developing personal and social competencies to the full potential), the Dutch model is not compatible with the observed shifts in international standard setting, in particular the shift towards a community (more collectivistic) framing of child rights and the operationalization in terms of participation and inclusiveness in the context of diversity.

According to the Dutch legislation, responsible ECEC means that, in a safe and healthy environment, physical and emotional safety is offered to children; the development of personal and social competences of children is supported; and the socialization of children is supported by the transfer of values and norms. This is a passive use of discourse; framing young children as passive recipients of care and education, and not as active agents in the processes towards their own development (UNCRC, 1989). The risk of framing the discourse in this way is that it may instil a system oriented towards protection and reactiveness, and an image of the child as 'incompetent' instead of using child rights and citizenship principles in ECEC, such as child participation and emphasizing the role of the community, to empower children and to support them in their development to reach their full potential.

Discussion

In this chapter, we first analyzed how in international standard setting documents core principles of child rights and democratic citizenship are operationally defined and applied to the context of ECEC and constitute an *ideological curriculum* for ECEC. We then analyzed to what extent, and how, this ideological curriculum is reflected in a supranational quality framework for ECEC (EU) and in a national (the Netherlands) statutory framework for ECEC and afterschool care, constituting *formal curricula*.

Child rights and democratic citizenship in 'ideological' standard setting curricula

UNESCO's global mission, central education goals and ECEC agenda are rights-based and seek to ensure the full enjoyment of the right *to* (early) education as fundamental to achieving sustainable development. It is assumed that education in itself is empowering and one of the most powerful tools by which economically and socially marginalized children and adults can lift themselves out of poverty and are enabled to participate fully in society. We referred to this as child rights instantiated *through* education. UNESCO advocates citizenship as a thematic issue to be addressed by education; however, it does not link the theme of citizenship to ECEC as such. SDG 4, target 4.2 regarding ECEC, implies ECEC serves children so that they are ready for primary education. For disadvantaged children, UNESCO recognizes that ECEC plays an important role in compensating for the disadvantages in the family. Combating early emerging educational inequalities can promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and reduce the costs for later remedial programmes (Marope & Kaga, 2015). This touches upon the discussion around *being* and *becoming* (Qvortrup, 1991), and the UN/UNESCO seems to combine both approaches in various documents.

Over the years, most noticeable were a decrease in attention to participation (voices, views) and fluctuations in emphasis on empowerment/agency. We also observed an increase in attention for the role of the community as the base for services. ECEC from a child rights perspective was increasingly framed as a community issue rather than an individual issue. The OECD's approach, though taking a global perspective, was more directed towards economically developed countries with a focus on its member countries (OECD, 2001, 2006). The earlier documents were general and rather complete overviews of ECEC in selected (2001) and most (2006) OECD countries. From 2012 onwards discussions concentrated especially on ECEC systems and on optimizing quality and efficiency. The 2006 document was infused with child rights references and references to democracy and democratic citizenship as benchmark or norm for quality ECEC. However, this approach seemed to have been left behind in later publications. Participation in terms of voices and views was often discussed in *Starting Strong* I (2001) and most strongly emphasised in III (2012), with special attention for parental participation (emphasis on community voices, however, strongly decreased). A possible explanation is, that 'participation' may have been used as a practical interpretation of the concept of rights-based citizenship. Moreover, the more recent emphasis on 'participation' (of children, of parents, of communities) was found to be less embedded in other child-rights aspects such as respect for diversity, inclusion of all, children's agency and furthering democratic citizenship. However, both UNESCO and OECD recognize the principles of a holistic approach to child development with an empowering multiplicity of images of children and their communities.

Overall and over the years, UNESCO and OECD as the selected international standard setting bodies, provided a mixed picture regarding the ways in which child rights and democratic citizenship concepts are used and elaborated. In the first two decades after the UNCRC came into force, discourse developed rapidly. However, over the last decade, attention for child rights and related concepts seemed to have decreased rather than increased. Overall, domains shifted from more service and target group oriented towards governance and system related issues (OECD), and from individualistic or child-centred to a more pronounced community perspective (UNESCO). Emphasis on participation increased, but this concept was increasingly less embedded in a context of empowering rights and citizenship concepts. This combination involves some risks, as we discussed in Chapter 1: with a discourse of stressing participation and stimulating the transfer of responsibilities towards local communities, parents and children, without ensuring ample attention of other rights concepts (e.g., empowerment, agency, inclusion and diversity), and in combination with an increasing emphasis on measuring results and efficiency, there is a risk of using 'participation' merely as a form of tokenism (Hart, 1997; Lansdown, 2005).

Child rights and democratic citizenship in 'formal curricula'

OECD and UNESCO are policy influencing organizations by setting standards and monitoring international treaties and conventions. Therefore, they influence supranational and national policy agendas. At the supranational EU level, the proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework document (2014) and the Complementing Indicators (2018) did not often explicitly refer to particular human rights or child rights. However, the underpinning principles of the framework and indicators were found to be highly overlapping with the key principles of the UNCRC (1989). Moreover, by defining an empowering image of the child and emphasizing this underpinned each quality statement, the EC actually went one step further. The EC strongly emphasizes participation of children, families, parents, communities and staff within the context of diversity and social inclusion. Diversity and inclusion are more emphasized as compared to UNESCO and the OECD. The EU/EQF applies a language of empowerment and agency of all stakeholders, and emphasizes whole child development, while equally paying attention to other rights and citizenship concepts in a balanced way. As an advice for establishing formal curricula in the EU member states, the EU discourse is respecting rights *to, in* and *through* ECEC, and acknowledges the democratic citizenship of children, their parents and their communities, while the operationalization of child rights mainly takes the form of equity, community and participation. In this regard, the EU/EQF is continuing and further elaborating on the trend uncovered in the UN and OECD documents: the changing conception of child rights and democratic citizenship from an individualistic to a community and systems perspective.

The present findings on the EU discourse are only partly in line with the results of a recent review of ECEC curricula in 11 European countries by Sylva and colleagues (2015), under the collaborative CARE project.[10] In the analysed European ECEC curricula, child rights are rarely explicitly mentioned. However, there are all kinds of concrete operationalizations and there is a shared image of the child as a competent and unique human being (Sylva et al., 2015). Overall, the review recognizes that especially the articles of the UNCRC regarding participation rights, while respecting the uniqueness of each individual child, are considered of particular relevance for ECEC (OECD, 2006; Sylva et al., 2015). This reflects the European tradition of social pedagogy. However, so far, the studied European curricula mainly represent an individualistic perspective with an emphasis on the competences and experiences of the individual child. At national levels, there is relatively little elaboration of how ECEC is to address issues regarding cultural diversity, multilingualism, participation, and the role of the community. In this sense, the EU/EQF also goes beyond these national curricula.

The EU/EQF, as it is still relatively new, is not fully endorsed or implemented at the level of national member states within the EU, although key elements of a child rights approach are already present in national curricula in several countries, as was shown by Sylva et al. (2015). In The Netherlands, a formal pedagogy or curriculum framework at the national level is so far not constituted. Four basic pedagogical aims are generally accepted: child daycare (and afterschool care) is to further emotional safety, personal, social and moral development (Riksen-Walraven, 2000), and these basic but globally defined aims are to be concretized in the pedagogical work plans at the centre-level (Commissie Kwaliteit, 2014). The four basic aims reflect a strong individualistic angle, in combination with a predominant protection approach and a view of the child as *becoming* a future citizen rather than *being* a citizen already. Although part of the basic aims are as such compatible with an individualistic interpretation of child rights and citizenship (e.g., the right to develop to the full potential), the Dutch model is not compatible with the observed shifts in international standard setting, in particular the shift towards a community related, more collectivistic framing of child rights and the operationalization in terms of participation and inclusiveness in the context of diversity, as is especially promoted by the EU/EQF. In that sense, ECEC in The Netherlands is at the level of legislation and formal pedagogy still not recognized as an instrument for furthering child rights, equity and inclusion in society. For this, at least two essential characteristics are missing. First of all, there is no clear image of the child that recognizes children as competent beings full of potential. Second, there is no indication on how children’s views are to be respected or included. Although it is assumed that children’s interests are best guaranteed by sufficiently qualified staff, by appointing a mentor for each child, by involving the children’s parents as their representatives, and by using a child monitoring system (IKK Act, 2018), these are indirect provisions fitting an image of the child as passive recipient of care and education.

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[10] CARE: Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC (2014-2016), including England, Estonia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Italy and Greece; https://ecec-care.org/

The current dominant framing, reinforced by the associated inspection regime, promotes a system rather oriented towards protection and reactiveness instead of being a tool to also empower children and to support them as agents in their own development. It merely instils an individualistic (vs. community) orientation. Issues around cultural and religious diversity and how to deal with them in an inclusive way, are avoided. However, despite formal legislation lagging behind, the sector itself considers this increasingly differently (Commissie Kwaliteit, 2014; Leseman et al., 2020; Van Rozendaal & Vaes, 2015; SER, 2016), and the absence of a national curriculum also gives individual child care providers the opportunity and space to shape child rights and democratic citizenship in their pedagogical work plans as they see fit (for examples of good practice, see Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation). This, however, may lead to differences between child daycare, preschool and afterschool care centres, and thus to inequality in the experiences of children (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation).

Limitations and strengths

The methodology of document analysis was used to explain the main discourse and conceptual fluctuations therein over the years, and appeared to be useful for understanding the composition and exact (shifts in) meaning of concepts. However, we are aware this methodology may have some weaknesses. The conceptualization through document analysis could be biased by the selection of publications. The assumption that publications reflect the discourse of specific organizations in a specific timeframe can be contested. In addition, the actual aim of the publications is of influence, for example whether they concern a general review, advice or advocacy purpose. Despite the fact that the documents were confirmed to be a reflection of the standards for ECEC-policy in their time by relevant representatives, particularly the selected UNESCO documents had various aims and target groups. These limitations were considered acceptable. According to Krippendorf (2011), texts always have meanings relative to particular contexts, discourses, or purposes. Therefore, we attempted to systematically clarify the context of interpretation of the selected documents to better understand the meaning of the key concepts. The present document analysis supported the identification of a child-rights and citizenship discourse regarding ECEC, and revealed the refinement of the meaning of concepts and shifts in meaning and emphasis over time. The analysis of especially the EU documents also indicated that the coding framework would have been stronger if a more elaborate concept of the multiplicity of child(hood) images was added.

Concluding remarks

Attention for child rights has increased rapidly as from the 1990s, and for democratic citizenship since the 2000s, resulting in an elaborate discourse and increased understanding of these and related concepts. Key aspects of a child rights- and citizenship-based pedagogy identified for standard setting are: inclusion and diversity, an explicit role for the community, referring to rights (*to, in*, and *through* a provision), participation (voices, views) of children and of parents, and a language of empowerment and agency. Over time, the international discourse has shifted from a more service and target group-oriented interpretation of child rights and democratic citizenship towards governance and system related issues, and from an individualistic to a more pronounced community perspective in the context of increasing diversity and the concomitant challenges of equity and inclusion. Particularly the European Union's EQF presents a strongly emancipatory pedagogical quality framework in this regard that contributes to the rights and citizenship of children *in* ECEC and could be part of a governance strategy *through* which children and their families and communities are empowered and can access their rights. An important principle of a rights and citizenship-based pedagogy identified for formal curricula is the empowering image of the competent child who is a valuable member of its community.

In the Netherlands, while the right *to* a universally accessible, basic child care and afterschool care service gains increasing support in the public debate, the (participation) rights of children *in* child care and education are currently not guaranteed or substantiated in national regulations. The Dutch system is still predominantly geared towards protection without balancing participation rights, and strongly individualistic without a community perspective. With regards to the formal curriculum, ECEC in The Netherlands can therefore not (yet) be regarded as a service *through* which child rights can be attained.

3

Chapter 3

Rights-based democratic citizenship pedagogy in Dutch centre-based child care

Author contributions: C.E., P.L. & M.B. designed the study on the basis of the data collected for the National Child Care Quality Monitor 2017-2019 (Slot et al., 2018, 2019). C.E. performed the data analysis and wrote the chapter. P.L. & M.B. guided the study and commented on the various versions of Chapter 3.

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we discussed the theoretical framework of a rights-based citizenship approach to ECEC and afterschool care, and how this perspective can be broken down into several characteristics, broadly categorized in the thematic elements of child rights, participation, inclusion and embracing diversity as part of bonding and bridging social capital, empowerment and agency, and the role of the community. These elements were useful to assess the ideological elaboration in international standards for child rights and democratic citizenship in ECEC, and to indicate its reflection in formal curricula as authorized at respectively the European supranational and Dutch national level. This contributed to our understanding of what a rights-based citizenship perspective entails - at least on paper. In this chapter, we continue our research by looking at the practices of Dutch centre-based early childhood and afterschool child care, based on a relatively large nationally representative sample accumulated in the context of the National Child Care Quality Monitor [Landelijke Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang, LKK; Slot et al., 2018, 2019]. We will first assess the implemented curriculum regarding child rights and citizenship education as perceived by managers and teachers, followed by an assessment of how elements of a child-rights and citizenship pedagogy are related to the experiences of children in Dutch child centres.

In ECEC and afterschool care practices in the Netherlands (not including kindergarten education, which is part of the primary education system), explicit attention for child rights or democratic citizenship is not evident. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, child rights and democratic citizenship are not explicitly addressed in the statutory quality framework of Dutch ECEC and afterschool care. One of the reasons could be that the Dutch child daycare system was originally designed as a labour market instrument enabling women to enter the workforce. In Chapter 2, we argued how framing the discourse on child daycare in this economic way may instil a system predominantly based on a protection view, instead of being a tool to empower children as well and thus support them pro-actively in their development to reach their full potential. However, some starting points could be found in three of the four basic pedagogical aims as laid down in the Child Care Act, being the development of social skills, the development of personal competencies and the transfer of the norms and values, or ‘culture’, of the society (Riksen-Walraven, 2000; Child Care Act, 2005; Slot et al., 2018). These basic pedagogical aims are as such compatible with a child rights and democratic citizenship approach, but do not provide strong guidance to the field of practice. For example, the pedagogical aim of transfer of ‘culture’ does not specify which norms and values this may encompass, and in the Dutch system it is left to the child care service providers to elaborate this in the obligatory pedagogical work plans, describing the policies and practices of the child care organizations. Therefore, the question is how, and to what extent the elaboration of the basic pedagogical aims in organizational and pedagogical policies and professional practices reflect the perspective of child rights and democratic citizenship.

Untill recently, the pedagogical targets for child care tended to focus on - and progress was typically measured by - the quality of the interaction skills of the professional caregiver towards the child (NCKO, 2012). Also in the quality monitoring by the municipal Public Health Authorities compliance with the structural quality regulations (e.g., the staff-to-children ratio) and the basic pedagogical aim of providing a physically and emotionally secure care environment predominate (GGD GHOR, 2014). Limited attention, if any, was, and still is, paid to the fourth basic pedagogical aim, the transfer of norms and values in relation to democratic citizenship. In this regard, we concluded in Chapter 2, the Dutch formal pedagogy for ECEC and afterschool care is not in agreement with international standards, where rights-based citizenship values in the context of increasingly diverse communities have gained prominence over the past decades. Interestingly, the formal pedagogy of Dutch ECEC and afterschool care is also not aligned with developments in Dutch primary education, starting at age 4, where citizenship education has been introduced as obligatory part of the curriculum since 2006 (see also Chapter 5).

Nonetheless, in the field of practice in Dutch ECEC and afterschool care, as in Dutch primary and secondary education, awareness is increasing that the best preparation for life in a democracy is the actual experience of democracy in the children's group in a child care centre, preschool or school (De Winter, 2004, 2011: Pauw, 2013, 2017b; Ten Dam et al., 2010; Van Keulen, 2012). In these groups, children learn democratic values, such as sharing, helping each other, working together, and resolving conflicts together. This is considered *citizenship-as-practice,* as discussed in Chapter 1, which includes four main social tasks for children: acting democratically, acting responsibly, dealing with conflicts, and handling diversities (Ten Dam et al., 2010). Children also learn to deal with diversities, taking each other into account and behave well in a diverse group (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2008). In early childhood, the foundations are being laid for the ability to self-regulate behaviour and for basic social and emotional skills such as empathy (cf. Findlay et al., 2006; Sylva, et al., 2010; Riksen-Walraven, 2002; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). Therefore, in the context of the decentralized responsibility of child care providers to elaborate the basic pedagogical aims into concrete pedagogical work plans, the question arises to what extent this increasing awareness of the potential contribution to citizenship has gained ground in the actual policies and practices in Dutch ECEC and afterschool care.

Current study

In light of the above, the primary purpose of the study reported in this chapter was to describe the state of the art of Dutch centre-based child care, preschool and afterschool care regarding rights-based democratic citizenship, and to determine whether, to what extent and in what forms children's rights and democratic citizenship elements influence the practice of Dutch child care. The second goal was to determine whether the degree of implementation of these elements is related to outcomes at the level of the child. Using data from the sector-wide National Child Care Quality Monitor[11] (LKK), with measurements in representative samples of child centres for respectively daycare, preschool and afterschool care in the years 2017, 2018 and 2019, the study aimed to collect evidence on how policy and practice at the centre level of Dutch child care is supporting young children's citizenship and participation. The study is based on the proposition that implementing child rights and democratic citizenship principles, such as a focus on child participation, can lead to a better understanding of children's competence, vulnerability and agency, and promote better decision making regarding the balance between protection and participation of children in daily practices (Woodhead, 2006; Woodhead & Moss, 2007; Kangas et al., 2016). As a first step, we identified variables in the LKK data set that represent possibly effective elements of child-rights based democratic citizenship. Next, based on the selected variables, we explored to what extent elements of rights-based democratic citizenship are reflected in the vision and policies, and implemented in pedagogical procedures and professional practices of the participating child care organizations. Finally, we examined how procedures and practices reflecting implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles are related to children's well-being and involvement, and to the quality of experienced peer interactions. As such, this study investigates to what extent children's agency is supported in situations where democratic citizenship is, or could be, practiced in terms of the theoretical conceptualizations demarcated in Chapter 1 and elaborated in Chapter 2.

Research questions

The present study addressed the following research questions:

1) Regarding the implemented curriculum (based on reports by managers and teachers): *To what extent are essential elements of a rights-based democratic citizenship approach reflected in the vision and organizational policy and implemented in the daily practices of Dutch child care centres providing day care and preschool programs for 0- to 4-year-olds and afterschool care to 4- to 12-year-olds?*
2) Regarding the experienced curriculum (based on observations of children): *To what extent are child rights and democratic citizenship indicators in the observed and experienced curriculum in Dutch child care related to children's well-being, involvement and peer-to-peer social interaction?*

Research context

The current study was set in a context in which child rights and democratic citizenship are not explicitly addressed in the formal statutory quality frameworks. Implementation of the specific requirements of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach depends on individual organizations and their choices. Overall, the LKK study has shown that Dutch centre-based child care is currently of relatively good quality in terms of the observed interaction processes, the observed environment, the provided program of activities, and structural characteristics such as group size and children-to-staff ratio, also in an international comparative perspective (Slot et al., 2019). This conclusion is based on quality assessments with internationally widely used measurement instruments, such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS, with versions for infant, toddler and school-aged child care), the Environmental Rating Scales for infants, toddlers and children (ITERS/ECERS) and the Caregiver Interaction Profile (CIP). The pedagogical climate can be characterized as child-centred and affective-inclusive in all types of child care involved in the current study. Also, a relatively strong orientation towards the stimulation of exploratory play, social play, and language and literacy can be observed. Stimulating broader development through supply of creative and musical activities, emerging mathematics, science and technology, and citizenship education, however, is generally more limited (NCKO, 2012; Slot et al., 2018, 2019). At the level of the child, the average well-being of children is considered moderate to high in all types of Dutch child care and the average level of involvement of children is qualified as moderate.

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[11] LKK is the successor of the NCKO quality monitor. A consortium of Utrecht University and Sardes B.V. is commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs to conduct annual quality measures in child daycare, preschool, after-school care and host family care from 2017-2025. The host family type of provision is not included in the current study.

Methodology

Participants

The data used for our analyses were obtained through interviews and online surveys held among managers and pedagogical professionals, conveniently referred to as teachers, and through observations by research assistants in day care, preschool and afterschool care groups. Using the national register of licensed child care providers[12], a stratified sampling method was applied based on the criteria type of care, region of the country, degree of urbanization and size of the organization (Slot et al., 2019). Within the cells of the stratified sampling model, centres were randomly selected. To deal with non-response, shadow samples were drawn following the same random-stratified sampling model to reach the desired numbers. Response rates over the three years varied between 33% (day care for 0-4 year olds) and 52% (preschool programs for 2-4 year olds) to 37% (afterschool care for 4-12 year olds) (Slot et al. 2019). Analysis of the reasons for non-response revealed no systematic bias. In a separate analysis, the LKK sample was compared to national data pertaining to all child care centres provided by the municipal Public Health Authorities who are in charge of monitoring observance of the statutory quality regulations. The Health Authorities apply a graded warning system if centres violate one or more regulations during one or several years. The distribution of the different levels of warnings issued to the centres in the LKK sample was highly similar to the national data and did not reveal a systematic bias either (Slot, 2021, personal communication). Therefore, the realized sample used for this study is considered to be nationally representative. The total sample, pooled over the years 2017 to 2019, consists of N = 93 child day care centres, N = 99 pre-primary education centres, and N = 96 afterschool care centres, in total N = 288, which is a sample of sufficient size to make reliable and accurate statements about the quality of child care in the Netherlands (Slot et al., 2019).

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[12] Landelijk Register Kinderopvang (LRK)

In each of these 288 centres, one care group was randomly chosen for observations. In daycare, observed groups included both ‘horizontal’ groups of children of about the same age, with some groups caring for babies and young toddlers from 0-2 years of age and other groups for toddlers and preschoolers from 2-4 years, as well as ‘vertical’ groups with a mixed child-population consisting of babies, toddlers and preschoolers from 0-4 years. Of the same centres, 415 pedagogical professionals working with the selected care groups participated in personal interviews using a structured questionnaire or filled-out this questionnaire in an online version (on average 1.44 teacher per centre), of which 151 identified their centre as mainly providing daycare, 143 as mainly providing preschool education and care, and 121 as mainly providing afterschool care. Finally, a total of 256 managers (for 88.9% of all sampled centres), mostly location managers, participated in the online managers’ survey, of which 87 identified their location as daycare, 90 as preschool, and 79 as afterschool care. Not all of the managers were full-time present at the respective locations – some also managed other locations. Location managers of small organizations were often the owner of the respective child care organization.

The LKK study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Science of Utrecht University (FETC17-068). Participating managers and teachers gave active informed consent. Parents gave active informed consent for the classroom observations. The present study made use of pseudo-anonymized data only.

Measurements and procedures

LKK was not specifically designed for the purpose of examining the implementation of a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective. Therefore, we started with a review of the variables included in the LKK measurements that could be regarded as indicators of the constructs of child rights and democratic citizenship, child agency and child participation, inclusion and diversity. In the paragraphs below, we describe the selected variables indicating the implementation of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach in the organization’s mission and policy (according to the managers) and pedagogical procedures and practices (according to the teachers). Figure A3.1. (Appendix) summarizes the framing of the selected variables under the concepts as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Most variables were found to apply to all forms of care. However, some variables were identified separately for either daycare and preschool, or for afterschool care only. Note that questionnaire items and the variables based on these items were occasionally highly similar or even the same for managers and teachers, yet represented different levels of implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles: official policy and formal procedures vs. reported actual procedures and practices.

Child Rights and Democratic Citizenship as represented in vision, mission and policy of the child care organization (based on managers' reports)

Child image indicates whether or not an organization refers to child rights or democratic citizenship in its official vision, pedagogical policy and curriculum, and was considered a primary policy indicator at the level of the organization. This indicator was assessed by asking managers to rate the extent to which their organization in its pedagogical vision refers to child rights on a 4-point scale (ranging from 1 'not', 2 'more or less', 3 'yes', and 4 'I don't know'). Also, managers were asked if children in the organization's vision are referred to as democratic citizens co-creating their own development on a similar 4-point scale.

For the present purpose, we dichotomized the scores for reflecting child rights and for democratic citizenship in vision or policy, and gave organizations that explicitly refer to child rights or citizenship a 1-score. Organizations that did 'not' or only 'more or less' refer, or if managers did not know if their organizations' policy refers to child rights or citizenship, received a 0-score - as for the purpose of this study this reflects an insufficient or unclear commitment to a pedagogy based on children as rights-holders and empowered citizens. In addition, the two items were also combined in a single dichotomous indicator representing whether the centre's official vision referred specifically to both child rights *and* democratic citizenship.

Including children's voices

Child participation concerns the extent to which the opinions and wishes of children are taken into account and child voices are heard. This construct was assessed by asking managers to rate the applicability of six statements about child participation. The included items were: 1) *'We have regular (annual) special conversations with the children and ask them what they like or do not like, and what ideas they have for their child centre'*; 2) *'We regularly conduct a kind of survey among the children, where they can share their experiences, wishes and ideas'*; 3) *'During regular conversations with the parents, we ask how their children experience the child centre and what they would like'*; 4) *'We regularly conduct a kind of survey among the parents, and ask at the same time how their children experience the centre'*; 5) *'We just listen very well to the children, and observe daily what they like and what they do not like, and take that into account*; and 6) *'If children come up with an idea for an activity, we adjust our plans'*. These six items were rated on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 'not applicable at all' to 5 'fully applicable'; Cronbach's α = .727). In addition, the overall concept of child participation as part of the organization's official policy was split into two subscales: *Formal child participation*, referring to the use of standardized procedures for child participation and inclusion of children's voices (items 1-4; α = .474), and *Informal child participation,* concerning an approach to child participation which is solely based on teachers informally interpreting on a regular basis what matters to children (items 5-6; α = .796).

Supporting children's agency

Open door policy represents acknowledgement of children's agency in the organization's policy and was assessed by asking managers to indicate the applicability of two statements. The first statement concerned '*The doors of group spaces in the centre are open during part of the day (e.g., two hours or so) and children can freely choose to play in another group'*; and the second statement was *'Children can choose by themselves if they want to go to another group, but we do keep track of where they are and it is clear which professional is responsible'*. Managers' answers were coded on 5-point scales (ranging from 1 'not applicable at all' to 5 'fully applicable'; Cronbach's α = .791).

Child influence reflects managers' perception of the influence of children on the centres' pedagogical policy and was assessed with a single item: '*According to your opinion, how much influence do children have on pedagogical policy of this location (quality of interaction, range of activities, methods of working etc.)'*. Managers rated their opinion on a scale of 1-5, ranging from 1 'no influence at all' to 5 'very much influence'.

Child Rights and Democratic Citizenship as represented in pedagogical procedures and practices (based on teachers' reports)

Including children's voices

Child participation reflects similarly as in the survey among managers the extent to which the opinions and wishes of children are taken into account and child voices are heard but now as implemented according to the teachers, and was assessed by asking teachers to rate the applicability of the same six statements regarding child participation on similar 5-point scales (Cronbach's α = .756). Furthermore, the concept of child participation was similarly subdivided into two subscales: *Formal child participation*, representing the implementation of standardized procedures for child participation and taking stock of children's voices (items 1-4; Cronbach's α = .757); and *Informal child participation,* indicating child participation where teachers interpret daily or occasionally what matters to children (items 5-6; α = .646). Finally, to be able to be even more specific, formal child participation was further subdivided in: *Direct formal child participation*, measuring the direct involvement and voices of children, either through special conversations or a kind of survey (items 1-2; α = .848), and: *Indirect formal child participation*, assessing inclusion of children's voices indirectly via parents or guardians (items 3-4; α = .633).

Supporting children's agency

Open door policy reflects similarly as in the survey for managers acknowledgement of children's agency but now as implemented in practice according to the teachers. Two items of the original construct were used to assess more specifically the agency a child can exercise through an 'open door policy' by planning its own activities or negotiating its space. The two items stated '*The doors of the classroom are open for part of the day and children can freely choose to play in another group*' and '*Children choose for themselves whether they want to go to another group, but we do keep track of* *where they are'*. Teachers rated the applicability of the statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 'not applicable at all' to 5 'fully applicable' (Cronbach's α = .819).

Bonding elements

Shared responsibilities for each other and the group indicates the extent to which teachers reported to encourage inclusive behaviour of children in the context of the group, as part of the *bonding* construct, and was assessed by asking teachers in all forms of care to rate how often they would create situations described in the following three items: '*I make sure that all children take care of each other'*; '*I organize activities that all children, also the youngest, can do together'*; and *'I encourage the older children to help the younger children, e.g., while putting on the jacket'*. Answers were rated on seven-point scales ranging from 1 '(almost) never' to 7 'more than two times a day' (Cronbach's α = .663).

Democratic conflict resolution measures teachers' attitudes towards child agency and responsibilities in conflict resolution, based on the following items: 1) '*When children are having a fight, I let them explain their point of view to encourage understanding'*; 2*) If children have a conflict, I encourage them to solve it themselves'*; and 3) '*When children are angry or frustrated, I try to calm them down by explaining why something is not allowed'*. Answers were given on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 'never', to 2 'rarely', 3 'sometimes', 4 'regularly', 5 'often', 6 'very often' to 7 'always' (Cronbach's α = .735).

Bridging elements

Attention for different cultures assesses to what extent children in daily care practices engage in situations where they have to deal with multiple diversities. Teachers were asked to rate the frequency of occurrence of the following intentionally provided situations: 1) *'Children pay attention to important holidays of other cultures'*; 2) *'Children explore differences in cultural and religious backgrounds, and learn about the children from other countries and cultures'*; and 3) *'Children of different cultural backgrounds are playing or working together and are encouraged to do so'*. Teachers' responses were rated on 7-point scales, ranging from 1 '(almost) never', to 2 'less than 2 times a month', 3 '2 to 3 times a month', 4 'weekly', 5 '2 to 4 times a week', 6 'daily', and 7 '2 or more times a day'. Items 1 and 2 are applicable to all care practices. Item 3 was additionally included for afterschool care only, as it refers to active encouragement of bridging cultural differences. Therefore, separate constructs were created based on items 1 and 2 for daycare and preschool (Cronbach's α = .599) and on items 1, 2 and 3 for afterschool care (Cronbach's α = .702).

Social and moral tasks represents the degree to which children are encouraged to empathize with vulnerable others and perform social tasks to the benefit of others. For children in daycare and preschool, this variable was assessed by a single item asking teachers how often children perform social tasks in general, like visiting elderly people, or collecting money for charity by doing a performance. For children in afterschool care, a composite variable of four items could be constructed. Teachers of children in afterschool care were asked to rate how frequently children were involved in

1) performing social tasks or duties for the community; 2) discussing moral topics and questions like animal welfare, poverty, famine, refugee issues; 3) learning about other countries through books, maps, documentaries and the internet; and 4) doing an intercultural project, for example on what people eat, different languages and religions. Answers were rated on similar 7-point scales as mentioned above, ranging from 1 '(almost) never' to 7 '2 or more times a day' (Cronbach's α = .621). *Global citizenship* specifically addresses to what extent children in afterschool care are engaged in activities geared towards raising awareness about other countries. Teachers' answers on this single item were rated on a similar 7-point scale as mentioned above.

Children's well-being, involvement and quality of peer-interactions as indicators of a pedagogy based on child rights and citizenship principles

Under the LKK-framework, children's well-being and involvement were assessed as indicators of the provided process quality with a focus on the experiences of individual children, using the Leuven Scales of Emotional Well-being and Involvement, developed by the Centre for Experiential Education (CEGO) of the Catholic University of Leuven (Laevers et al., 2005). For both concepts, the Leuven Scales specify observable indicators which result in overall scores on 5-point rating scales. Video-recordings focusing on individual target children were made of 1 to a maximum of 15 children in a daycare group, 16 in a preschool group, and 22 in an afterschool care group (in total 346 in daycare, 370 in preschool, and 329 in afterschool care) in situations of play, educational activities and care routines, and coded afterwards. All observers were intensively trained by an experienced trainer of CEGO, and had to score a minimum reliability score of 70 per cent, in accordance with the requirements. Scores below 2.5 are considered *low*, scores between 2.5 and 3.5 as *moderate*, and scores above 3.5 as *high* (Laevers, 2005; see Slot et al., 2018, for a more extensive description of the procedure applied in the LKK study). *Well-being* is defined as the joy, spontaneity, being relaxed, openness to experiences and self-confidence children express in the care situation (Laevers, 2005). *Involvement* is defined as the concentration, motivation and drive to explore, and the intense mental activity shown by children in the care situation (Laevers et al., 2005). For the present purpose, the well-being and involvement scores for individual children in the same group were aggregated as mean scores to the group level.

Furthermore, under the LKK-framework, the Individualized Classroom Assessment Scoring System (inCLASS) Toddler (focussing on the interactions of individual children from 2-4 years old in daycare and preschool; Slot, Bleses, & Downer, 2015) and the inCLASS Pre-K (for children aged 4-12 in afterschool care; Downer et al., 2010) were used as observation instruments to evaluate several aspects of classroom process quality from the point of view of individual children on 7-point rating scales, ranging from 1 'very low quality' to 7 'very high quality', with scores between 3 and 5 considered moderate quality. The inCLASS frame work distinguishes four broad quality dimensions: the experienced quality of the interaction with teachers, the experienced quality of the interactions with peers, children's play/work attitudes, and children's rule-following behaviour in the group. For the present purpose, the dimension of quality of peer-interactions was used, as this fitted best the current study's focus as we assumed this could provide insight into the child-level outcomes of bonding and bridging practices[13]. The same video-recordings made for assessing well-being and involvement, were also coded with the inCLASS Toddler and pre-K. Observers were trained by licenced trainers. After the training, the observers scored test videos and their scores were compared with the scores of the trainer; the average agreement within one scale-point deviation was 89.5% for the Toddler and 91.5% for the Pre-K (chance level is 33%; the minimum inter-rater agreement required according to the test manual is 80%). As a final check, a guided observation was made, showing an average inter-rater agreement between observers and trainers of 93.5% (see Slot et al., 2018, for a more extensive description of the procedure). *Quality of peer-interactions* is based on three observable behavioural indicators and assesses the degree in which children show positive pro-social behaviour and communication towards peers, and assertiveness in peer-interactions. For the present purpose, the quality of peer-interaction scores for individual children in the same group were aggregated as mean scores to the group level.

Control variables

Finally, to control for possible effects of the age of the children and related to the type of care in the planned analyses, a dummy variable was created with 0 being daycare/preschool (ages 0-4) and 1 being afterschool care (ages 4-12). Also, in order to overcome the issue of structural variances in the data due to characteristics inherent to the type of care provision (e.g., daycare as a provision for children aged 0-4 for working parents *versus* preschools for socioeconomically disadvantaged children aged 2-4 who are at risk for language delays), we created dummy variables representing the teacher-reported proportion of children with *language support needs* as a proxy of targeted preschool education programs and the proportion of *babies in the group* as proxy of age-heterogeneous daycare, both with value 1 if the proportion was > 50%, to be included as control variables in the planned analyses for the younger age group.

Analysis plan

To answer the research questions, two analysis steps were conducted. First, related to research question 1, we conducted a descriptive analysis to determine to what extent in the vision, mission and organization's policies, and in the provided practices at Dutch centres for daycare, preschool programs and afterschool care aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective are present. We tested whether this differed by type of care using independent samples *t*-tests. In addition, we examined the relationships between policies at the organization level and the provided practices at the classroom level, using bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses. Second, related to research question 2, we examined the relationships between these indicators of the implemented child rights and democratic citizenship perspectives and children's well-being, involvement and experienced quality of peer-interactions, using bivariate correlations and multiple regression analyses, both in the whole sample and per type of care. All analyses were conducted with IBM SPSS version 26.

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[13] The dimension of *Group behaviour* was also considered, however, rejected in the light of our rights-based citizenship perspective (e.g., the inCLASS relates *conflict* with teachers or peers to negative interactions, while a rights-based citizenship approach considers *conflict* as a dimension for practicing democratic skills like *democratic conflict resolution*).

Results

Implementation of child rights and citizenship indicators in Dutch child care

To answer the first research question regarding the implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship perspectives, we analysed the descriptive statistics of the selected indicators from the managers' and teachers' surveys. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 for both the whole sample and for the subsamples of the three types of care separately. Regarding child participation and child agency, we focus in this section mainly on the more detailed reports by the teachers, and refer to the reports by the managers mostly to note agreement or discrepancies with the teachers.

Child image

To the question if the vision and pedagogical policy of the child care organization explicitly refer to the universal rights of children, 51.7% of the managers answered affirmatively (highest in day care centres, 57.1%, and lowest in afterschool care, 46.7%). To the question if the vision describes children as a *democratic citizens*, co-creating their own development, 65.7% of the managers confirmed their organizations do reflect this child image in their official vision and policy (this percentage is highest in afterschool care, 68.3% and lowest in preschool 63.4%). When the two items are combined, 47.3% of the managers indicated their organizations explicitly refer to *both* child rights and to children as democratic citizens. In sum, these results suggest that democratic citizenship is referred to more often than child rights, and that this difference is most prominent in afterschool care.

Including children's voices

On average, teachers indicated that the voices of children at their locations or in their groups, based on the correspondence with the labels of the original response scales, are 'more or less' taken into account. This is reflected in the mean score for *child participation* (*M* = 3.23, *SD* = 0.70), see Table 1. The highest mean scores for child participation can be found in afterschool care, followed by daycare, and preschool. Child participation as overarching concept includes the indicators *formal child participation* (i.e., a form of participation through scheduled discussions or some kind of a survey with children or their parents) and *informal child participation* (i.e., just listening well to the children, observe what they like and take that into account or respond to their ideas). When split, much lower mean scores are found for *formal child participation* (*M* = 2.82, *SD* = 0.89) than for *informal child participation* (*M* = 4.06, *SD* = 0.80). Frequency scores of *formal child participation* are, again, highest in afterschool care, followed by daycare and preschool where this aspect of giving voice to children was mostly indicated as 'not applicable' or 'more or less applicable'. *Informal child participation*, in contrast, scores higher in all forms of child care. Across the board the responses of the managers were quite similar to the responses of the teachers.

For the teachers, *formal child participation* was further subdivided into *direct formal child participation*, i.e., consulting children themselves for their ideas and preferences either through scheduled discussions or some kind of a survey, and *indirect formal child participation*, for those practices where parents are asked to voice their children's ideas either verbally or through some kind of survey. On average, teachers indicated that *direct formal child participation* is overall 'not applicable' to 'more or less applicable' *(M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.15). However, there are differences between the types of care. *Direct formal child participation* was considered respectively 'not applicable' for daycare and 'not applicable at all' for children in preschool, and between 'more or less applicable' and 'applicable' for children in afterschool care. The overall mean score for *indirect formal child participation* was indicated at 'more or less applicable' (*M* = 3.10, *SD* = 0.94) to all forms of care included in the study, with much smaller differences between the types of care.

To summarize, according to managers and teachers, implementing formal child participation, and in particular direct formal child participation, is on average not considered applicable in Dutch daycare and preschool settings, but clearly more so in afterschool care. Indirect formal child participation (via the parents of the children) is considered more applicable in all types of care. On average, informal child participation is the most widely used form of child participation in all types of care.

Supporting children's agency

An *open door policy* to support children's agency is overall not widely applied in Dutch daycare centres, according to the teachers (*M* = 2.32, *SD* = 1.20). However, there are clear differences between the types of care. In preschools, an *open door policy* seems nearly absent, with a teacher-reported mean score between 'not applicable at all' and 'not applicable' (*M* = 1.64, *SD* = 0.96). In afterschool care, in contrast, an *open door policy* is clearly more common (*M* = 3.08, *SD* = 1.24, 'more or less applicable'). In total, just 70 out of the 398 responding teachers across all types of care considered an *open door policy* 'applicable' or 'fully applicable' to their practices (17.6%), with space for children to go beyond the boundaries of their own group or classroom. Most of these were teachers in afterschool care (N = 44). The mean scores of the managers on *open door policy* were about the same as for the teachers. Regarding managers' perception of *children's influence* on the pedagogical policy of their location, they indicated that on average, children have 'some influence' as is shown in Table 1 (*M* = 3.01, *SD* = 1.00).

Table 3.1

Descriptive statistics of reported child rights and citizenship characteristics

				All Types		Day care		Preschool		Afterschool	
Variable (managers)	**Level**	**Scale**	**Range**	**M (SD)**		**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**
Child image	Vision										
Explicit reference to Child rights %				51.7	201	57.1	70	50.7	71	46.7	60
Explicit ref. to Democratic citizenship %				65.7	201	65.7	70	63.4	71	68.3	60
Explicit ref. to both CR and DC %				47.3	201	50.0	70	46.5	71	45.0	60
Child participation, voices		1-5	1.17-5	3.41 (.67)	235	3.41 (.64)	84	3.08 (.70)	80	3.78 (.45)	71
Formal child participation	Policy	1-5	1-5	3.03 (.83)	235	2.97 (.79)	84	2.66 (.84)	80	3.51 (.58)	71
Informal child participation	Policy	1-5	1-5	4.17 (.75)	235	4.30 (. 61)	84	3.91 (.89)	80	4.31 (.67)	71
Child agency											
Open door policy	Policy	1-5	1-5	2.36 (1.17)	239	2.49 (1.03)	85	1.82 (1.09)	82	2.81 (1.18)	72
Child influence	Policy	1-5	1-5	3.01 (1.00)	235	3.07 (.92)	84	2.73 (1.09)	80	3.25 (.90)	71
Variable (teachers)	**Level**	**Scale**	**Range**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**
Child participation, voices		1-5	1-5	3.23 (.70)	394	3.16 (.61)	144	2.92 (.69)	136	3.70 (.60)	114
Formal child participation	Procedures	1-5	1-5	2.82 (.89)	394	2.69 (.78)	144	2.44 (.83)	136	3.44 (.77)	114
Direct formal child participation	Procedures	1-5	1-5	2.54 (1.15)	394	2.27 (.94)	144	1.90 (.69)	136	3.63 (.89)	114
Indirect formal child participation	Procedures	1-5	1-5	3.10 (.94)	394	3.11 (.88)	144	2.97 (1.07)	136	3.25 (.84)	114
Informal child participation	Practice	1-5	1-5	4.06 (.80)	394	4.11 (.74)	144	3.88 (.93)	136	4.21 (.64)	114
Child agency											
Open door policy	Procedures	1-5	1-5	2.32 (1.20)	398	2.37 (0.99)	144	1.64 (0.96)	137	3.08 (1.24)	117
Bonding											
Shared responsibilities for eachother and the group	Practice	1-7	2-7	5.52 (.97)	378	5.48 (.95)	140	5.61 (.97)	132	5.44 (1.05)	106
Democratic conflict resolution	Practice	1-7	2-7	5.44 (.99)	378	5.20 (1.01)	140	5.56 (0.93)	132	5.60 (1.01)	106
Bridging											
Attention for different cultures	Practice	1-7	1-7			1.66 (1.10)	128	1.61 (1.02)	123	2.54 (1.48)	103
Social and moral tasks*)	Practice	1-7				1.38 (.78)	128	1.09 (.29)	123	1.66 (.88)	103
Global Citizenship**)	Practice	1-7	1-6							1.41 (.70)	105

*) This variable was assessed separately for a) daycare and preschool and b) afterschool care due to variations in items related to form of care

**) This variable was assessed for afterschool care only

To summarize, regarding the support to children's agency in Dutch child care, a mixed picture emerged based on the current indicators. An open door policy is not widely implemented, but children are reported to have some influence on the centres' policy and practice. Support for children's agency is overall more prominent in afterschool care than in the other types of care.

Bonding elements

Overall, teachers reported to encourage children to take *shared responsibilities for each other and the group* frequently, with the mean score being between the scale points 'two to four times a week' and 'daily' (*M* = 5.52, *SD* = 0.97). Shared responsibilities for each other and the group is quite evenly stimulated by teachers in daycare, preschool and afterschool care. In total, around 80% of the teachers indicated they do so at least once or a few times per week. Regarding the attitude of teachers towards promoting *democratic conflict resolution*, we also observed a high mean score (*M* = 5.44, *SD* = 0.99) between the scale points 'often' and 'very often'. Across all types of care, teachers reported to stimulate children to take try to resolve conflicts among themselves, peacefully and in a consultative way. In sum, children in Dutch daycare are well supported in terms of the construct bonding, with no big differences between the types of care.

Bridging elements

Regarding the *attention for different cultures in daily practice*, teachers indicated this is not standard at all in daycare (*M* = 1.66, *SD* = 1.10) and preschool (*M* = 1.61, *SD* = 1.02). In afterschool care, according to the teachers, more attention is paid to different cultures but still only between 'less than two times a month' and 'two to three times a month', with a relatively large standard deviation suggesting big differences between afterschool care centres in this regard (*M* = 2.54, *SD* = 1.48). Further exploration of the data revealed that in afterschool care especially stimulating children of various backgrounds playing together was reported to occur most frequently, while exploring and celebrating diversity in other regards occurred less frequently.

Similarly, according to the teachers, the frequency of children performing social tasks for the community or engaging in discussions about moral topics like animal welfare, poverty, famine, or refugee issues, was low in all care practices with mean scores ranging between '(almost) never' and 'less than once a month'. Children in afterschool care were reported to perform slightly more frequently social tasks or discuss slightly more often moral topics (*M* = 1.66, *SD* = 0.88). In preschools, this hardly ever occurred (*M* = 1.09, *SD* = 0.29). The variable *global citizenship* refers to activities aiming to raise awareness among children about the world and was assessed for afterschool care only. This type of activity occurred less than once a month or almost never (*M* = 1.41, *SD* = 0.70).

To summarize, based on the teachers' reports, the occurrence of activities with a diversity, normative-moral or global citizenship element, as indicators of the construct bridging, is rather rare in Dutch child care of all types.

Relation between organizations' vision and 'child participation policy'

We assessed if, and how, explicitly mentioning child rights and referring to children as democratic citizens in vision and organizational policy, influences other relevant organizational policy variables as reported by (location) managers about their organizations. To this end, we related the managers' responses regarding child rights and democratic citizenship, dichotomized into yes (explicit full reference to both aspects) and no (either no or only one aspect explicitly referred to), to their answers regarding *formal* and *informal child participation*, applying an *open door policy* and perceived perception of *children's influence* on pedagogical policy, activities and working methods of their centres. For this analysis, we used independent samples *t*-tests. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 3.2

Relation between organization's vision and identified policy variables (managers)

	Child Rights and Democratic Citizenship in vision and organizational policy			
	Explicit reference (N=95)	**No explicit reference (N= 106)**		
Policy variable	***M (SD)***	***M (SD)***	***t (df)***	***p***
Formal child participation	3.18 (0 .70)	2.93 (0.88)	*t*(199) = -2.220	.028
Informal child participation	4.19 (0.71)	4.17 (0.82)	*t*(199) = - 0.230	.819
Open door policy	2.39 (1.16)	2.32 (1.19)	*t*(199) = - 0.473	.637
Child influence	3.06 (1.00)	2.95 (1.01)	*t*(199) = - 0.778	.437

The results show that when an organization's vision or policy explicitly refers to both *child rights* and *democratic citizenship,* the managers significantly more often indicated that a form of *formal child participation* is applicable to their organization (M = 3.19, SD = 0.70), compared to organizations who did not explicitly refer to *child rights* and *democratic citizenship* in their vision or policy (M = 2.93, SD = 0.88). Thus, explicating an image of the child based on child rights and democratic citizenship, is found to positively relate to the organization's position regarding formal child participation in Dutch child care centres; the other organizational policy indicators were not significantly related.

To examine whether the indicators as reported by the managers were related to the pedagogical procedures and daily practices as reported by the teachers (the variables are mentioned in Table 1), we first aggregated the teacher data to the centre level. Next, we tested if explicitly referring to child rights or democratic citizenship, or both, in the official vision and policy of the organization was related to the various variables of implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship at the daily practices level by applying independent samples *t*-tests. None of the tests were statistically significant, suggesting no systematic differences between organizations that are related to explicit reference in the organizations' vision to child rights and democratic citizenship.

Third, we examined the Pearson correlations between the other organizational policy variables as reported by the managers' and the teacher-reported implementation in pedagogical policy and practice variables regarding a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective, with the selected indicators being aggregated to the centre level. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.3

Correlations between selected child rights and citizenship organizational policy variables (managers) and selected pedagogical policy and practice (teachers)

	Pedagogical policy and practice variables (teachers)					
Organizational policy variables (managers)	Direct formal CP	Indirect formal CP	Informal CP	Open door policy	Shared responsibilities	Democratic confllict resolution
Formal child participation	.389**	.182**	.127	.245**	-.022	.022
Informal child participation	.209**	.156*	.064	.173**	.018	-.005
Opendoor policy	.228**	.120	.145*	.361**	-.071	.111
Perceived child influence	.194**	.182**	.046	.211**	-.031	-.005

	Pedagogical policy and practice variables (teachers)				
Organizational policy variables (managers)	Social & moral tasks (0-4)	Social & Moral tasks (4-12)	Attention for different cultures (0-4)	Attention for different cultures (4-12)	Global citizenship (4-12)
Formal child participation	.099	-.019	-.075	.236	.192
Informal child participation	.031	.086	.009	.309*	.091
Opendoor policy	.050	.078	.011	-.034	-.021
Child influence	.181*	-.085	.046	.008	-.051

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
CP = child participation

Several statistically significant weak to moderate correlations were found, especially between manager-reported policy variables and teacher-reported pedagogical policy variables. Moderate correlations were found between managers' reports on *formal child participation* and the teacher reported degree of *formal child participation,* r = .353 (p < .01), especially *direct formal child participation,* r = .389 (p < .01). Weak to moderate correlations were found with *indirect formal child participation,* r = .182 (p < .01), and *open door policy,* r = .245 (p < .01). The manager reported degree of *informal participation* was weakly to moderately correlated to the teacher reported *formal child participation,* r = .220 (p < .01), but no significant relations were found with the degree of teacher-reported *informal child participation*. Manager-reported *open door policy* was significantly correlated with teacher-reported *open door policy* r = .361 (p < .01) and with teacher-reported *direct formal child participation*, r = .228 (p < .01). Manager-reported degree of *informal participation* was also moderately associated with teacher-reported *attention for different cultures in daily practices* (pertaining only to afterschool care), r = .309 (p < .05). Overall, the relationships between the manager-reported policy characteristics and the indicators of child rights and democratic citizenship at the level of pedagogical and curricular practices reported by the teachers, were weak and mostly not significant.

To summarize, there are clear associations between the centres' policies regarding child participation and the actual implementation of formal child participation, and also with a number of aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship pedagogy, such as applying an open door policy; however, there are no clear associations with pedagogical and curricular practices.

Observed experiences of child rights and citizenship indicators in Dutch child care

To answer the second research question, regarding the extent to which elements of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach in the manager respectively teacher-reported pedagogical policies and curricular practices in the care group are associated with children's observed well-being, involvement and quality of peer interactions, we first aggregated all data to the level of the child care groups. Descriptive statistics of the outcomes at the level of the child are presented in Table 4.

Table 3.4

Descriptive statistics of outcome quality indicators for child care centres (ECEC, preschool and afterschool care, aggregated)

			Total		**Day care**		**Preschool**		**Afterschool**	
Indicator	**Scale**	**Range**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**	**M (SD)**	**N**
Well-being*)	1-5	2.94 - 4.18	3.54 (.21)	252	3.51 (.20)	84	3.48 (.20)	89	3.66 (.19)	79
Involvement**)	1-5	2.27 - 4.05	3.06 (.32)	252	3.00 (.29)	84	2.99 (.33)	89	3.19 (.32)	79
Quality of peer interactions***)	1-7	1.00 - 6.00	3.13 (.88)	226	2.83 (.85)	62	2.81 (.61)	88	3.75 (.86)	76

*) Leuven emotional well-being scale
**) Leuven involvement scale
***) inCLASS Toddler/Pre-K

According to the standards of the Leuven Well-being and Involvement Scales (Laevers et al., 2005), children in Dutch child care show on average moderate to high well-being and moderate involvement. The inCLASS scores for the quality of the peer interactions children experience are in the low to low-middle range, according to the inCLASS benchmarks (between 3 and 5 is a middle score). Overall, well-being, involvement and quality of peer-interactions are found to be slightly higher in afterschool care compared to the other care types.

As first analytical step, Table A3.1. in the Appendix presents the Pearson correlations that were computed to examine the relations of key indicators of the organization's child rights and democratic citizenship policy, as reported by the managers, with the observed child outcomes, based on the whole sample of care groups as well as per type of care. There were no relationships between the organization's child rights and democratic citizenship policy and children's observed *well-being* and *involvement*. However, the indicators of the organization's policy regarding *child participation* were weakly but significantly correlated with *quality of peer-interactions*, with respectively $r = .235$ ($p < .01$) for *formal child participation,* $r = .197$ ($p < .01$) for *informal child participation,* and $r = .160$ ($p < .05$) for managers' perception of *children's influence* on the centre's pedagogical policy pertaining to the whole sample. Upon closer scrutiny, these correlations appeared to be mainly driven by the daycare sample. No relations were found for preschool and afterschool care.

As second analytical step, the Pearson correlations of the teacher-reported indicators of child rights and democratic citizenship implementation in daily pedagogical and curricular practices with children's observed *well-being*, *involvement*, and *quality of peer interactions* aggregated to centre level, were computed. The full results, based on the whole sample and on the subsamples per type of care, are presented in Table A3.2. in the Appendix.

Regarding *child participation*, Table A3.2. shows that *direct formal child participation* was moderately related to child *well-being*, $r = .320$, $p < .01$, weakly to *child involvement*, $r = .208$, $p < .01$, and moderately to *quality of peer-interactions*, $r = .372$, $p < .01$. Indicators addressing child agency were also weakly but significantly related to child outcomes. Applying an *open door policy* was weakly but significantly correlated with child *well-being*, $r = .209$, $p < .01$, and *quality of peer-interactions*, $r = .228$, $p < .01$. *Democratic conflict resolution* was weakly but significantly related to child *well-being,* $r = .130$, $p < .05$. The reported degree of *indirect formal child participation* (via parents) and *informal child participation* (based on day-to-day observing children) were not significantly related to *well-being*, *involvement* and *quality of peer interactions*.

The correlations that were found may, however, may partly reflect spurious relations due to correlations with type of care and age of the children. Although the pattern of associations is rather similar across types of care, few correlations hold significance at the $p < .05$ level when split by type of care because of the smaller sample sizes. Given the smaller samples, the positive relationships for preschool groups between *direct formal child participation* and *child well-being*, $r = .214$, $p < .05$, and for daycare groups between *democratic conflict resolution* and the *quality of peer interactions*, $r = .305$, $p < .05$, stand out. For preschool groups, remarkably, we found a negative relationship between performing *social and moral tasks* and *involvement*, $r = -.243$, $p < .05$. For afterschool care separately, no significant correlations were found, however the pattern of associations was rather similar to the other types of child care.

Multiple regression analyses were applied to further examine the multivariate relationships of the child rights and democratic citizenship indicators as represented in the organization's vision and policy (managers) and implemented in pedagogical practices (teachers) with the child outcome measures, both in the whole sample and in the subsamples per type of care. Based on the previous correlational findings, only those variables were included as predictors in the regression analyses that were consistently in the expected direction related to the child outcomes (*formal child participation*, *informal child participation* and manager's perception of *child influence*). Other child rights and citizenship variables, however theoretically important, were not consistently or significantly related to child outcomes throughout the study. Several of these variables - by their composition - could only be separately assessed per form of care; the lack of significant relationships could also – at least partly – be explained by the smaller sample-sizes they applied to. To control for possible differences caused by age-related type of care, language support needs related to type of program and age-heterogeneity of the group, dummy control variables were included. Age-related type of care had no significant effect and was not further included.

Detailed results of the multivariate relationships of the implemented indicators as represented in organizations' vision and policy (based on the managers) are presented in Table A3.3. (Appendix A). For all types of care combined, we included *formal child participation, informal child participation,* and managers' perception of *child influence* as predictors of child *well-being,* child *involvement,* and quality of *peer interactions* in three separate regression models. For *involvement*, the explained variance by the regression models was small and not statistically significant. For child *well-being,* the explained variance by the regression model was small but statistically significant (R^2 = .033 (F (4, 198) = 2.702, p = .032). However, none of the individual predictors added significantly predicted variance to the model. For *quality of peer interactions*, the explained variance by the regression model was statistically significant (R^2 = .063 (F (4, 177) = 4.062, p = .004), however, again, none of the individual predictors added significant variance to the model.

Subsequently, the regression analyses were repeated per type of care. For daycare, the regression models were statistically significant for *involvement*, R^2 = .126 (F (4, 52) = 3.014, p = .026), with *child influence* being a significant predictor (β = .517, p = 0.001), and for *quality of peer interactions*, R^2 = .154 (F (4, 43) = 3.146, p = .024), with the control variable type of programme (proportion children in need of *language support* > 50%) as significant predictor, β = .347, p = .016. The model was not statistically significant for *well-being*, R^2 = .070 (F (4, 52) = 2.058, p = 0.100). However, managers' opinion of *child influence* was a significant predictor in the model (β = .419, p = .010). For preschool, the regression model was only significant for *quality of peer interactions*. The predicted variance was R^2 = .116 (F (4, 57) = 3.009, p = .025), with *informal child participation* (β = .356, p = .008) as a positive predictor, and managers opinion on *child influence* as a negative predictor (β = -.297, p = .044). For afterschool care, none of the regression models with the child outcomes as dependents were statistically significant.

Detailed results of the multivariate relationships of the indicators of implemented child rights and democratic citizenship principles in pedagogical and curricular practices (based on the teachers) are presented in Table A3.4. (Appendix A). For all types of care combined, the regression model with the predictors *direct formal child participation*, *indirect formal child participation*, *open door policy*, and *democratic conflict resolution,* was statistically significant for *well-being* with R^2 = .076 (F (5, 94) = 2.618, p = .029), with *direct formal child participation* being a significant positive predictor (β = .349, p = .002). For *involvement* and *quality of peer interactions*, the explained variance by the regression models were not statistically significant.

Next, the regression analyses were repeated per type of care. For daycare, the regression model with the experienced *quality of peer interactions* as dependent variable was significant, with R^2 = .203 (F (5, 46) = 3.591, p = .008), and *democratic conflict resolution* was a significant predictor (β = .327, p = .014), as was the control variable *children in need of language support* (β = .290, p = .033). For preschool, the model for child well-being was significant, R^2 = .097 (F (5, 64) = 2.476, p = .041), and *direct formal child participation* added statistically significantly to the prediction (β = .376, p = .004). For afterschool care, none of the regression models with the child outcomes as dependents were significant.

To summarize, the correlational and multiple regression analyses showed some relationships between aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach at the level of the organization and at the level of pedagogical and curricular practice and observed child well-being, involvement and experienced quality of peer-interactions. At the organizational level, managers perception of *children's influence* seems to contribute positively to child outcomes in daycare. At the level of pedagogical and curricular practices, the separate analyses per type of care revealed rather consistently positive predictions of child outcomes by *direct formal child participation*. The analyses for separate types of care showed a positive contribution of *democratic conflict resolution* to the *quality of peer interactions* for daycare and of *direct formal child participation* for preschool. For afterschool care the results were inconclusive.

Discussion

The present study examined to what extent daycare, preschool and afterschool care services in The Netherlands implement a policy promoting child rights and democratic citizenship; how this influences pedagogical policy, procedures and day-to-day practices; and how this affects outcome quality indicators measured at the level of the individual child. The study was based on nationally representative data collected within the National Child Care Quality Monitor in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (Slot et al., 2018, 2019). We considered Dutch child care services as a provision where citizenship could be practiced in day-to-day situations, thus as *citizenship-as-practice,* including four main social tasks for children: acting democratically, acting responsibly, dealing with conflicts and handling diversities (Ten Dam et al., 2010; Van Keulen, 2013).

Regarding the first research question of this study, to what extent essential elements of a rights-based democratic citizenship approach are reflected in the vision and organizational policy and are implemented in the daily practices of Dutch child care centres, the analysis revealed a mixed picture. According to the managers of the participating child centres, about half of the centres made reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in their vision or organizational policy, about two-thirds referred to children as democratic citizens, and nearly half to both child rights and children as democratic citizens. However, referring to this was rarely reflected in other relevant domains, such as child agency (elaborated and implemented, for example, through an open door policy or by providing children with systematic opportunities to influence centre's policy matters), nor in applied pedagogical procedures and implemented practices. Overall, based on the selected indicators (e.g., child participation, open door policy), implementation of principles of child rights and democratic citizenship was occasional rather than systematic and varied between centres; referring to child rights and citizenship in the organisation's view and mission was not significantly related to how teachers indicated their practices were set up with regard to the identified child rights and citizenship indicators. This discrepancy between vision, policy and practice may indicate that referring to child rights and citizenship in vision and organizational policy in Dutch child care, so far, tends to be mostly tokenistic (Hart, 1997).

Nevertheless, when managers reported that both children's rights and democratic citizenship are anchored in the vision and pedagogical policy of the child care organization, this was significantly related to what managers reported on the extent to which child participation occurs, in particular a formal form of child participation (children are provided with the opportunity to voice their opinions and wishes in a formalized, structured manner through regular discussions or some kind of a survey). This linkage was slightly stronger when an organization specifically referred to children's rights over referring to democratic citizenship – however, strongest in conjunction. Moreover, there was also a positive relation with the actual occurrence of formal child participation in pedagogical procedures and practices as reported by the teachers. Based on this analysis, child participation in general, and formal child participation in particular, seem to be distinctive aspects of a child rights and citizenship vision at organizational policy level that have the potential to influence pedagogy and practices.

At this point, it is also interesting to make a distinction between *direct* formal child participation (i.e., providing the opportunity to participate directly to children) and *indirect* formal child participation (i.e., consulting parents to voice their children's opinions and wishes). Indirect formal child participation, according to teachers' reports, occurred more frequently than direct formal child participation, especially in daycare and preschool. In afterschool care, both direct and indirect forms of formal child participation occurred regularly (though not commonly, as there was large variation between centres), and predominantly verbally through regular special conversations. Differences between daycare and preschool practices were small but noticeable: asking children about their opinions, wishes and experiences - although low in both practices for young children - was less often practiced with children in preschools, neither directly through asking children, nor indirectly through their parents. This may reflect the stronger orientation of preschools on pre-set educational targets focussing on language development and the use of teacher-led education programmes in the vast majority of preschools in the current sample.

The degree to which (formal and informal) child participation was implemented, as reported by managers, was also found to be related to a number of other indicators of child rights and citizenship principles in pedagogical procedures and daily practices, as reported by the teachers. More specifically, with a view on children exercising their agency, we looked at the extent to which teachers reported that an open door policy is implemented. Applying an open door policy appeared not a common practice in any of the forms of child care, though it applied more to afterschool care than to daycare and preschool. A likely explanation is the strong emphasis in Dutch child care as per law on group stability with stable child-child and child-staff relationships, reflecting a protection orientation (see Chapter 2). In preschools in particular, an open door policy was found to be rare. This may be due to the fact that preschool is often provided in comparatively small centres with only a few groups and fewer spaces to navigate. It may also, again, reflect the more structured educational orientation of preschools offering a half-day programme of mostly teacher-led activities.

Managers across all types of care generally perceived children as having ‘some influence’ on the range of activities, quality of interaction and methods of working, but there were differences between centres. The centres’ scores on this indicator correlated significantly with the extent to which teachers reported to implement formal child participation and an open door policy, and to stimulate performing social and moral tasks (in daycare and preschool). In sum, children’s agency was especially exercised in children’s personal spaces: children did have some influence on day-to-day activities, however opportunities to explore beyond the boundaries of their groups were limited, especially in daycare and preschool.

Regarding practices concerning inclusion and diversity, more specifically referred to as stimulating ‘bonding and bridging social capital’ (Putnam, 2000), the analysis revealed that children from various backgrounds were stimulated to play together, to take up responsibilities for each other and for the group, and to resolve conflicts democratically. Teachers reported to stimulate these predominantly bonding practices regularly in all types of child care. This suggests attention for good relationships within the groups, and for furthering positive peer-interactions. This is in line with quality investments in interaction skills of professionals and the findings of various studies that qualify the quality of Dutch child care as high regarding socio-affective climate, however, these studies observed for daycare and preschool practices that positive peer interactions are insufficiently stimulated by professionals (NCKO, 2012; Slot et al., 2018; Slot et al., 2019). Opening up to bridging diversities by paying attention to different cultures was reported to be limited in all forms of care. Daily practices, according to the teachers, overall, did not pay a lot of attention to other cultural habits or to exploring diversities. In addition, teachers’ responses revealed that children in all forms of care only infrequently performed social tasks for the community, discussed moral topics, or did projects about other countries.

To summarize, elements of a child rights and citizenship approach are implemented in Dutch child care mainly when efforts overlap with the attention for children's socio-emotional development and with stimulating bonding skills and activities. However, on indicators that go beyond the level of children's intra- and inter-personal development and direct social relationships in the group by addressing issues of the wider community, centres scored overall low. The latter concerned especially the implementation of child rights and citizenship principles in the domains of bridging diversities and where practices went beyond the level of personal citizenship towards participatory or social-justice oriented democratic citizenship, for example by performing social or moral tasks (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Children in Dutch child care, according to teachers' reports, learn to adapt, play and work together, and resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. However, combined with the stimulation of autonomy (a key indicator of emotional process quality on which Dutch child care centres score rather high; Slot et al., 2019), this finding fits more in the constructs of adaptive and individualistic citizenship rather than critical democratic citizenship (Veugelers & Leenders, 2006; see also Chapter 1). For critical democratic citizenship, more outward looking and open attitudes need to be stimulated by celebrating various religious or cultural festivals, performing social tasks for the community, discussing moral topics, doing projects about other countries, and include strategies for taking children's voices into account in a direct and formalized way. Child voices in the form of direct formal child participation, according to the present findings, is surely not a common practice in preschool and daycare; more often, but also not commonly, children are represented by their parents. Attention for democratic citizenship could serve as a framework for implementing child rights if it is based on the child rights principles of whole child development, participation, and social justice (Van Keulen, 2013). However, based on this study, the majority of the Dutch child care organizations do not yet meet this criterion.

Nonetheless, a considerable number of organizations do implement child rights and citizenship principles at least to some extent according to the present findings. This brings us to the second sub-question of this study: to what extent is the implementation of these child rights and democratic citizenship principles related to children's well-being, involvement and experienced quality of peer-to-peer social interactions? The correlational and multiple regression analyses showed several relationships between aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach at the level of the organization and at the level of pedagogical and curricular practice with observed child well-being, involvement and experienced quality of peer-interactions. Firstly, at the organizational level, relatively consistent indications were found for child participation and children's opportunities to influence pedagogical policy and procedures according to the managers, are positively related to these child outcomes, especially in daycare. Again, some deviating results were found for children in preschool, with particularly standing out the managers' perception of influence of children negatively relating to the quality of peer interactions. These could reflect lesser opportunities for children to practice agency and democratic citizenship skills as a result of the more structured educational orientation of preschools. It could very well be that unfamiliarity of children with exerting influence could initially and briefly lead to more tensions between children. Secondly, at the level of pedagogical and curricular practices as reported by teachers, separate analyses per type of care revealed rather consistent positive predictions of child outcomes by *direct* formal child participation (through some form of systematic periodical special conversations or surveys). Indirect formal child participation and informal child participation were not significantly related to child outcomes. Other significant small to moderate effects on children's well-being and experienced quality of peer interactions were found for stimulating democratic conflict resolution in daycare and applying an open door policy in preschool. For afterschool care the results were less conclusive.

Limitations

The present study was subject to a number of limitations. First of all, although a number of direct indicators of the implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship were included in the LKK measurements, other indicators had to be composed specifically for this study from survey questionnaire items that were not directly intended to measure child rights and democratic citizenship principles. Therefore, in some cases the scope of the concepts and their measurement may have been too limited or rough. As a consequence we may have been missing out on some results or relevant linkages.

Secondly, the present study included the concept of *diversity and inclusion* but focussed on cultural diversities only. We did not include, for example, *special needs* or other forms of diversities that exist in society. This limited the scope of the study and width of the discussion. We geared the available data as much as possible towards current conceptualizations of democratic citizenship from a child rights perspective. However, we are aware that other forms of diversities deserve ample attention as well within the concept of *inclusion and diversity (bonding and bridging)* in child care provisions.

Thirdly, the Leuven Well-being and Involvement Scales and the inCLASS Toddler and PreK instruments used to assess process quality at the level of the child, were not specifically designed in an actualized international child rights and citizenship-perspective as outlined in Chapter 2. For example, the inCLASS instrument rates 'conflicts with peers' per definition as a negative interaction, while from a child rights and citizenship perspective *conflict* is perceived as an opportunity to practice citizenship in day-to-day situations, in verbal and non-verbal communication, and in democratic conflict resolution. Future research should include more sensitive observation instruments to assess child outcomes in a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective.

Finally, the study design was cross-sectional and correlational, allowing no firm conclusions about the causal direction of the significant associations that were found. Future research with stronger longitudinal or experimental designs is needed to corroborate the present findings and to make the case for applying child rights and democratic citizenship principles in child care stronger.

Concluding remarks

In this study we found a mix of principles that can enhance a child rights and democratic citizenship approach within pedagogical services for children in daycare, preschool and afterschool care. Some of these can be further deployed to improve process quality indicators like child well-being, involvement, and positive peer interactions.

Under the framework of a child-rights and citizenship approach to child care services, this study found that especially direct formal child participation and other measures to stimulate agency, such as an open door policy and stimulating democratic conflict resolution, can significantly contribute to the quality of child care in The Netherlands, more specifically to children's well-being, involvement, and positive peer interactions. Regretfully, not all rights-based citizenship concepts are as yet fully developed nor widely implemented in Dutch child care organizations, especially when it comes to bridging diversities and reaching out to the community. Yet, there are opportunities, as many organizations do include references to child rights or democratic citizenship in their official vision and policy, and some organizations do include child voices or reach out to the communities. If the sector wants to further progress on outcome quality and to contribute to the development and empowerment of our youngest citizens, it can relatively easily advance by increasing children's direct participation and agency, by giving them voice and providing them at set times with choices, free spaces and opportunities to navigate through the centres by themselves. It can pay more attention to bridging diversities by paying attention to different cultures and performing social and moral tasks for the community and thus stimulate global critical democratic citizenship.

4

Chapter 4

Child Voices: young children's views on well-being and inclusion

A summary edit of this chapter was also published as Part III of the ISOTIS Report D2.5 on the ISOTIS Child Study (Broekhuizen et al., 2020).

Author contributions: The ISOTIS Child Study was designed by G. Pastori, V. Pagani, & A. Sarcinelli and adapted for this dissertation by C.E. in consultation with P.L. & M.B. C.E. collected and analysed the data and wrote this chapter. P.L. & M.B. supervised the study and reviewed the chapter.

Introduction

General background

The first years of life lay the foundation for healthy growth and are crucial for children's emotional, intellectual and social development (Oates et al., 2013; Shonkhoff & Garner, 2012). Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programmes generally aim to improve opportunities for individuals, families, and communities. There is a strong link between ECEC programmes and child well-being (Laevers et al., 2003; Melhuish, 2014; Singer et al., 2014). From a human capital point of view, investment in ECEC also yields high economic returns for society, reducing disadvantages and inequalities especially for children from marginalized or low SES communities (Denboba, 2014; Melhuish et al., 2015; Reynolds et al., 2011; Van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). Providing ECEC to support children's development and to prevent delays early on is more cost-effective than to compensate for disadvantages as children grow older (Heckman & Masterov, 2007; Heckman, 2011; Hanushek & Woesmann, 2007, 2012). However, despite overwhelming evidence for its benefits, governments still accord relatively low priority to early childhood development and education with regards to public spending (Adema et al., 2014).

In The Netherlands, ECEC programmes encompass diverse arrangements - including centre-based daycare and pre-primary education (in Dutch: voor- en vroegschoolse educatie, VVE) and afterschool care sometimes linked to primary schools, and community or family-based child care through host families[14]. Programmes typically aim at two age groups: children in child care 0 to 4 years of age and children in preprimary, preschool or playgroups from age 2.5 onwards to primary school entry at age 4 (first grade of the *basisschool, starting with two years of universal Kindergarten*). The Dutch daycare system, as a core component of the wider ECEC system, was originally designed as a labour market instrument enabling both parents to enter the workforce. Relatively recently only, the government recognized the sector as important for the development and learning of young children and introduced additional provisions and amendments to strengthen the system in this regard. Efforts are on-going towards a more integrated ECEC system and preschools are incorporated into the Child Care Act. In this regard, policy is still evolving, as described in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Also in Chapter 2, we discussed the risk of a system operating predominantly from a protection-oriented point of view instead of being tailored towards the needs, aspirations, potentials and (cultural) preferences of the children, parents and communities it serves. Following from Chapter 2, the Dutch system lacks a clear view on child rights and democratic citizenship, and associated concepts such as inclusion, participation and community involvement. In that sense, the risk of the two 'faces' of education, discussed in Chapter 1, may also apply to the Dutch ECEC system and currently implemented pedagogies at the centre level, as analysed in Chapter 3: on the one hand, it has the

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[14] https://www.isotis.org/en/publications/inventory-and-analysis-of-promising-and-evidence-based-parent-and-family-focused-support-programs pp. 54-63 extensively describes the Dutch profile.

potential to contribute to the promotion of inclusion, social cohesion, and engaged citizenry based on the recognition of diversity and individual and community needs. On the other hand, if not tailored towards the needs, aspirations, potentials and preferences of specific communities, it risks reproducing dominant thought systems, patterns or even structures of exclusion and inequality (Cummins, 2008, 2019). In this way, it may unintendedly contribute to existing patterns of fragmentation in society, leading to segregation and polarization (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Paulson, 2008). Then, how do we increase that potential for inclusion, social cohesion, and recognition of diversities in individuals and communities? Approaching child care and education from a rights-based approach, may provide us with some clues – first and foremost by including the voices of the children the system is built for.

There are no studies available on the application of child rights guiding principles to pedagogical settings for young children in The Netherlands, except for studies on the well documented democratic citizenship programme in primary education *The Peaceable School*. At the level of service provision, there is a conception of the school, preschool and child daycare centre, including afterschool care, as unique settings to practice rights-based democratic citizenship skills and values (De Winter, 2011; Moss, 2010a; Van Keulen, 2013). Some projects and programmes addressing rights-based democratic citizenship have been implemented during the last decade, such as *Together for the Future* and the *Peaceable School* (Aguiar & Silva, 2018; Pauw, 2013; Van Keulen, 2013). The present study is part of an effort to document the effective elements and essential characteristics of these initiatives for children and their communities. With the Dutch child care system developing into an increasingly integrated universal provision for child development and child well-being beyond a mere labour market function (Leseman et al., 2021; SER, 2021), there is an urgency to use a child-rights and citizenship perspective to explore specifically children's perceptions and views on well-being, participation and inclusion in daycare and preschool (3 to 4 year old children) and early afterschool care (4-6 year olds). This may inform national policy debates and formal pedagogies, as well as daily practices in ECEC.

Aim of the study and research questions

The present study was designed as a Child Voices research project (Dedding et al., 2013; Harris & Manatakis, 2013), giving young children the opportunity to provide their ideas about a number of core aspects of pedagogy based on child rights and citizenship principles, concerning themes like identity, diversity, inclusion and participation. The aim was to investigate the perspectives of children and assess what does, and maybe does not work with regard to well-being at child centres for daycare, preschool education and afterschool care, all within a context of diversity in the city of Utrecht, The Netherlands. These centres were part of one organisation and were selected for implementing a child rights and democratic citizenship based pedagogy. More specifically, we set out to gain more insight into the factors and conditions that contribute to the well-being of children in these centres; explore the views of children about their (personal and socio-cultural) identity; and determine how young children value and use their own agency and participation in a pedagogical context. The overarching goal was to assess whether young children are indeed able to participate and use their voices (through 'many languages'; see Chapter 1), and how best to support and stimulate this. The main research question was: *How do young children perceive a rights-based democratic citizenship pedagogy in ECEC practices?* To answer this question, we collected in-depth qualitative information from young children themselves, along the following sub-questions:

- What contributes to, or undermines, young children's' well-being, inclusion and participation in ECEC services in The Netherlands*?*
- What do young children think about their (personal and socio-cultural) identity in the context of ECEC and how do they experience issues of diversity?
- What do young children regard as quality indicators of inclusiveness in their ECEC centre, and what ideas do they have for allowing all children to participate in their group?

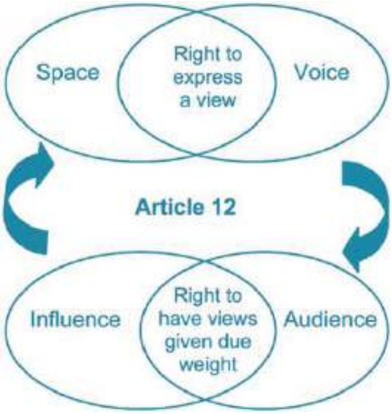
The present study addressed the *experienced curriculum* in the selected exemplary ECEC and afterschool care services. An innovative aspect of this study was the inclusion of very young children's voices (3-6 years of age) on participation in their daily experiences at ECEC, pre-primary education and afterschool care.

Children as key informants

The involvement of children as key informants builds on the recognition that children are active citizens, competent and reliable informants and research participants as well as partners in research, as is stipulated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989; Harris & Manatakis, 2013; Qvortrup, 1987, 1990). Regarding children's views, we built on Lundy's Voice model (Figure 4.1), and the appreciation that four separate factors are important for actually respecting and giving voice to children's opinions (Lundy, 2007; Welty & Lundy, 2013): space, voice, audience and influence. *Space* is about creating an opportunity for involvement - a space where children feel encouraged to express their views (Welty & Lundy, 2013); *voice* involves recognizing the many 'languages' of children (verbal and non-verbal communication, and other ways of expressing thoughts and feelings) and using just as many ways of listening to children to ensure that children have the opportunity to explore and clarify their perspectives in their own way (Harris & Manatakis, 2013; Moskal & Tyrell, 2016); *audience* involves making it clear to children that their views are being heard; finally, *influence* is about ensuring that the views of children are not only heard, but that they are taken seriously and that - where possible - action is taken, also implying the responsibility to explain why a position or idea cannot be implemented. If this is done properly, it lays the foundation for later learning, understanding and behaviour (Alderson, 2000, 2008; Cooke et al., 2019; Moss, 2008; Oates et al., 2013).

Figure 4.1

The 'Voice' model



Note. From *Voice is not enough* (Lundy, 2007; Welty & Lundy, 2013)

Conceptual framework

Below we briefly explain the relationships between the concepts of well-being, inclusion, participation and agency, and shortly address the transformative power (i.e., the potential for fundamental change or change of awareness) of attention for identity.

Inclusion and well-being

For this study we used the theoretical foundation of the concept of inclusion as inspired by and building on the classification of multiculturalism in educational settings proposed by Rosenthal and Levy (2010). They conceptualize inclusion as a 4-step process[15]:

1. *Inclusion as the recognition of differences*: a condition for promoting inclusion is the recognition and promotion of social and cultural differences;
2. *Inclusion as the appreciation of differences*: diversity must not only be recognized, but also appreciated as a value (Salamanca Statement, UNESCO, 1994);
3. *Inclusion as acceptance of differences*: only when differences are recognized and appreciated, all forms of diversity will be accepted;
4. *Inclusion as 'well-being'*: the recognition, appreciation, and acceptance of diversity are all essential conditions for promoting *well-being*. *Inclusion* and *well-being* are two concepts that are closely linked.

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[15] Realizing that by using theoretical foundation, 'inclusion' is viewed from the perspective of the system and/or of the dominant group and this may intrinsically involve a certain balance of power.

The concept of *well-being* refers to the feeling that a person's perceptions and experiences matter (UN DESA, 2007). Well-being requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of a higher purpose, that they are able to achieve important personal goals and participate in society. Well-being is reinforced by conditions such as supportive personal relationships and strong and inclusive communities (Newton, 2007). In this way, well-being can be considered as the goal to be pursued when it comes to promoting inclusion.

Inclusion and participation

Based on the UNCRC, and the argument for pedagogical provisions for young children on the basis of this Convention, Article 2 (non-discrimination), Article 3 (in the best interests of the child), Article 6 (right to development), and Article 12 (children's participation) apply as guiding principles for the implementation and interpretation of the Convention. According to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, responsible for overseeing the implementation of the UNCRC, Article 12 is particularly often overlooked - especially with regard to young children, who are often seen and treated as objects of care and protection rather than independent and active right-holders (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006). Also, young children should be accepted as an active participant in routine processes and day-to-day activities (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005). From day one, the child should be seen as a citizen and agent, with its own rights. These rights are practiced and developed through actions and interactions with the environment. Lansdown (2005) adds that in line with the *evolving capacities of the child* this is not based on predefined frameworks and stages of development.

Building on this, and in addition to the 4-step process elaborated by Rosenthal and Levy (2010), we added for the present purpose a fifth step from the perspective of the person(s), child(ren) or minority group that need to be included. This fifth step involves:

5. *Inclusion as participation and agency*: being both informally and formally invited and provided with the opportunity to participate, as well as being enabled and supported to develop the skills to participate (as a developmental task of the participant); being enabled as well as being able to negotiate the space to interact and influence a situation in a specific context.

Agency and empowerment

A narrow needs-based approach is aimed at solving specific problems that require immediate attention and rapid action (e.g., language delays among specific groups of children, stunted growth, situations of abuse) and focuses on the specifics of the problem. This carries the risk of converting 'the child as a citizen' into a passive subject considered from the position of the problem in need for protection and care (Woodhead, 2005). This approach is driven by a fragmented child image (Willems, 2005) and contrasts with a rights-based approach. A rights-based approach promotes a vision of citizenship, in which citizens – including young children – are the holders of rights. This vision is based on a holistic, multiple, or 'rich' image of the child (Moss, 2010a ; Smith, 2015; Van Keulen, 2013; see also

Chapters 1 and 2). The child image stemming from the Convention on the Rights of the Child is averse of overprotection, over-control, disciplining or behaviour control (Lansdown, 2001; Willems, 2005). A narrow view towards child protection only, without seriously taking participation rights into account, means the child is actually disempowered (Lansdown, 2005).

Identity

The UNCRC stipulates children are to be respected as persons in their own right. *Identity* can be interpreted as dynamically constructed, co-constructed and reconstructed by the child through his or her interactions with various systems and social agents (Bronfenbrenner, 1979): parents, teachers, peers and others. *Identity* can be divided into aspects of personal or individual identity, and aspects of social identity. Personal identity refers to children's subjective feelings about their distinctiveness from others, their sense of uniqueness and of individuality; social identity refers to the ways in which they feel they are (or would like to be) the same as others, typically through identification with the family and peer group (Brooker et al., 2008). Identity thus covers simultaneously two core human motives: the need to belong and the need to be unique (Schaffer, 1996). Besides imitation and identification of role models, also verbal and non-verbal communication, dialogue and, later, text and electronic media are important key resources (Brooker et al., 2008). Early identities continue to change and grow as children experience new settings, activities, relationships and responsibilities. In the UNCRC, these developmental processes are acknowledged through various references in different articles, and by an *enhanced sense of identity and affiliation* as an aim of education in Article 29 on the Right to Education, also mentioning the protection and promotion of *physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development* as important to it (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001).

Children from socially marginalized communities face additional challenges with regard to their identities. Sources of potential disadvantage are bias and prejudice, discrimination, and stereotype threat in education. Children's task performance deteriorates when negative stereotypes are communicated to them; and low teacher expectations may lead to devaluation of identity reflecting societal power relations (Cummins, 2013; Emmen et al., 2013; Pulinx et al., 2015). Being aware of *identities* can be of transformative power, by asking what *image* of the child adults and professionals are consciously or unconsciously propagating with their pedagogical procedures, daily practices and instructions (Little & Kirwan, 2019). Cummins (2019) mentions the importance of being aware of the capable child in this regard: capable of becoming bilingual and biliterate; capable of higher-order thinking and intellectual accomplishments; capable of creative and imaginative thinking; capable of creating stories and art; capable of generating new knowledge; capable of thinking about and finding solutions to social issues.

Research context, methodology and ethics

The present study was part of the international research project *Children's views on inclusion,* a study within the European ISOTIS project (Pastori et al., 2018) that aimed at exploring children's perspectives on inclusion and well-being at (pre)school and identifying facilitating positive elements at (pre)school within social, cultural, religious and linguistic differences, what children identified as quality indicators of school inclusiveness, and their suggestions to make their school more welcoming and inclusive (Pastori et al., 2018). The present study kept in line with ISOTIS methodologies in order to facilitate (international) comparisons of specific characteristics and perceptions in other countries (Pastori et al., 2019)[16]. For the current study, the wider research context was a neighbourhood in the city of Utrecht, The Netherlands, with a substantial native low SES population and a large immigrant population with very mixed cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The neighbourhood is dealing with various urban issues related to - amongst others – migration and diversity, changes in social structures and individualisation. During the last ten years, this neighbourhood was one of five areas in Utrecht that received special attention and additional financial support by the city council within a specific 'neighbourhood approach' (referred to as the *krachtwijk* [empowered neighbourhood] policy), including supplementary investments in communications, empowerment of vulnerable groups, attention for citizen's participation, and attention for special places or themes symbolizing improvements in the neighbourhood[17]. Within this neighbourhood, three locations for respectively daycare, preschool and afterschool care were selected as study sites. The selected sites belong to the same child care provider.

The child care organization uses a pedagogical approach including elements of child rights and citizenship, applicable for all children from birth onwards. This pedagogy involves staff, parents and children around themes for social-emotional and democratic citizenship competencies for young children: togetherness, space to explore, challenges within limitations, positive attention, trust, diversity, respect, problem-solving, observing, listening, and giving children a voice. The pedagogy is based on a whole child approach, and aiming at the gradual transfer of responsibilities to children. The centres and groups are considered democratic communities in which children feel heard and seen, are given a voice, and where children learn to make decisions together, to take responsibility for themselves and their environment, and to learn to resolve problems and conflicts together. The central theme is *"Together, you can do more"* and respect for diversity is a central pedagogical value[18]. The pedagogical curriculum and approach were developed by the organization for child care (on its own initiative) and are in line with but also clearly a further elaboration of the basic pedagogical aims as specified in the Dutch Child Care Act (2005), being development-oriented and providing children with emotional safety, opportunities to develop their personal and social competences, and with democratic practices to familiarize themselves with the values and norms of society (see also Chapter 2).

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[16] The research was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines that apply to conducting scientific research in general, and research with (young) children in particular, and was approved by the Ethical Commission of Faculty of social Sciences of Utrecht University (ISOTIS-FETC19-055, 2019).

[17] https://www.utrecht.nl/fileadmin/uploads/documenten/bestuur-en-organisatie/publicaties/onderzoek-en-cijfers/Rapport-Leren-van-wijkaanpak-2018-06.pdf

[18] http://www.samengoedvoorlater.nl/wp-content/uploads/We-zijn-allemaal-anders.pdf. The project 'Together for the Future' ('Samen goed voor Later' in Dutch) was implemented in all Kindwijzer child centres from 2011 onwards. Kindwijzer, a network of child care providers, represents about 15 per cent of all day care centres in The Netherlands.

As children in the Netherlands often visit daycare and afterschool care programs on a part-time basis, the composition of the groups may differ from day to day. Research activities were planned accordingly to ensure the research groups were stable, most diverse in backgrounds and well reflecting the population in the neighbourhood. Table 4.1. provides a general overview of the context, sites and participating children, including children from immigrant groups, native low SES, and other cultural backgrounds including children from a refugee context. The specific ethnic background of the children is not registered for reasons of privacy protection. In the afterschool care program, a number of children are enrolled from a special Language school catering to recently arrived immigrant children with special catch-up education programmes. Emphasis in this Language-school is on learning the Dutch language, providing social-emotional support and preparing children for the integration into the mainstream school system. This particular school caters to refugee children from Syria, and, for example, children from labour immigrants from Eastern Europe, South Asia and Latin-America[19].

Table 4.1

Overview of context, sites and participating children

Context and site information				Participating children (unit of analysis)	
City / Area	Background characteristics	Formal context	Age group	Observations (participatory observation techniques)	Interviews recorded (verbalisations during/after playful activities)
Utrecht, Neighbourhood X	Culturally and linguistically mixed (incl. substantial native low SES population and large migrant population with mixed cultural and ethnical backgrounds)	Daycare, pre-school group	3-4 years	2 different moments (2 x group of 12 children)	11 individual 1x focus group
		After school care	4-6 years	2 different moments (2 x group of 24 children)	9 individual 1x focus group

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[19] http://www.taalschoolutrecht.nl/

Participants

The study involved young children below 6 years of age. The study aimed to collect information on children's perspectives on promising interventions and practices. The research activities were designed to be playful, creative and fun. All children in the selected settings could join the activities if they wanted, irrespective of their (formal) participation in the study. Prior to the study, written consent was obtained from teachers and parents, and of course from children themselves who were interested to participate. For these children, the consent form was visualised and verbally explained. Only the verbalisations of children with written consent from their parents and verbal consent from children themselves, were included in the study. Furthermore, verbal consent was asked from children in every phase of the study and at the onset of every activity. As a result, not all individual child-led activities were performed by all participating children; sometimes children were simply distracted or not interested to continue. This was especially the case during the child-led tour (see below) with the older children in afterschool care: while walking around, children saw their peers being involved in other activities at the same time; sometimes the children preferred to join their friends (which was absolutely fine and accepted as a consequence of doing child-led activities from a rights-based perspective with children during normal daily practices). Though all children were included in the observations (12 three-four year olds and 24 four-six year olds), the individual activities led to records of 20 open in-depth conversations and 2 focus group discussions (both involving 4 children). Included were 7 unique respondents out of the group of three-year old children (daycare/preschool), and 6 out of the group of four-six year old children (afterschool)[20]. An overview of participating children in individual activities including gender and age is provided in Table 4.3.

Continuous feedback was given to the children, showcasing their products and informing children how their work and collected information was of use.

Research methods and instruments

The study adopted a flexible approach doing justice to local priorities, specific characteristics of the age-group, the specific cultural background and vision of the child centre. Table 4.2 shows the various phases and activities of this Child Voices project and the central dimensions or concepts these fed into.

The first phase of the data-collection started with a document analysis of the pedagogical policy of the included organization, reports of the Utrecht city council, evaluation reports, web articles, journal articles, literature, and various websites. Secondly, an initial open group-interview with staff (managers, teachers and support staff) was conducted. Though not the focus of this study, their understanding of the details of the research, consent to, and cooperation with the activities was important to be able to conduct the research activities with children effectively and meaningfully. Also, they provided details about the context, location and general group climate. Thirdly, field notes of teacher-children and peer-to-peer interactions in selected situations were collected through participatory observations. Four different moments were selected for close observations in the two selected groups/sites. These were carefully documented and analysed, with a focus on: a) interactions between children during free play; b) interactions between children during a structured activity (meal time); c) interactions between staff and children; and d) situations of conflict-resolution.

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[20] The personal interviews and focus groups took from 30 minutes to over 1,5 hours – depending on the concentration span and interest of the child(ren). The child is/children were in the lead.

Table 4.2

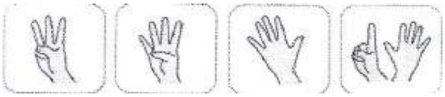
Overview of phases and activities of the Child Voices research project

Phase	Step	Activities	Dimensions / concepts
Preparatory	0	Identification of research sites Explanations (staff, parents, children) Consent forms (teachers, parents and children)	Recognition of children as valuable resource of information about issues related to their day-to-day experiences
First phase	1	Document analysis	Adapting to local context, culture and priorities
	2	Staff group-interview	
	3	Participatory observations	Experiences of children in their (pedagogical) context
Second phase	4	Child-led Tour	Views and experiences of children
	5	Identity Cards / Passports	Individual identity (afterwards discussed in focus groups), incl. family, friendships and 'myself in the future'
	6	Suns and Clouds	Children's well-being
	7	Making polaroids	Group identity and experiences of children in their context
Feedback	8	Group Compilation Book	Defining individual and group-identity, as well as aiming at welcoming new children for their well-being and inclusion. Final group product (and as collection of individual contributions). Also useful for feedback purposes.

After the participatory observations and following from the premise of involvement of children as key informants, the second phase of our data collection was based on a multi-method approach using various ways for eliciting expression of, and listening to, the voices of children (step 4-8 in Table 4.2). This part of the study was conducted in children's own safe day-to-day care environment; they were encouraged to express their views in recognition of the 'many languages' of children, pointing to the multiple ways in which children can express their thoughts and feelings. The individual and group activities conducted with children involved playful and creative activities - sometimes resulting in visuals that were used as stimuli to further communicate with children. This is also called a 'Mosaic Approach': through activities especially designed and developed for research with young children and through eliciting concurrent verbalizations during or after these activities or according to the output, the researcher builds a 'mosaic' of information highlighting children's voices on an issue from various angles (Clark & Moss, 2001; Clark, 2017). This methodological approach provides the opportunity to actually strengthen the feeling of being empowered and the sense of agency of the children involved.

The playful activities led to discussions, and output as stimulus for further verbalisations. The methodology included the following activities with children:

- A child-led tour through the building and premises: children took the lead in a tour and told the researcher what they see, what is important to them, how children experience spaces or activities, who belongs where, what they like (or not), they explained purposes, rules, regulations, et cetera – while the researcher asked open questions stimulating children to verbalise or otherwise communicate as much as possible (individual activity);
- Drawing or colouring of identity cards/passports ('This is Me' on A4-format): this included spaces for writing children's names (sometimes children could write their names themselves, or an alphabet of their name), ages, and framed spaces for drawings on *a*) 'this is me with my friends in the child centre') and *b*) 'this is me in the future'. This activity was performed in a group sitting at a table while drawing and talking about individual and group identity, family, friendships, and ideas, with the researcher coaching the process and stimulating the discussion by asking open questions or following up on what children communicated;



- 'Suns and Clouds': again a child-led individual activity, going around while children assigned a total of 3 activities or spaces they liked (a sun) and 3 they disliked (a cloud), provoking discussions on children's well-being in the centre. To capture the moment and provide feedback, we made a photograph of the sun/cloud stuck on the activity/in the space;
- Making polaroids of favourite spaces: also an individual child-led activity to invoke discussions on what is important to children in the child-centre. The direct and tangible output, again, was used as stimulus for further communications and verbalisations;
- Showcasing the output: while showcasing the output of the work and providing feedback was a continuous process during and after each of the activities, there was a growing portfolio of individual and group artefacts that deserved continuous showcasing in the group;
- Group book: soon after the start of the research activities, as part of the iterative process, the activity of making a living and growing group book was added to our methodology. This served multiple purposes: to facilitate overall feedback; to further stimulate discussions; to make the purpose of the Child Voices project less abstract for this young age group; to visualise their bonding group symbol; to include the contributions of individual children; and to contribute at the same time to a collective project with a bridging function to other children as well (children 'read' with each other in the book). While compiling the group book, as a final showcasing of products plus a summary of all the work accomplished, adults involved in the process (teachers, management, parents) were stimulated to continuously ask children what they think, as collecting child voices without listening or taking action on it (e.g., by

providing feedback), gives children the message that there is actually little real interest in their opinion (Mooney and Blackburn, 2003);

- Welcoming new children: furthermore, the overarching (ISOTIS) goal of generating ideas from children was to discuss how to welcome new children in the group. The group book was one of those ideas, containing inferences of children's responses during the research process and served multiple purposes, including furthering inclusion. The collection of work with drawings and pictures telling stories of individual children and of the group could serve as an introduction to new children.

The whole process of verbalisations (during an activity and on the basis of the visuals as output of an activity) resulted in in-depth, open interviews with children discussing issues related to inclusion, belonging, well-being, identity and participation. When necessary, we adjusted the tools (according to the evolving capacities of the young child; cf. Lansdown, 2005). For example, we found that the tools provided needed to be short, concrete, functional, colourful, tangible, flexible and adaptive to the context.

Table 4.3

Overview of recorded interviews during/after playful individual and group activities

Respondent				**Activity**		
No.	M/F	Age	Child-led tour	Identity cards	Suns and Clouds	Picture favourite place or space
1	F	3		x	x	x
2	F	3			x	
3	F	3		x	x	x
4	F	3	x			
5	F	3	x	x	x	
6	M	3	x	x		x
7	M	3				x
8	F	6		x	x	
9	M	6	x		x	x
10	F	5		x	x	x
11	F	5		x	x	
12	F	5		x	x	
13	M	4				x
Total			4*)	8 **)	9	7

*) Three possible explanation of the low number of recorded verbalizations resulting of this activity are: 1) All children were invited to join (one by one) this activity; however, coincidentally, some of the children were without parental consent to use their verbalizations for this study; 2) Not all of the children were interested to participate in this activity; 3) Some of the children who did participate (with parental consent), became easily distracted by their peers – they dropped out while walking around over the premises, probably due to their young age and relatively short span of attention.

**) During this activity, while children were sitting and drawing/colouring their identity cards at the table, the focus group discussions were held about current (and future) identities (with two groups of four children).

Data analysis

The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through qualitative content analysis after coding (using NVivo11 pro), organized in categories and using analytical sub-codes (Table 4.4). We used a directed form of content analysis in order to validate the existing framework and to support us in creating an initial coding scheme (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Deductively derived categories were enriched with specific definitions, anchor samples, as well as coding rules in order to explicitly show which text components belong to which category (Mayring, 2014). Data that could not be coded was marked and later determined if it represented a new category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Assigned data in each category was summarized and inductive subcategories were formed (Mayring, 2014). Only verbal data, such as children's wordings (transcribed) was coded, and analysed in combination with children's visual products (such as drawings, pictures and polaroids), that were primarily used as stimuli and incentives for further discussions.

In line with the coding tree of the ISOTIS-project (Pastori et al., 2018), children's verbalizations were coded according to four main categories of factors influencing their well-being, inclusion and participation: diversity, identity, organization and social relationships (and various sub-categories). These were divided in factors promoting and factors undermining children's well-being, inclusion and participation. Transformative factors (i.e., factors that may contribute to changing the environment and involve children as social change agents) as such were identified indirectly from the verbalisations of children. Open questions asking for 'proposals' ("*what would you suggest?, how would you..?, what would happen if..?*") require a certain level of abstract thinking that appeared to be difficult to apply for this age-group. However, transformative factors could be analysed combining all applied tools, including observations, as per the Mosaic Approach.

Results

This section firstly summarises children's verbal input, organized along the coded categories (main codes and sub-codes) as related to inclusion and well-being: diversity, identity, organization and social relationships. Following to that, we will describe what children articulated as promoting and undermining their 'feeling good', inclusion and participation during day-to-day experiences in their centres. We will end this section with referring shortly to the transformative factors that could be deducted from these results.

The figures in the co-occurrence table (Table 4.4) provide an overview of how many times each specific code recurred in the voiced and recorded data. As can be confirmed from here, children responded generally positive, when encouraged to voice their experiences in their centres. Many expressions came spontaneously, other verbalizations were in response to open questions about what children do like, or not, in or about their care provisions; what activities they like to do; what their favourite place or space is; whom they do like to play with; and how they welcome new children. Children most frequently mentioned factors related to *organization,* both promoting and undermining well-being and inclusion; followed by factors related to *social relationships* and *identity*. Among this group of young children, the category *diversity* was least mentioned as a factor of influence; if mentioned, it was neither in positive nor negative way.

Table 4.4

Table of co-occurrence of coded content (children's verbalizations)

Codes applied	**Subcodes identified**	**Children's voices 3-6 years on well-being, inclusion, participation at preschool and care**	
		Factors promoting	Factors undermining
Diversity	Social inequalities	0	1
	Language	0	0
	Culture	0	0
Identity	Physical features	4	0
	Social identity	30	1
	Myself in the future	9	0
	Linguistic identity	0	0
	Cultural identity	0	0
Organization	Transition to school	8	1
	Time	7	6
	Teachers	0	0
	Space	42	6
	Rules	4	2
	Play, exploration	45	5
	Participation	1	0
	Learning	4	2
	Food	0	1
Social relationships (and citizenship)	Inclusion, acceptance	20	2
	Friendship	32	6
	Exclusion	5	5
	Discrimination	1	0
	Conflict	7	5

Amongst the organizational factors most frequently mentioned in relation to promoting well-being and inclusion, were by far factors related to *play* and *space*. For example, preschool children indicated frequently they liked the space and open doors during free play and the possibility to go beyond their 'official group boundaries' and explore without restrictions. This was followed by – notably – factors related to the future transition to the kindergarten department in primary school among the group of three-year olds. Undermining organizational factors mentioned were issues related to *time*, *space*, and *play:* especially afterschool care children indicated they did not like restrictions in this regard during free play, for example interruptions for fixed mealtimes or being allowed to play outside only at certain pre-defined timeslots.

The second most frequently mentioned category were factors regarding *social relationships,* with the highest occurrence of undermining factors relative to factors promoting well-being and inclusion. Important for promoting well-being and inclusion at preschool and afterschool care were factors like *friendship*, *inclusion* and *acceptance*: children indicated they really liked to come to the centre and play with their friends. Children with siblings in the child centre indicated this was very important to them (younger as well as older siblings). Issues related to *friendship, exclusion* and *conflict* were most frequently mentioned as negative to children's well-being and inclusion. For example, children mentioned they did not like to come on days that their friends were not attending – some even indicated that on those days without friends, they felt lost and excluded.

Finally, in the category *identity*, factors related to the sub-code *social identity* were often mentioned as positive and supportive to well-being and inclusion: children learned to define themselves in relation to others with referring to belonging to a group (family, friends, neighbourhood) and factors like age and gender. In the following section, we will explain relevant observations and children's verbalisations per category in more detail.

Factors promoting or undermining well-being and inclusion in day- and after school care

Below, we will explain and provide context to the factors the children indicated as promoting and undermining well-being, their sense of belonging and inclusion, and their participation. At the end of this section, as derived from our mosaic of (participatory) observations, children's verbalisations and output, we will come to suggestions and possible transformational factors.

Factors regarding Diversity

While there was considerable ethnic-cultural diversity in the group, the only references children themselves made to diversity were related to gender. At preschool and afterschool care, children knew the physical differences between the two sexes 'boy' or 'girl'. Sometimes gender differences were mentioned as an exclusionary mechanism (e.g., a 3-years old girl mentioned she did not play with boys, apart from her brother and father). Differences in interest could be observed in the type of toys boys and girls choose to play with, and the character of the preferred play. Pretend play for example, was mostly done by girls, and sports like soccer was observed as mostly played by boys. A general observation was, that children chose to mainly play with the same sex and this was observed to be more prominent the older children get in the observed age groups (3 to 6). As gender diversity was not the focus of this research, we did not analyse the data in further detail regarding this topic.

While the groups were culturally and linguistically mixed regarding children's backgrounds, the only language spoken at the child centre was Dutch - both in daycare, preschool and afterschool care. The organization has no policy or programme with regards to language support for non-Dutch speakers. This was not considered a barrier as such, or a reason for exclusion. All children interviewed spoke Dutch. When asked specifically, children associated "*another child not speaking the language*" with a child being either too young or too shy to speak (according to respondents in preschool), or with a child they could "*teach the language when they play*"[21]. Children were indeed observed to correct each other, also linguistically. Also, during one of the observations, a discussion was overheard between two boys discussing their home language, while they were building a farm with Duplo (a Dutch L1 and an Arabian L1 respectively; both speaking Dutch at the child centre):

> *Boy 1: "In school and at afterschool care, I speak Dutch".*
> *Boy 2: "And during your birthday children's party* [verjaardagsfeestje] *at home?"*
> *Boy 1: "Then I also speak Dutch".*[22]

Factors regarding Identity

With regard to identity, children participating in this study did not refer to themselves or others in terms of physical features, or cultural or linguistic background. All participating children knew and recognized their own names. Regarding their individual identity, it was observed that young children took a lot of pride in being able to write (an alphabet of) their first name. They also liked to count their age. Sometimes, the 3-year olds did not know their age verbally, but they always knew it in terms of the symbol of holding 3 fingers up in the air. They also knew how to count, and they liked the conclusion of being a 3-years old. When asked about their friends, children mentioned peers of around the same age and gender. This was also observed during the group observations. During free play children sought the company of those who have the same interests, and age and gender was more prominent for the older children. When playing with other age-groups, the linking pin was very often a sibling and his or her friends; or an overarching linking activity such as playing soccer, which goes across ages (usually not across gender, as was observed). Also, classification of children in years of age was important, as illustrated by this discussion among a group of girls, aged 4-6 years, and verbalised by one of them: "*Cynthia says she will be 5. Charlotte says that she is 2 years older than her, because she is 6. Another girl says that she is now 5 and the difference is one year only. Yes, says Charlotte, and this year I will be 7 and then your number will be 6. Your number will follow my number. Forever. (...).*"[23]

Also important with regard to identity was that within the daycare-context, children have their own basket in the dressing room, with their name-tag on it. This basket-with-nametag was often mentioned by children as important, as it contained children's personal toys and things they were allowed to take from home – even though the toy had to be stored in the basket during day-time. The basket was also mentioned to be important because it contained children's stuffed animals to cuddle when they needed comfort[24]. However the baskets were kept out of reach of the children, which was pitied: "*when the toys have to be put away in the basket, then children can be sad and they need a hug*"[25].

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[21] Picture favourite place and space, respondent 10
[22] Group observation afterschool care
[23] Discussion between children during the Identity-Card activity, focus group 1, 4-6 yrs
[24] Suns and Clouds: respondent 8; Child-led tour, respondent 5, 9

Children often referred to their home situations, especially when they had other siblings in the care environment – both in day- and afterschool care. When indeed children had an older or younger brother or sister around, they liked to point to them, talk about them, and - when possible – play with them. They often described themselves in relation to them, in terms of age (older or younger), and in terms of what they have or like. Also, in general, when children talked, they often indicated that they experienced continuity between the centre and home environment[26], as can also be illustrated by the following:

When asking a 3-year old girl if she still takes a nap in the afternoon at the daycare centre, she replied: "*No! Only in my own bed! I have a princess bed. But my brother, he is one year old and he is in the other group, and he hits me a lot but he does not yet understand it, he has a knight bed, and he cries very often in his bed. My mommy and daddy have a king and queen bed*" [27].

When asked to draw themselves with their friends, all of the 3, 4 and 5-year old children identified themselves and their friends with fairy-tale, animation, or phantasy figures or animals, both now and for themselves in the future[28]. From 5 years of age onwards, children started drawing themselves with "real-life" friends, varying from the children they actually played with at the centre, friends they know from their school, or their parents[29]. Also, with regard to themselves in the future, older children also increasingly made more 'realistic' projections. As we will discuss later, during the interviews with the 3-year olds, the near future in terms of the transition from preschool to school, was mentioned by most of them and often, even when this moment was still relatively far away (6 or more months).

Regarding group identity, children were often observed to refer to their group's space (classroom) and peers; each group had a name and a group symbol. This was where children 'belonged'.

During the group discussions while and after drawing the Identity Cards, children sometimes had normative discussions amongst each other, about what is possible and what is not possible (fantasy or reality) – in the afterschool group sometimes related to age[30]. However, there were no indications that this was regarded by the children as undermining well-being, inclusion and participation.

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[25] Child-led tour, respondent 5

[26] Identity-card, focus group 1; Picture favourite place or space respondents, 6, small group 4-6 yrs, 10

[27] Child-led tour, respondent 5

[28] Identity-card: myself in the future 3-4 years old: rabbit, Elza (4x), princess (2x), mermaid, superhero, alien.
Identity-card: myself in the future 5-6 years old: pizzaman, policewomen, teacher, mother.

[29] Identity-card, drawings afterschool care group age 4-6 yrs, drawing 1 t/m 3 en 5

[30] Discussion between two girls while working on the Identity Cards, afterschool-care

Organizational factors

During the interviews and verbalisations, children were explicitly asked what makes them feel good and what they like most – and what they think new children would like most, or would need to feel good about their daycare, preschool or afterschool provision. Most of the answers were concerned with play and space. Here, also many of the preschool children made notice of their forthcoming or future transition to primary school in this regard. Below, we describe what children mostly indicated in general terms; when answers were unique, or especially illustrative, references to specific respondents are made.

To illustrate how children spoke in 'many languages':
When individually asked what they liked most about their child centre, two out of seven 3-year old children ran around across the hall with their arms spread widely, and - while turning around – called out loudly: "*Everything*!"

Physical space

In daycare and preschool, all of the children indicated they very much liked to freely move around outside the designated group-space[31]. There was an open door policy at the centre during free play, and children were able to move across the large central hall and to some extent into the rooms of other groups. In this hall, the space was divided in thematic play-centres. Children liked these play-centres a lot, and mentioned they liked to play in the 'kitchen centre', the wooden playhouse and the wooden play-boat. Also mentioned were the play-cushions, because "you can lay down there when you are tired". Even more often than mentioning the central hall, preschool children mentioned they liked the space of the older afterschool groups in the same building. This space was not part of the open door policy, and the passage was usually closed for the younger children in daycare and preschool. However, daycare and preschool children were sometimes allowed to go there during the day - in small groups and accompanied by a teacher. The most favourite space there, was a small enclosed glass-walled room with pillow-blocks and mats, to build piles and huts, or to hang around. Also, the afterschool care space was popular as a provision: some 3year old children indicated they have parental permission to play there in the afternoon, when also the older afterschool children arrive (after their school time). These 3-year-olds then shift from the preschool setting to the afterschool setting, in order to play with their friends that already made the transition to kindergarten and afterschool care.

Children were allowed to bring toys from home, and were proudly showing them and telling about them. They had to store these toys during the day in their name-tagged-baskets, where also their other belongings and utensils were kept for them. These baskets were stored out of their reach on shelves in the dressing room. In their own group space, children mentioned they liked the sofa, the soft carpet on the floor to lie down on, and the lego table to sit and play.

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[31] Most of the participants mention this during the Child-led tour and Sons and Clouds-exercise. This is also observed during group observations.

Children in the afterschool care provision, seemed to mention space more often in direct relation to play. Space to freely move around, was not specifically mentioned as such[32]. Some children in afterschool care indicated they preferred to play inside above playing outside, especially when they were busy with their play. However, they did not always have the choice to stay inside, as outside play is also part of the fixed programme of activities every afternoon – weather permitting. Some children can obtain permission (with parental agreement) through "outside playing contracts" from age 7 onwards to play outside without direct supervision. In these cases, children have the opportunity to expand and explore their boundaries. It was observed that for younger children in afterschool care (ages 4-6) these opportunities to freely explore were less. This was not verbalized as an undermining factor as such by children, only shared as some kind of an 'accomplishment' or 'status' to reach when moving to the next age group[33].

Time

Many preschool children knew exactly when they come to the child centre for half a day or a full day that respective day. Sometimes they knew to tell what days of the week they usually come (e.g., Mondays and Thursdays, or all days except Mondays, et cetera). Many children made at any point reference to fixed moments of the day, usually organized around the meals: "*now we can play for a little while, and then we eat fruits"*[34]. The children in daycare and preschool knew very well the organized structure of the activities of the day, which gave them grasp on time and their environment. It was observed that this created an important part of the peaceful atmosphere in the daycare and preschool groups.

One of the favourite daily moments in daycare, confirmed by all children standing around[35]:
Researcher: "*What is your favourite moment of the day then*?"
Child (girl, age 3): "*Hiding under the orange blanket when my mom comes*."
Researcher: "*That's nice! Under which blanket then? And where do you do that*?"
Child: "*The orange one. Here.*"
(She runs to the corner, and points to a pile of blankets).
Researcher: "*Do you do that every time*?"
Child: (nods yes).

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[32] Children in the 4-6 age afterschool group have limited free space and/or time to move around. The elder groups in afterschool care have more 'freedoms': they are allowed to move around with a larger action-radius including outside spaces. Also, they do not have fixed mealtimes when children sit jointly to eat their afternoon-snacks.

[33] Suns and Clouds, respondent 8

[34] Child-led tour, respondent 9

[35] Suns and Clouds, respondent 2

Researcher: "*And mom? Does she startle? Where is my child*?"
Child: (nods yes).
(All other children call around that they always do that too. They all come closer, start to laugh and have fun. The researcher asks the children to show how they do it. Together they spread the blanket on the floor).
Child: "*Then you first have to make it (..the blanket) all that way, flat. Flat in the corner*."
Researcher: "*And then, are we laying it down here*?"
Child: "*Yes*."
Laughter.
The researcher asks how she then crawls under it, and if she wants to show it and do it now. But she doesn't want that, because that is only for "*when mommy comes*!"
Child: "*Today I am here half a day (.. and then she comes*)."

Also in afterschool care, children knew exactly when they usually come to the centre, and at what days their friends are coming[36]. Children spoke of fixed days of the week that "they have to go" [..to the afterschool care centre]. They generally indicated they did not like the days in afterschool care when their friends were not present. It was pivotal for them to have their own friends from school to play with. Some indicated that otherwise, they felt lost[37]. This can be illustrated by the following:

Child (boy, age 6): "*I play only with Jan. That is the most important. And Sophia, but she is not here today. She is here on Mondays and Thursdays*."
Researcher: "*And are you here as well on Mondays and Thursdays*?"
Child: "*No. Only on Tuesdays and Thursdays*."
Researcher: "*So on Thursdays you can also play with Sophia. Do you know Jan and Sophia from your class in school?*"
Child nods.

Rules

Neither the children in preschool, nor those in afterschool, made much mention of specific rules. The 3-year-olds made mention of the rules around the baskets with nametags in the dressing room: "*the toys we take from home have to be kept there during the day, but if that makes us sad we can have our cuddle-animal from the basket to comfort us*"[38] . Also, they made mention of the rules around hygiene: "*after toileting, you have to wash hands, then dry and then eat*: *if you do it right you get a sticker*"[39].

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[36] Suns and Clouds, respondents 1, 2; Identity cards, focus group 1 age 4-6 yrs; Child-led tour, respondents 5, 9
[37] Identity cards, focus group 1, 4-6 yrs,
[38] Child-led tour, respondent 5
[39] Child-led tour, respondents 5 and 6

In the centres, the general rule applies, that if a child asks to join a game, he or she is always allowed to join. This implies, however, that the 'new' child is pro-active, or is actively supported by other children or staff. The result could be, that some children are unintentionally excluded (as could be observed in one case). An illustration:

Researcher: "*What do you like best*?"
Child (boy, aged 6): "*Lego*."
Researcher: "*Do you think you can join them now, if you'd like*?"
Child: "*Join what*?"
(researcher points at a group of around five boys, playing in the lego-centre)
Researcher: "*Join them with the Lego*?"
Child: "*Yes, everybody can*."[40]

As mentioned earlier, children indicated that they are enjoying more freedom to move around and make their own decisions when they grow older. Some indicated that they experienced fixed activities such as 'meal-time' or afternoon snacks (organized in the class with the children placed around the table) as undermining their 'feeling-good' and as interrupting their play[41]. From 6 years onwards, children do not have to observe a 'sit-while-eat' rule anymore and they can decide about their own pace during the afternoon. Children liked that very much, but some of the older children indicated they did like the waiting time for their younger siblings and friends who do not enjoy those freedoms.

Play, exploration and learning

Positive references to play often came along with references to space ("*I like playing in the corridor*"[42]) and references to friends, the latter more prominent in afterschool care: "*I like playing with my friends with the beads*"[43]. In their own group-space, preschoolers mentioned they liked to dress-up, play with lego, play 'hide and seek', and do crafting (many of them pointed very proudly to the crafts in the classroom that they made before). Most references among the preschoolers, however, related to free exploration outside their classroom in clearly defined spaces: they liked to play in the hall in general. Also playing in one of the thematic centres[44] is very popular. Children liked to move and to climb[45]. They also indicated they liked to push beyond these borders, and explore new grounds accompanied by a teacher (referring to spaces in the same building for the afterschoolers). It was observed that during free playtime with an open door policy among all daycare groups (age 0-4), the group space of the preschoolers (3-4 years of age) was filled with younger toddlers, in their turn freely exploring toys and expanding their perimeters.

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[40] Child-led tour, respondent 4
[41] Child-led tour, respondent 4 and 9
[42] For example, Suns and Clouds, respondents 2 and 12; Child-led tour, respondents 5 and 6
[43] For example, Suns and Clouds, respondents 5, 11, 9
[44] For example: kitchenette, slide, train, wooden playhouse, wooden boat
[45] All of the children dance, run, wobble, move, climb when involved in the Child-led tour and during the Suns and clouds exercise

In afterschool care, construction-toys were very popular among boys, and beads among the girls interviewed. Girls also mentioned they liked to play in the playhouse-centre, and do crafting. Other important spaces specifically mentioned among the afterschoolers were: playing outside/inside, the glass-walled room with pillow blocks, the studio for creative crafting, various construction centres (duplo, lego and knex), and the gym. Apart from time spent during daily fixed activities, children aged 4-6 were allowed to move around through the hall and the assigned group spaces inside the building only. A few children mentioned specific activities they did not like in afterschool: only reading books was mentioned more than once as something they would rather not choose as an activity[46].

Researcher: "*Do you like it here in afterschool care*?"
Children: "*No*!" (all smiling)
Researcher: "*Really*?"
One child (girl, 5): "*Sometimes.*"
Another child (girl, 5): "*A little*."
Researcher: "*How can we make it a little nicer then*?"
"*By playing kindly*!", another girl (age 5) says.[47]

Some children indicated they liked to go outside to the playground and garden. Play-time outside is a structural daily activity – both in pre- and afterschool care. Furthermore, children mentioned they liked to learn to count, mention colours, and liked to show it if they can write (alphabets of) their names[48]. When they accomplished something, whether it was in a structured activity or during unstructured play, they liked the confirmation and praise of an adult or peer[49].

Transition

As mentioned above, playing on the premises of the afterschool care facility was considered as something very special by the preschoolers - either under supervision of their own teachers during day-time, or in the afternoon with their friends aged 4+ under supervision of the afterschool teachers. The same eagerness was observed with regard to the shift to primary school[50]. Most of the preschoolers made at any moment mention of their prospective transition to primary school; all positive in the sense that they looked forward to it. For some it was already very concrete, as they mentioned the name of the school they were going to attend, or the names of their future teachers[51].

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[46] Suns and Clouds, respondents 5 and 9
[47] Focus-group discussion 1, age 4-6 yrs
[48] Identity cards, focus group discussions 1 and 2; Informed consent forms for children
[49] Observations preschool and afterschool care
[50] In The Netherlands, children make the transition to primary school at age 4 (first two years of kindergarten, followed by another six years of PE).
[51] Suns and Clouds, respondent 2; Child-led tour, respondent 5, 6

Some talked about it, but still had to wait quite a long time (more than 6 months[52]) before they turned 4. Clearly it was an issue that kept children occupied; the topic was mentioned and discussed with eagerness. In the current study, this topic was not further assessed, and it cannot be concluded whether this is an intrinsic or externally motivated concept for them, or a combination of both.

Factors relating to social relationships (and citizenship)

Children in both preschool daycare and afterschool care indicated that playing with their friends is very important, and some children indicated that during the days that none of their friends were present, they didn't know what to do and felt a bit lost[53]. The presence of siblings seemed to be even more important for children's 'feeling-good'. This was mentioned across all ages and all verbalisations (that is, if a respondent had a sibling at the centre). During the observations, it also became clear that younger siblings tended to seek the company and comfort of their older brother or sister; and often, the older brothers or sisters felt responsible for, and took care of their younger sibling. This was observed as the main trigger of cross-ages free play in the more informal afterschool care environment. It was also observed here that some kinds of play by itself triggered playing across age-groups: mainly football, lego-construction and the water-games that were organized on a hot day. The latter, however, concerned more boys than girls; girls were more often engaged in social play with each other, or sat together colouring or playing with beads while talking, resulting in relatively more same-age and same-sex play. The following quotes illustrates this:

Researcher: "*When a new child comes, can he or she also play along*?"
Child (girl, age 3): "*Yes, but only if it's a girl she can play with me*."
Researcher: "*Only if it's a girl, not a boy*?"
Child: "*No*."
Researcher: "*Why*?"
Child: "*Just not. Except when it is my dad or my brother. Only two boys are allowed*."[54]

In preschool, friends were said to be made at the centre; in afterschool care, friends were mostly made at school. When asked, none of the afterschool children responded with a full "Yes" to the question if they liked to play with 'new children'; four children replied with a full "No"[55]. The rest of the children were ambiguous while responding, however not with an observed negative attitude to 'new children'. 'New children' were a common phenomenon in the groups, and children reacted open and neutral to questions about newcomers. As admission to the groups was generally organized according to age, the younger children did not understand the concept of a 'new child' other than a 2.5-year-old entering the toddler group after the baby-group. In the context of afterschool care, the concept was understood after explanation. Children reacted open to newcomers. However, children indicated that they would not automatically play with a new child. During free play time, children played with their friends - very often fixed friends on fixed days. However, the rule of the centre is, that if another child wanted to join, he or she should be allowed to. From the observations it became clear, that generally children stuck to this rule without hesitation. However, if a child is not in a good mood or making a negative demand to join the game, he or she might be ignored[56]. In general, children seemed to take good care of each other as is illustrated in the following excerpt of a discussion in afterschool care:

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[52] Child-led tour, respondent 9
[53] Identity cards, focus group 1, 4-6 yrs; Picture, favourite place or space, respondent 10
[54] Child-led tour, respondent 5
[55] Child-led tour, respondent 4, 9; Identity cards, focus group 1, 4-6 yrs.

Researcher: "*Are you also playing with new children*?"
Child (girl, age 5): "*No. I don't know yet*."
Researcher: "*I mean, are there sometimes children here who do not speak Dutch*?"
Child: "*Yes, just one now. But now she does speak Dutch again. Because the first time she didn't speak Dutch. But now she does*."
Researcher: "*Did she learn the language*?"
Child: "*Yes, by my girlfriends and by me. We were going to teach her*."
Researcher: "*And then you taught that new child how to speak Dutch*?"
Child: "*Yes, together with my two girlfriends. Now she knows everything. We taught her something every time. And now she knows*."
Researcher: "*Is she always allowed to play with you*?"
Child: "*Yes. Sometimes not and sometimes she is*."[57]

It was observed that small conflicts do occur all the time. Children liked to resolve these themselves, and did indeed solve them most of the time, as could be observed at various occasions. Children seemed to need conflict to define themselves and make their own point. It was also observed that the attendance and attention of an adult can even aggravate or prolong a conflict between peers, as children started to expect a reaction from the respective adult[58]. The teachers did intervene at a certain point, but not immediately. Also, conflicts were allowed to exist - to a certain extent - as can be understood from the following situation:

A 3-year old girl is angry, and has turned her back to the group for a while already. She wants the pencil that is in use by another girl. Two exactly the same pencils are at her disposal, but she refuses.
Researcher says: "*You really are allowed to stop, if you no longer like to draw. No problem*".
A third girl (age 3) says to the angry girl: "*But you are allowed to be angry too, that's okay*".
Researcher says: "*Of course you are allowed, but I do not understand why you are angry. Maybe you like to tell us why?*".

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[56] Identity cards, focus group 1, 4-6 yrs
[57] Picture favourite place or space, respondent 10
[58] Group observation, preschool age 3 yrs

The third girl says: "*No. Maybe it'll be okay again*."[59]

Some children indicated they did not like conflict, either for themselves[60] or for their siblings[61]. From the observations it seemed that conflicts increased in frequency after an extended time of free play (more than 30 to 40 minutes) – both in the preschool and afterschool settings.

Transformative factors for well-being, inclusion and participation

Some factors could be identified as transformative regarding children's well-being and inclusion, and are described below. Mostly, these were indirectly deducted from children's verbalisations and questions, and not directly observed or heard from the children, and based on combining all applied tools, including the (participatory) group observations.

One of the transformative factors identified was the recognition of the importance of 'spaces', literally and figuratively. First of all, facilitating children who wished this to explore and expand their boundaries seemed to be of transformative value: offering children the opportunity through safe spaces and time to freely explore, and to go beyond their spatial and social boundaries by moving around and shifting to older groups. Also, recognition of the importance of individual preferences and spaces - for example with regard to individual identity (e.g., as reflected by the often-mentioned basket in the dressing room with the child's name tagged on it) came to the fore as a transformative factor – as it was mentioned by the children at so many occasions and across the groups. The pedagogical function of a personal basket could be expanded, e.g., to bring the basket within reach of children during the day.

Another transformative factor identified, was the overarching and connecting group symbols that distinguished while at the same time emphasized group-identity. The observed groups had names that were continuously symbolized, e.g., using animal names or colours for the groups like 'butterflies' and 'bees', or 'green' and 'blue'. All children were proudly mentioning their group names and symbols and knew exactly who belonged where.

In addition, working on an aggregated and collective product that recognized both individuality and collectivity or community - such as the group book that was compiled using all personal products made by the children – was transformative with regard to personal and group identities, and beyond that: to bonding and bridging diversity, and could be used either as a wrap-up tool for feedback on children's voices or as a story-telling book for peers (children were observed to enthusiastically read the book together, showing other children (and parents) their work). Moreover, this book could also count as a great introduction to new children. Not only to get to know the group (identity), their peers, but also as a tool to introduce themselves by adding to it their identity card, their

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[59] Identity cards, focus group 2, age 3 years

[60] Suns an Clouds, respondent 3; Picture favourite place and space, respondent 10

[61] Child-led tour, respondent 5

pictures and polaroids of what they like in the centre and what makes them feel good. By linking this book to a 'higher' and abstract goal such as *"for new children so that they get to know what it is like to be with the 'butterflies', who belongs to it, and what are the favourite spaces, toys or ways to play"*, the book stimulated and motivated the children enormously and made the assignments very concrete.

Discussion and lessons learned

The issues of well-being, inclusion, diversity, belonging, participation, and educational and social equity are urgent in current society (Biesta, 2015; Crul, 2016; Leseman et al., 2020; Melhuish, 2014; Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2014). This study was based on the premise that first-hand information from children themselves, about their day-to-day experiences in daycare, preschool and afterschool care, and their perception of characteristics of a rights-based democratic citizenship pedagogy, can be highly relevant for informing public discourse and policymaking, and for adapting policies and practices to the needs and potentials of those whom the provisions are catering for: the children, their parents and communities. We were seeking to answer questions such as: what contributes to (or undermines) young children's well-being, inclusion and participation in the selected ECEC services; what do young children think about their (personal and socio-cultural) identity and how do they experience issues of diversity? What do young children regard as quality indicators of inclusiveness in their daycare, preschool or afterschool programme, and what ideas do they have for allowing all children to participate in their group? While doing so, we explored ways to ask (very) young children about these abstract issues. Below, we will firstly discuss the findings along the lines of context (input, setting and tools applied), followed by a discussion of the promoting and undermining factors for well-being and inclusion voiced by our respondents. This will be followed by an overall discussion of the process of child participation. Finally, as part of our results were included as country input in the cross-national analysis of the ISOTIS project, we link our results to the overall findings of the ISOTIS Children Study .

Context: input, settings and tools applied

First, regarding the context, the afterschool-setting (children 4-6 years old) may not have been optimal to implement a Child Voices project such as the current one. We identified various reasons for this, varying from the more informal character of the setting to less structure as compared to formal daycare and preschool provisions. It was observed that children were 'floating' after a day in school through their assigned spaces. Children were focused on their peers and were sometimes hard to mobilize to participate in a structured activity. When interested to join, it was also a challenge to keep them involved, as there were many distractions around: high numbers of children, toys, friends, sounds, play, et cetera. Despite these challenges, it was still very well possible to conduct the Child Voices project including the specifically designed activities that were characterized as short, concrete, and adjusted to fit children's attention span according to their age and particular context. Making visualisations either through drawing or via camera or polaroid, appeared to be most effective and appropriate (and likewise through duplo/lego, which appeared very popular among both boys and girls in the study; and found useful in other studies as described by Pimlot-Wilson, 2012). However, especially for the younger children these tools could work as a distraction as well: on more than one occasion, the means became an end in itself and children started playing with the tools or gave their own meaning to the tools during the course of the activity. For example, during the Suns and Clouds-activity, when children were invited to assign three suns to a place or activity they liked, and three clouds to things they disliked, children started their fantasy-play with the suns and clouds on the floor[62]; or as another example, one child refused to place a cloud at something she disliked and used a sun instead "*as suns were making it look nicer"*[63].

In the formal daycare and preschool settings for 3 to 4-year-old children, the project was implemented more effectively: a lot of structure in time and activities during the day made it easier to decide on the best time-slot for research activities. Also, the groups were smaller with higher staff-child ratios. A restful and quiet environment caused less distraction, resulting in more focus from these younger children. On the other hand, some children really enjoyed the individual attention and the one-to-one character of some activities, therefore stretching time not willing to end the open-ended character of activities such as the Child-led tour and the Suns and Clouds-activity.

In sum, we received more useful and relevant information from the younger age group. The context and setting was more decisive in this regard, as well as the flexibility of the approach, than the actual age of the children. This is in line with child rights being based on evolving capacities, meeting children where they are and not based on pre-defined stages (Anderson, 2008; Lansdown, 2005). Our findings imply that principles of child participation, child voices and child leadership can be very well implemented in child centres with young children. Further research under below-three age groups could reveal the conditions and characteristics for toddlers, babies, and children in age-heterogeneous vertical groups.

Main findings

With regard to the results of this study, it was obvious that children were very enthusiastic to join the research and to participate. Especially in the younger age group (3-4 years, daycare and preschool setting), all children were willing to join. For young children, it appeared to work very well to start with an activity around their own identity (drawing the identity cards, for example). As this activity can be done in small groups, this created confidence and sufficient time for personal talks to get to know children and their daily experiences. From this personal identity activity ('me'), it was easier to bridge discussions to the domains of the other research activities later on in the process, with accents on the child in relation to the group, space, or organization ('us'), and to diversities, the other and questions on involving new children (‘them’). Also with regard to the activity of identity cards, the mastering of children to write (some alphabets of) their names, was observed to be part of their pride and identity[64].

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[62] Suns and Clouds, respondent 1

[63] Suns and Clouds, respondent 10

In addition, the following differences between the 3 to 4-year-old children and the 5 to 6-year-old children were observed during the Identity card activity: the 3 to 4-year-old age group mostly used fantasy figures to identify themselves (e.g., a superhero, a princess, a rabbit); the 5 to 6-year-old children moved towards ‘real’ projections (a teacher, a pizza man, a parent). The 3 to 4-year-old children immediately started drawing without hesitation; many of the 5 to 6-year-old children first said “*I cannot draw this*” and needed confirmation before they started drawing. The space on the identity card: ‘*When I grow up, I’ll be …’* seemed to be too abstract for the younger children and drawing ‘friends’ was quite vague for some of the younger children.

Many children interviewed in the 3+ preschool age group mentioned their own basket with their name-tag on it, in which they kept their toys brought from home during the day, as important. As often the first thing mentioned, this suggests the little basket is considered important to children; and because of their name on it, it suggests to be part of their personal identity and a safe space in preschool or child centre. It would be interesting to consider to give this concept of a personal basket with toys brought from home a more central place - both in the physical space (so that children can reach out to them by themselves) and at a specific time during the day – when children are allowed to play with their own toys and the toys of others. This may lead to conflict at times, but the advantages could be in the opportunities it provides: a) to feel comfortable with own toy or stuffed animal; b) to share these identities with others; c) to learn to share belongings; d) to play together; e) to have and resolve conflicts; f) to demarcate children’s own identity in the larger, but safe context of the own group[65].

To work with children individually and with the group towards a collective product during the course of the project, worked very stimulating and inspiring for all. It made the direct and indirect goal and instruction of the assignments concrete and tangible. We gave the book an overall recognizable symbol according to the name of their group.

Overall understandings

Regarding children’s verbal input, and what they articulated as promoting or undermining their ‘feeling good’, inclusion and participation in day- or afterschool care, an important finding was that none of the respondents referred to ‘the other’ as being culturally or ethnically different, nor did they identify themselves in terms of ethnic background or home language. A ‘new child’ was always associated with a child reaching the minimum age to enter their group, and a ‘child not speaking the language' with a child too young or too shy to talk, and not in terms of different ethnic-cultural background. Friendship combined with gender and age range ("*younger, same or older to me*"), family (siblings) and individual and group identity were the most determining factors when asked about how and whom children play with, and related to what children tell about their well-being and inclusion.

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[64] In this sense, it appeared not very useful to communicate to children in the consent-form that what they say is processed anonymously or that they can use another name if they want. It felt like undermining their ability to define themselves.

[65] Needless to say, this concept should be elaborated and discussed with parents and children, and rules and regulations should be set with regards to safety, ownership, variety, changes, et cetera.

Another finding was that, for very young children, there is no clear division between 'me' and 'the other'. In that respect, the preschool and care environment, seemed to be the appropriate place to expose children to as much diversity as possible, reflected in an inclusive environment and based on equal opportunities and a democratic organization. Children are very receptive at this age, and though observed to be increasingly able to define identity and diversities, they seemed to absorb and reflect their environment without judgement. Children's own identity, their social relationships and the various contexts in which children are situated during the day, particular the home and child centre, were not sharply delineated and seemed to merge smoothly. Children told in one breath about what happens in daycare and what happens at home (or at school). At the same time, children were also observed to firstly connect with what, and whom, they already know. These findings are important when considering policy measures aiming to support the inclusion of all (Cummins, 2008). On the one hand the findings substantiate the argument to start early with centre-based education and care as children are most open and receptive to new skills and attitudes at a young age (De Winter, 2011; Moss, 2010b). However, on the other hand, this places an enormous responsibility on organizations and services for young children. Factors promoting inclusion and well-being, citizenship and equal opportunity should be consistently reflected in organizations' policy, pedagogy and practices. Being aware of personal and social identities can be of transformative power (i.e., potential for fundamental change or change of awareness) by asking what image of the child adults and professionals are consciously or unconsciously propagating with their pedagogical procedures, daily practices and instructions (Little & Kirwan, 2019).

Many of the references of young children related to organizational factors – which can be directly influenced. For example, the present particular group of children identified positive organizational factors promoting their well-being and inclusion mostly in relation to play and space, such as having spaces to explore freely and expand their boundaries (open doors, outside play contracts) and spaces for comfort (a sofa, a pillow corner, a carpet). Some organizational choices related to time and space, however, may be undermining children's feeling good at the centre, such as using fixed timings for scheduled activities, or setting limits to children's access to spaces.

In addition, the study confirmed that giving voice to children is not only about what is literally verbalized by children, but also about the processes of enactment, interaction and expression via other modalities and forms of representation to support the development of the child's capacity to negotiate its agency. The simple fact that young children were invited to talk, to lead a tour through the centre, to give their opinion and ideas, was observed to be a great explorative discovery and stimulation for children. It was important to reflect on what children told, to make sure children were understood, to show them they were heard, to clarify how their information was useful, and to explain how what they proposed could be implemented or, for that matter, could not be acted upon.

Cross-national comparisons of factors for well-being and inclusion

The current study was part of a cross-national analysis under the umbrella of the ISOTIS Children Study. The international analysis involved children in a broader age-range, from 3 to 14 years, in pre- and primary school settings and after-school contexts in urban areas characterized by high cultural diversity and social inequality in eight European countries (the Czech Republic, England, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, and The Netherlands).

As was also apparent in our Dutch study, the material dimension of (pre)schools, concerning its spaces and resources, emerged cross-nationally as a dimension to which children attributed great impact on their well-being, their attitudes towards the (pre)school environment and experience of social inclusion at (pre)school. Positive relationships between children and friendships were identified as the most influential factor for children's well-being in child centres, and the keystone of an inclusive social climate. Children stressed the urgency for dynamic, interactive pedagogies in large and small groups; for spaces not only limited to the group or classroom, but diversified in multiple spaces indoors and outdoors. Furthermore, children showed that they can play a significant active and proactive role in increasing inclusion. For example, they were receptive to following the rules about playing together, they showed eagerness to work on a (sometimes abstract) cause of welcoming new children, they were trying to communicate and overcome language barriers. Also, the research process itself was for children (and professionals) across countries a stimulating experience to progressively acquire critical-reflective thinking skills, exercise agency, and acquire collaborative communication skills with peers and adults (Pastori et al., 2019). Also from this cross-national analysis, it was concluded that the participatory and transformative research experiences in a 'child-friendly' context and anchored in children's everyday experiences, can have great educational value. It offers a supportive democratic learning environment which not only gives 'voice', but also allows children to take leadership of their environment, and collaborate in decision making which in turn renders them active social actors responsible for their environment, however always proportional to their relative maturity. As also found in the Dutch study, despite some methodological complexities, children emerged as reliable participants who could and did want to contribute to creating an inclusive environment; therefore they could also be considered important drivers of change. In addition, professionals perceived participative methodologies as an enrichment and stimulus to recreate their teaching approaches and practices. They were motivated to review their approaches to pedagogy, ideas regarding the role of children in a child centre and children's lives, and re-assess their image of children regarding their potential and skills (Pastori et al., 2019).

Limitations

In addition to the strengths of the approach and the process of involvement of young children as described above, there were some limitations for the Dutch setting. One limitation of the study was the minimal use of data regarding the cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participating children. In Dutch daycare and afterschool care, children are not registered along those lines. However, for the purpose of our study, the fact that the context was diverse sufficed as we were not studying the specifics of background. Moreover, the results clearly indicated that these specific details were not relevant as the young children in our study did not refer to, or classify cultural, linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds.

Another limitation concerned the choice of the child centre in a particular neighbourhood. Albeit in a superdiverse context, the conditions in this neighbourhood have improved enormously in recent years thanks to additional government support. Therefore, the context is possibly not representative for an average large city neighbourhood in The Netherlands. In addition, in recent years the child centre has worked with a pedagogy based on elements of child rights and democratic citizenship, which is still exceptional in Dutch daycare, preschool and afterschool care (see Chapter 2). Nonetheless, this study showed the potential of a child rights and citizenship approach, including the direct participation and hearing of voices of young children.

A third limitation concerned the preparation time that was needed before the actual field work could start. It took more time than anticipated to collect allowances, especially parental consent forms. Limited parental consent resulted in a relatively limited number of children whose verbalisations could be recorded and analysed. An explanation could be that not all parents are closely involved with the child centre. Also, parents seemed reluctant to expose their children to research activities, making it difficult to sufficiently explicate the overall purpose via centre authorities. Approaching parents in person and explain the goal and process verbally, appeared to be more effective in the end to get parents involved and interested in allowing their child to participate.

Concluding remarks

Very young children may not be able to hold a pencil and draw, but without exception they enjoyed participating, showing, telling, and sharing. This study showed that children as young as three years old are capable of providing valuable and relevant information for policy and practices relevant to their daily lives. For this age-group, child participation can be shaped with special playful activities as used in this study. The combination of different modes of expression and communication yielded a lot of relevant information about children's well-being in a particular pedagogical setting. The value is not only in what is expressed, but also in the process of interaction and dialogue itself during particular activities. This stimulates the child's capacity to express itself and negotiate its agency due to continuous responsive dialogue and feedback.

Children especially enjoyed working towards an evolving collective result such as the group book that they could access at all times, carry around, show to others (peers, teachers and parents alike) and which they could observe to grow and develop over time. Young children really enjoyed helping others, both adults and peers. In that sense, such a group book contributes to their personal social-emotional skills, in addition to the mentioned citizenship skills. Finally, the proposed group-book supports adults in a pedagogical setting (teachers and researchers) to bring coherence and consistency among all the different steps towards the overall goal of investigating the perspectives of children.

This study endorsed that active participation in activities that promote bonding and bridging of diversities, acknowledging the autonomy and personal identity of each child, and building a shared community identity through symbols, recognizable language, and daily group routines, contributes to inclusion. In this particular pedagogical setting, children experienced they matter (me), while doing something together (we) at the service of an overarching goal (them) to come together as a group (us); which may help children to define themselves and their identities at a personal level (me). This is a circular process including autonomy and agency as key to reinforcing the process of socialization, supporting children in their development and implementing an empowering child image in practice based on child rights and citizenship. The role of the professional is to oversee this process, interact, and provide sensitive, stimulating and motivating feedback, thereby placing the individual ‘me’ in its community context: in relation to other children, in relation to the group, in relation to any larger community.

Further to the UNCRC and its guiding principles based on Articles 3, 4, 6, and 12, we can conclude that emphasising the voice of the child and child participation in a pedagogical setting, if not a goal or end in itself, can be an additional means to increase well-being and inclusion of all.

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Chapter 5

Active elements of a good practice A case study of The Peaceable School programme

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A summary of this chapter was published as country report in ISOTIS report D4.3 *Case studies on curriculum, pedagogy, and school climate interventions tackling inequalities* (Aguiar & Silva, 2018).

Author contributions: The ISOTIS study was designed by C. Aguiar and C. Silva (2018). C.E. and M. Be collected the data. C.E. analysed the data and wrote this chapter. P.L. and M.B. supervised the study and reviewed Chapter 4.

Introduction

In this dissertation so far, we addressed a number of key concepts and essential elements of a rights-based citizenship pedagogy, such as having an image of the child as competent, the right of the child to participation, the need for empowerment and agency of the child, the importance of inclusion and dealing with diversity, and the pivotal role of the community. These concepts were substantiated by the results of the previously reported studies, assessing the ideological and formal curriculum frameworks, the organizational policies, pedagogical procedures and practices of child care centres, and children's experiences. This fifth Chapter is reporting on the fourth study, which was conducted within the ISOTIS study on curriculum, pedagogy, and school climate interventions tackling inequalities (Aguiar & Sylva, 2018), and focuses on an actual child rights and democratic citizenship curriculum implemented on scale in Dutch early childhood and primary education, *The Peaceable School programme* [De Vreedzame School]. The aim is to assess to what extent a child rights and democratic citizenship approach can be implemented on scale, and to identify possible facilitators and barriers in this regard. Through a case study of an exemplary implementation of the programme, we studied the curriculum as it is implemented, experienced and perceived by its stakeholders: programme developers, site managers, primary school teachers, daycare professionals, and parents. We specifically attempted to identify facilitating and impeding conditions for implementing the programme on scale. Although implementation of The Peaceable School programme in daycare and preschool settings until four years of age is still limited, the curriculum for primary education, including universal kindergarten for four- to six-year-olds, is currently implemented on a rather large scale in The Netherlands. The programme for primary schools was formally evaluated and found to be effective with regard to its aims, which we will refer to later in this chapter. The programme provides an example of a child rights democratic citizenship approach for implementation on scale which may be extended to child daycare, preschool and afterschool care settings in The Netherlands as well. The present study is based on the assumption that the more young children learn about democratic citizenship concepts like having a voice, solving problems together, dealing with diversity, taking responsibility, and making choices - and the earlier children experience that they are being heard and taken seriously - the stronger the foundation for later learning, understanding and democratic behaviour may become (Moss, 2008; Oates et al., 2013; Vandenbroeck & Peeters, 2014).

General background

This case study on The Peaceable School programme as a proven effective intervention focusing on democratic citizenship and inclusion in The Netherlands was conducted as a country case study under the framework of the ISOTIS project regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and school climate interventions (Aguiar & Silva, 2018). The Peaceable School, and its extensions The Peaceable Preschool and The Peaceable Neighbourhood [De Vreedzame Wijk], are educational programmes aiming at developing social competencies and democratic citizenship skills among children, including openness towards people with different backgrounds. The programmes consider the classroom and the (pre)school as a community, in which all children feel equally heard and seen, get a voice, and, moreover, in which children learn the meaning of being a *democratic citizen*. The Peaceable School implies a pedagogical approach focussing on the child in its social community rather than on the individual developing child. In addition to fixed weekly lessons and activities according to a detailed curriculum around six themes in all groups, the school, the classroom or care group are all set up as an inclusive democratic space. Here, children have the opportunity to practice the acquired citizenship competencies in a meaningful context (Pauw, 2017a).

At some of the research locations regarding daycare and afterschool care involved in the current study, staff worked with a somewhat adjusted approach, called the *Growth chart* [Groeimeter]. This is a tool for staff and parents around 'Peaceable' themes for socio-emotional and democratic citizenship competencies for young children in the context of The Peaceable Neighbourhood. All approaches are based on the same theoretical base regarding democratic citizenship pedagogy and consider the child centre as a democratic practice (Van Keulen, 2013). However, whereas The Peaceable (Pre)School programme is based on a continuous curriculum methodology from age 2.5 years onwards and includes a stronger school and teacher centred approach, the *Growth chart* approach is implemented already from birth onwards in daycare centres for 0 to 4-year-olds, while building on notions and principles shared with the Peaceable (Pre)School programme. This involves a child-centred pedagogy, considering children as unique, competent, powerful, creative, and able to take responsibility. Children are provided with ample opportunities to discover themselves and the world, and to solve problems by experimenting, experiencing, playing, researching and, above all, learning by doing. It is implemented on a day-to-day basis, taking ad hoc events and situations as opportunities for learning instead of implementing fixed activities and lessons, and is 'development-oriented' instead of directed towards specified learning goals.

The research site for this case study was situated in a neighbourhood in the city of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Utrecht counts as the cradle of The Peaceable School as the programme was initially developed and piloted here. In Utrecht, nowadays, almost all neighbourhoods are officially 'Peaceable' and about 75% of the schools[66] are actively involved. This is in line with a pro-active policy of the city council that made 'Peaceable' part of local regulations for community organizations. The selected neighbourhood has on the one hand a native low SES population, and on the other hand a large migrant population with very mixed cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In recent years, some areas have been subject to gentrification. Due to upgrading of housing blocks, an increasing number of higher educated middle-class families have entered the neighbourhood in the past years. The selected area is one of five neighbourhoods in Utrecht that received special attention by the city council through a specific empowerment-oriented ‘neighbourhood approach’ (in Dutch referred to as *krachtwijk*, powerful neighbourhood), such as providing additional investments in communication, empowerment of vulnerable groups, citizen’s participation, and attention for special spaces or themes, such as parks and playgrounds, symbolizing improvements in the neighbourhood (Janssen et al., 2018). Though also a *krachtwijk*, the neighbourhood involved in this case study is adjacent, but not the same neighbourhood that provided the context for the study on child voices as described in Chapter 4.

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[66] http://www.utrecht-monitor.nl/sociale-leefomgeving-ondersteuning/onderwijs-vaardigheden/leerlingpopulatie-migratie

This case study is focussing on The Peaceable (Pre)School-programme (also including the *Growth chart*-approach for the youngest children). In addition, the Peaceable Neighbourhood perspective is continuously included as it is considered an essential feature of the success of the overall programme, yet this neighbourhood counterpart is not the topic of the present study. Our main research questions are: *what are key features of The Peaceable School-programme as perceived by its stakeholders, and what are the conditions that may facilitate, or, for that matter, hinder, its effective implementation on a wider scale?*

Below, we will first provide more context by describing the formal features of the programme by its aims, target groups, and structural characteristics; then we will explain the methodology and results of the case study; and finally we will discuss a selection of key features that may be replicable and facilitate implementation on scale in other settings such as daycare and afterschool care, including aspects that may be specifically relevant for settings also targeting younger children (below 3 years of age).

Background of The Peaceable School-programme

The Peaceable School programme has multiple goals. The main, overarching goal of the programme is to develop social and democratic citizenship skills among children. In its vision, the school needs to become a place where everyone feels equally responsible and socially involved, and where conflicts are resolved constructively and peacefully. This means children will be able to: 1) make decisions in a democratic way; 2) resolve conflicts constructively; 3) take responsibility for each other and for the community; 4) show openness towards people with different backgrounds; and 5) gain knowledge of the principles of a democratic society. This, in turn, is expected to reduce problem behaviour of children, and feelings among teachers of insecurity and inability to provide adequate support to children.

Outside the school, street culture dominates in many neighbourhoods. For children of various backgrounds, whether non-Western immigrant, native low SES communities or otherwise, there are often differences in pedagogical cultures between the school and the home. In The Peaceable Neighbourhood, the school-based methodology of The Peaceable School is expanded to the community. By connecting with the pedagogical approach, language and symbols of The Peaceable School, all these domains (school, street, clubs, home, et cetera) are connected to each other, in such a way that it becomes clear to children that similar expectations and rules apply everywhere (Horjus & van Dijken, 2014). The extended Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme is aiming at: 1) children applying their Peaceable School-competencies in different contexts; 2) children performing tasks as community volunteers and children having a voice in neighbourhood activities affecting their daily lives; 3) creating a sense of shared responsibility among parents and professionals in the community for the upbringing and care of children in the neighbourhood ('*It takes a village to raise a child'*); 4) decreasing feelings of incapability to act among educators (professionals and non-professionals); and 5) increasing feelings of security in the ecology of The Peaceable Neighbourhoods.

Target group(s)

The programme has various target groups and beneficiaries:

Schools: The school, and also the preschool for 2.5 to 4-year-olds, is the point of entry for The Peaceable School-programme. School-teams, including board, management and the vast majority (at least eighty percent) of the teachers, need to fully commit to an intensive implementation period of two years of (team) trainings. Besides that, the school has to be transformed into a democratic practice in itself, where children can experience what democracy means in day-to-day situations and daily interactions with each other.

Teachers: The teachers, as an intermediary target group, are trained during 5 days in the first implementation year, and 3 days in the second implementation year. They will gain knowledge about democratic practices, conflict resolution and child participation, and the skills to teach the weekly lessons around the six Peaceable thematic blocks. Moreover, they will learn to reflect on their own attitudes in relation to issues around democratic citizenship, and they will become aware of the transferability of these attitudes to daily classroom practices.

Children: The Peaceable School programme is aiming at primary school children aged 4 to 12 years. The Peaceable Preschool Programme is aiming at children aged 2.5 years to 4 years. The programme is even extended to secondary and tertiary education levels – however, these groups fall outside the scope of this case study.

Professionals and semi-professionals working with and around children in the neighbourhood, and local residents: The programme is also extended to the community, through the community outreach programme The Peaceable Neighbourhood. Emphasis in this outreach programme is on developing a universal 'language' for conflict-resolution and awareness of joint (pedagogical) responsibilities.

Parents: Furthermore, the programme is reaching out to parents as an intermediary target group in The Peaceable (Pre)School. In the context of The Peaceable Neighbourhoods they are considered a direct target group. In some communities, parents are trained in community-mediation.

Number of children, professionals, and organizations involved in the Programme

Since 2001, approximately 946 Dutch schools became ‘Peaceable’, out of a total number of about 6.800 schools in the Netherlands (CBS/DUO, 2017[67]). Also, roughly fifteen per cent of all preschools and daycare centres are working based on the Peaceable philosophy, either directly through the Peaceable Preschool programme or through an adjusted version like ‘Together for the Future’[68], an initiative under which the ‘Growth chart’ arose (Ludens, 2011). These numbers are still increasing[69]. The distribution and implementation of the programme is nation-wide, however the programme is more concentrated in the four largest cities in The Netherlands being Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht, and the forty medium-sized cities in The Netherlands[70,71], as the need and demand in these urban areas has been higher due to various urban challenges related to, amongst others, immigration, an increasingly diverse population, changes in social structures and individualisation.

Funding

The budget for implementing The Peaceable (Pre)school-programme comes from the (pre)school’s annual budget. A two-year implementation trajectory for schools is rather costly (Pauw, 2017a). The budget and funding for activities under the umbrella of The Peaceable Neighbourhoods is mainly coming from the local government, either directly by supporting Peaceable Neighbourhoods-projects and trainings, or indirectly by making the commitment towards The Peaceable Neighbourhoods a condition for providing government subsidies to community organisations.

The Peaceable (Pre)School is a ‘product’ implemented by an independent not-for-profit organisation (CED-Group) offering educational consultancy and in-service trainings aiming at quality improvements in education. The Peaceable Neighbourhoods, though closely linked, is operating under a separate independent not-for-profit foundation aiming at community social climate improvement. Innovation of the programme, both for The Peaceable (Pre-)School as for The Peaceable Neighbourhoods, is a task placed under the auspices of this latter foundation.

Case study methodology

Methods for data-collection

Aiming to maximize opportunities for triangulation (based on data from multiple sources and data collection approaches) the following methods were used:

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[67] https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/primair-onderwijs/instellingenpo/aantal-instellingen

[68] http://www.samengoedvoorlater.nl/wp-content/uploads/We-zijn-allemaal-anders.pdf. The initiative *Together for the Future* (=Samen goed voor Later) was implemented in all Kindwijzer-day care centres from 2011 onwards. Kindwijzer, of which the organization for day care centres in Utrecht Ludens is a member, represents nearly 15 per cent of all day care centres in The Netherlands

[69] https://vreedzaam.net/actueel-nieuws/item/423-aantal-vreedzame-scholen-en-wijken-stijgt-nog-steeds

[70] https://www.g40stedennetwerk.nl/

[71] http://devreedzameschool.nl/vreedzameschool201425/home/overzicht

Semi-structured interviews: For this case study, we conducted 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with three programme developers respectively from The Peaceable School, The Peaceable Preschool and The Peaceable Neighbourhoods. Furthermore, we conducted interviews with two Peaceable School site coordinators (one primary school and one daycare centre), five teachers (two preschool; two primary school; and one after-school teacher), and three parents. Respondents were connected to one primary school and one organization for daycare and afterschool care working with the programme, and from that perspective, they were also asked about the community and The Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme. All interviews were conducted from May to September 2018. Interviews were held at various sites of an organization for daycare and afterschool care and at a public primary school. The interview guidelines were established within the ISOTIS project and can be found in Aguiar and Silva (2018). Themes addressed were: history of the programme, key activities, features of success, facilitators, barriers, solutions, outcomes, and innovative features. An overview and designation of respondents is annexed in Table A5.1.

Documentary analysis: Several types of informative documents were reviewed for this case-study: publications on 'Peaceable', such like dissertations, research and evaluation reports, web articles, peer-reviewed journal articles, and articles in literature for professionals.

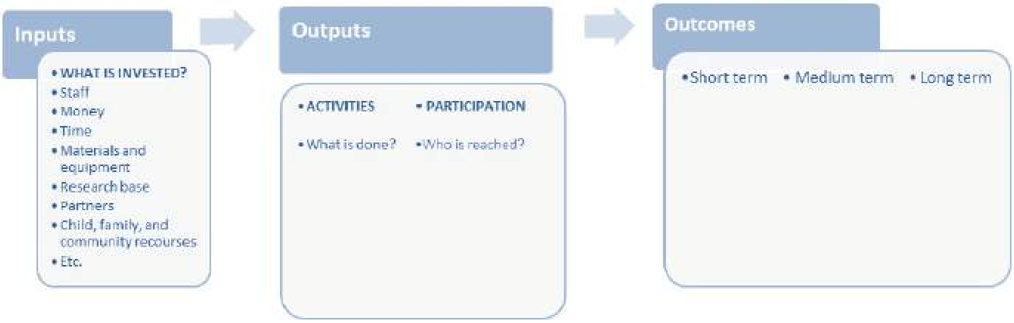
As a last step, *feedback* was collected on the (draft) case study report by key informants (pedagogues affiliated with the child care organization and programme developers).

Tools for analysis

The data (literature and interviews) were analysed in line with the interview guidelines (Aguiar & Silva, 2018). To assess the key features of The Peaceable (Pre)School Programme, the Intervention Logic Model as presented in Figure 5.1 was used, concentrating on inputs, outputs, and outcomes. This model was used for all country case-studies included in the ISOTIS study of promising curriculum interventions for tackling social and educational inequalities (Aguiar & Silva, 2018).

Figure 5.1

The intervention Logic Model



Results

History of the programme

The Peaceable School-programme was developed and piloted between 1998 and 2006 by the CED-group[72], a not-for-profit organisation for educational consultancy and training in The Netherlands. The Resolving Conflicts Creatively Programme (RCCP), implemented in New York during the 1990s, served as a source of inspiration, mainly because of its unique approach to peer-mediation. This approach included a transfer of responsibilities to the students: giving them ownership of the problem and letting them participate in finding the solution for that problem. Volunteering students were trained as student-mediators, and they were visibly present in the school. Within the emerging Peaceable School programme in The Netherlands, the initial emphasis was also on reducing conflicts and improving the general school climate. At that time in the 1990s, teachers in The Netherlands perceived student behaviour as increasingly difficult, teachers' absenteeism increased, and the education sector was faced with considerable teacher shortages, which was seen as partly due to the more difficult working conditions at schools. The Peaceable School programme was regarded as providing tools to address this inability for action, and was warmly welcomed by many school-boards and professionals.

In 2005, the Dutch government introduced a policy on citizenship education: all schools had to address 'democratic citizenship' in their curriculum (De Winter, 2004; Bron, 2006). Subsequently, The Peaceable School programme was further developed into a comprehensive approach for social competence and democratic citizenship. The Peaceable School programme was also extended to preschools (since 2011) and to the local communities (The Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme, since 2009/2010). The strong connection of The Peaceable School programme with the community is illustrated in the quote below. Schools were, and still are, free to choose how they will implement citizenship education. However, The Peaceable (pre)school programme is the most implemented programme for this purpose in the large and middle-sized cities in The Netherlands.

Quote illustrating the strong connection with the community:
"It is the nature of the programme to make maximum use of resources and strengths already available in families and neighbourhoods / communities. An example is 'Parents for parents', a Peaceable School strategy recently piloted in another "krachtwijk" in Utrecht, in which parents motivate other parents to join parental meetings in school. During such meetings, parents team up to translate for each other in case of language challenges. They may end up sharing personal experiences and recognizing the universality of their perceived personal problems" (interview, programme developer 2).

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[72] The programme was originally developed by Leo Pauw for SAC (School Advisory Committee Utrecht), predecessor of Eduniek, which became part of the CED-group in 2011

The Peaceable School-programme has a strong research and evidence base. Various aspects have been studied by researchers over the years, concluding that the programme is theoretically well-grounded and effective in terms of reduced student problem behaviour and improved classroom and school social climate, and sustainable in the perception of the teachers and school principals (Pauw, 2013). Also, since 2017, The Peaceable School programme is included in the Database for Effective Youth Interventions of the Dutch national Youth Institute where it received the official status of 'proven effective' (Pauw, 2017a). The Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme has also been studied extensively by scholars of Utrecht University (e.g., De Winter et al., 2009; Horjus et al., 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Horjus, 2014, 2021; Van Dijken et al., 2013). The studies show that the programme seems to work well for professionals and children. However, these studies also do point to a need for more parental involvement and influence. There are indications that parents may be more willing to participate in the programme if the programme would better match their priorities, for example by clearly linking with the future prospects of their children.

Key activities of the programme

The basic curriculum (in 2018) consists of six thematic blocks which are implemented during the school year:

1) We belong together (focusing on school social climate and interaction skills)
2) We resolve conflicts ourselves (conflict resolution skills)
3) We are aware of each other's needs (communication skills)
4) We take care of each other (social-emotional skills)
5) We all contribute to the community (participation and (peer-)mediation)
6) We are all different (respect for diversity)[73].

Peaceable is as much about a fixed curriculum (weekly lessons) as it is a way-of-working in daily practice. Interviewed teachers mention examples, like giving a lot of responsibility to the group or class, evaluating class climate, an open and responsive attitude towards children (and parents), solving problems together, organising chores and participation. One teacher mentions that it essentially means that professionals are increasingly moving from a teaching to a coaching role, organising the teaching-learning process in co-creation with the children in the classroom, and subsequently with the children in the context of their families. The following quote illustrates the programme as a way-of-working when an opportunity occurs, in this case a conflict (the core of block 2, conflict resolution skills):

> *"Young children, even toddlers, learn to recognize the difference between a fight and a conflict. The first includes verbal or physical violence - then we must first make sure that children cool down. The latter is a healthy argument without violence"* (interview, programme developer 2).

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[73] https://www.devreedzame.school/info

The following quote illustrates the child-centred and inclusive philosophy throughout all key activities:

> *"You count, you make a difference, you belong to us. It is this bonding and group creation, which is very strong with us and in the context of Peaceable. That is a great thing: you take care of each other, and you are allowed to be yourself"* (interview, preschool site coordinator 1).

The implementation period of Peaceable at schools and preschools is intensive and takes two years. Mostly, school boards are encouraged by word of mouth on the benefits of the programme. Trainings are provided by experienced teacher-trainers, and enable teachers to reflect on themselves and each other, and hence learn how to transfer social and democratic citizenship skills and attitudes to students. The teachers themselves are responsible for implementing the programme in the group or class, and monitor the class and school social climate with various available tools. At the preschool site included in this study, teachers were trained in-service on the job. The focus here was less on instruction and more on sensitization of staff (Van Keulen, 2013).

Features of success

The Peaceable School serves a purpose and a widely felt need among professionals. Teachers mentioned, firstly, that the programme offers a curriculum to implement one of the compulsory core objectives of the Dutch educational system: schools have to deliver on citizenship education and by the time pupils leave primary school, they need to have acquired minimum standards on citizenship competencies (Van Dam et al., 2010). As expressed by a programme developer:

> *"The higher purpose of the program is to combine a series of lessons on democratic citizenship skills and attitudes with the school as a democratic practice in itself. It is precisely this combination that makes it powerful. The curriculum provides guidance, but it is not possible to be effective without setting up the school as a training place - which is actually much more difficult than just teaching lessons"* (interview, programme developer 1).

Secondly, The Peaceable School programme meets the needs of teachers and provides tools to deal with an increasingly diverse student population – not only diverse in students' backgrounds but also increasingly diverse in children's needs and challenges, as educational approaches tend to become increasingly personalized. In addition, as confirmed by the interviewed programme developers, the programme provides a framework to address wider societal challenges, such as social and cultural integration and inclusion by seeking binding factors among social and cultural groups. The child centre can be the starting point for this, as can be illustrated by the quote below regarding one of the binding factors of the programme:

"Cross-cutting through all (ethnic) groups, is the fact that parents just want the best for their child" (interview, programme developer 2).

The programme developers mentioned the effectiveness to connect the school with other domains of life by facilitating one common 'language', i.e., attitudes, terms and concepts, rituals and objects as an expression of this social norm (Horjus &Van Dijken, 2014). The different approaches of Peaceable (via school, via the neighbourhood, through parents) are important for the success of the programme, which is also confirmed by recent studies (Horjus, 2018). The parents interviewed for this study, also confirmed this statement. A common language and symbols do work, and children use them also at home. For example, children learn to use commonly agreed phrases like: '*Stop, please quit*' and '*I have to cool down'* or '*I have to put on another (blue/yellow/ red) hat*' and everybody knows what is meant by these phrases. Also, the teachers confirmed that these practical elements help to express the same vision and the use of a joint approach.

The following quotes reflect the contribution of having a clear vision as 'common language':

"The programme offers a common language, a joint approach to citizenship education, and a shared vision. A shared vision is easier to create with such a clear-cut programme and such a straight-forward implementation strategy" (interview, programme developer 1).

"Clarity is important. In this you have an important task as location manager. Endlessly, I have emphasized to employees that it is just the core of their work. That it is nothing new, not something additional. By the moment you are used to it, it can really help you. By repeating this time and again, it is now internalized" (interview, site coordinator 1).

An often-mentioned unique feature of the programme is the peer-mediation component. From preschool-age onwards, responsibility to resolve conflicts among children is increasingly transferred to children themselves. This culminates in the last two years of primary education, when some of the children are trained as 'student mediators'. Student mediators, mostly two students per class, are visibly present in the school. Students that have a conflict that they cannot resolve amongst themselves, may ask the help of the student mediators. Only if that does not work out, for example if one of two parties is not willing to cooperate, the support of teachers is called in. As we will address later on, this approach results over time in a reduction in conflicts and an improved school social climate (Pauw, 2013).

The Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme features a strong focus on the community. Sometimes this is an autonomous spin-off of The Peaceable School rather than an active outreach programme of the school. The advantage of this is that both initiatives could strengthen each other and contribute to a pedagogical civil society around the child through their respective successful strategies either in school or in the neighbourhood. It is a continuous challenge for both initiatives to work alongside, and strong connections and communication are needed to ensure coordination, both among professionals and among children, who sometimes like to diversify in their roles (as a student at school and as a child playing outside after school, sometimes in the connected afterschool care programme). Like one afterschool care teacher explained: "*some of the older children are really relieved when they find out they may quit their role and responsibility as a student-mediator after school-hours*" (interview, teacher 3). At the primary school, the site coordinator and one of the teachers questioned the scope of the programme outside the school. One teacher even questioned the desirability of children extending their school-mediation role outside the school: "*these are different worlds for children, and should children feel responsible for all conflicts in their neighbourhoods?*" (interview, teacher 5).

Facilitators: Factors that contribute to success

Several facilitators were identified that were perceived to contribute to the success of the Programme. Firstly, The Peaceable School programme has a clear theoretical background and has been recognized by the Dutch Youth Institute as being 'proven effective' (Pauw, 2017a), the highest level of recognition that an intervention or curriculum can get. The programme received quite some exposure in the professional and public media[74]. However, as the programme developers indicate, the information on the benefits mostly spread by word of mouth.

Secondly, according to all interviewees, The Peaceable School programme has a very clear purpose, concrete goals and an elaborated curriculum including various tools for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The implementing agency will not start implementation without wide-ranging commitment at all levels in the school (board, management, steering committee, teaching staff). According to a programme developer, strong leadership is essential. A site coordinator added: "*The continuity and enthusiasm of a team leader or school leader is very important, even crucial, for these kinds of programmes*" (interview, site coordinator 1). All teachers mention their own important and decisive role in this process: it is up to them to involve children in all processes at all levels in the classroom and the school.

Thirdly, teachers stress the importance of having close ties with parents, especially in common daily contacts, and of being responsive to any query, issue or problem that children or parents may have. A seemingly small but striking feature mentioned by all, is the visibility of staff (managers and teachers alike) before and after school, in and around the classroom. For example, every morning, the principal of the primary school is welcoming and greeting each child and parent at the entrance of the school. The teachers do the same at the entrance of the classroom. All teachers and parents mention

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[74] http://www.devreedzameschool.nl/component/content/article/36-praktijk/deelnemen-1/433-publicaties-2009-heden

their appreciation of this gesture, and the importance of this for creating a community and making everybody feel equally welcomed and respected.

Whether The Peaceable School is successful, is also determined by factors like the quality of the governance and support by the school management, the degree of commitment to follow the curriculum, the extent to which teachers can relate to the programme, are able to act as a role-model, and the degree in which the values of the program are explicitly communicated to parents and the broader community around the school (Pauw, 2013). In addition, the site-coordinators mentioned the importance of staff-continuity, and one of the site-coordinators mentioned it really helps to appoint more staff of mixed backgrounds, who represent the diverse backgrounds of the children and families. One of the parents confirmed this: "*Our teacher has an immigrant background, so this teacher may be even more able to create a sense of togetherness and belonging – also because this teacher can see the signals that other teachers may ignore or underestimate. The role of the teacher is quite crucial I think: in the school, but also by motivating children to take this attitude with them into the neighbourhood"* (interview, parent 2).

Barriers and solutions

According to the programme developers, it has been noticed that particularly in communities with a native low SES population, it is generally more difficult to achieve results than elsewhere. This is true both for (pre)schools and for neighbourhoods. They assume this may have to do with a more cynical attitude of the residents, which is very difficult to influence. A programme developer remarked: "*Very generalizing: there is a huge recalcitrance in some native neighbourhoods; people do not feel connected to the broader society. It is individualistic, and very much focused on the interests of the own group. So, if one comes up with a programme like The Peaceable School that stimulates connection with society, school children will not easily receive any cooperation from their home-situation*" (interview, programme developer 1). There is no clear-cut solution for this. Actually, as this programme developer indicated, only active government policy to increase socioeconomic mobility in these communities can yield results regarding a sustainable positive change towards citizenship and participation in the long term. In the short term, and within the scope of the programme, a very active policy regarding outreach and parent-to-parent motivation and stimulation, and a close cooperation with The Peaceable Neighbourhoods programme, may work out. Successful examples in this context concern the changes observed in one of the other larger cities in The Netherlands since the introduction of the Peaceable programme. In a multi-problem neighbourhood with predominantly native low-income families, teachers reported a significant reduction in problem-situations in the classroom and with individual children, and also local residents indicated that the number of conflicts and problem situations in the neighbourhood had decreased (interview, programme developer 2).

Another, often mentioned, general challenge for The Peaceable School programme is parental involvement. In contrast, in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, parents often do embrace the pedagogical goals of The Peaceable School. Parents with an immigrant background often want children to be educated socially and to be taught moral standards and values. Note that these goals are sometimes redefined for parents in a different ‘vocabulary’. For example, the aims may be explicitly brought in line with the six golden rules of Islamic pedagogy, as was done in a course about The Peaceable School for parents of Islamic backgrounds taught by Islamic community organisations in Utrecht. All parents interviewed for the present study stressed the fact that they wanted their children ‘to fit in’ (group, class, neighbourhood, society). This matches with the aims of The Peaceable School and the Peaceable Neighbourhood.

Also mentioned is the limited involvement of the schools with other (semi-)professional organisations in the community. An integrated solution for these challenges, coming from The Peaceable Neighbourhoods, is the introduction ‘parent mediators’ for peaceable conflict resolution around the schools and in the neighbourhoods. The school site-coordinator placed the impact that The Peaceable School can have in the neighbourhood in perspective: without underestimating its importance, there are so many issues to deal with *within* the school – issues that the school is held accountable for, and results on which they have to report to the school inspectorate - that no resources are available to go beyond the boundaries of the school. Therefore, parents may be able to bridge that gap. As one of the teachers confirmed: “*in that sense, close contact with parents may be even more important than close ties with a child – we have to do this together. If the relationship with parents is good and open, many problems and conflicts in and outside the school can be prevented. That is why I really invest in very good one-on-one relationships with parents. And if – as is sadly true in some cases – parents are completely out of sight, it is all the more important to invest in the relationship with that respective child*” (interview, teacher 5). Besides that, the research sites of the present study (a preschool and primary school) both actively invest in activities and celebrations involving parents as a group on-site (for example, by organising a high-tea during Eid al Fitr, the summer festival before the summer-holidays, a Christmas get-together, et cetera). Moreover, the informants interviewed at the preschool stress the importance to reach out to, and enter the community and link up with community initiatives. The studied preschool, for example, actively invests in cooperating in neighbourhood activities, also after workhours and in the weekends.

Perceived impact for key actors

Evaluation research has been conducted among a large group of schools that have been working with the programme for three years or more (Pauw, 2013). This research indicated that teachers and boards of the participating schools experienced evident change in the school climate after the introduction of the Peaceable School programme. Schools reported a decrease in the number of conflicts and teachers broadly indicated that the programme influenced the behaviour of students: they behaved more calmly and responsibly, interacted with each other more respectfully, showed improved adherence to agreements, had fewer conflicts, articulated issues better and were more approachable by teachers from lower grades. As a result, the teaching climate improved. The number of years that a school worked with the method seemed to influence the achievement of the goals positively, especially when it comes to increased participation and responsibility of students. Moreover, the research conducted so far indicates that the programme is sustainable: it is continuously used by most of the schools even years after its introduction. Only a very small number of schools (4 out of the 131 schools surveyed in study by Pauw, 2013) indicated that they no longer worked with the programme after 5 years.

Perceived outcomes for children

Many schools noticed that the programme positively influenced the behaviour of children, and improved the class and school climate (Pauw, 2013). Teachers in our study noticed that things run smoother if they let children think along and participate. Like one teacher remarked: "s*ince the introduction of Peaceable, we hardly had to fill up 'Oeps-page' with children"* (interview, programme developer 2; *Oeps*[75] is a method to influence child behaviour and implies that children have to reflect on their 'unacceptable behaviour' after two warnings through, among other things, filling out an *Oeps*-page). Other teachers mentioned the student-mediation works very well, and after a while also in a preventive way: conflicts hardly arise anymore, because issues are resolved very quickly before they become problematic. They also stressed the fact that if problems arise, it may also be a good thing: problems are to learn from, and conflicts of interests or about different meanings are allowed to exist – as long as children are able and willing to discuss them, treat each other with respect, and as long as children are able to change perspectives. As a teacher quotes one of her students: *"in the end, we are all the same"* (interview, teacher 2).

All interviewees mentioned that children are enthusiastic about Peaceable. As young as 4 years old, children start to ask for their weekly Peaceable activities. Also, children enjoy their increasing responsibilities when schools start to function as a democratic practice (like children chairing circle discussions, organizing and participating in group meetings, forming children's committees, drop ideas, participate in solving problems and the methods of conflict resolution). Examples given, are that even the youngest children (from around age 3) are able to chair a meeting, develop clear social perceptions and are open to learn resolving problems in a peaceable way. The following quote explains how a positive approach is perceived to impact on children's self-confidence in relation to future citizenship:

> *"We have agreed that we especially emphasize what is going well. Of course, we do mention things that are not allowed like 'you cannot hurt anyone' or 'do not leave other children out'. By primarily stressing positive things, children get a lot of confidence, and they learn to position themselves in society. Hopefully, in the future, they will value democratic citizenship, and they know they matter and can make a*

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[75] http://www.vanhoogstratenschool.nl/bestanden/Documenten/Oeps-procedure.pdf

difference. So: 'Thank you for helping me' or 'How nice that you wait for Pietje' or 'Do you want to get that shoe for me, you do that very well, thank you'. Children like that and we find that they are very free here and they develop very well" (interview, site coordinator 1).

Interviewed teachers explained that children's self-esteem increases, also through the student-mediators. Some of the mediators are (democratically) selected because of their capacity to socially bind, be neutral and their enthusiasm to resolve conflicts; others are the opposite and may have been 'the problem' in the group in past times, and may need this extra boost to increase their conflict resolving skills and self-confidence ("*teaching others is teaching yourself*"; interview, teacher 4). Neither parents, nor teachers, indicated the fact that some children are chosen as student-mediator leads to jealousy or differences in status. All children get different chores and roles in the classroom and/or in the school, and get the opportunity to participate in various activities, working groups or clubs: either formally through the student-council, or through various exercises and roles in the classroom. This is closely monitored by the teachers and The Peaceable School provides tools for that. In general, interviewed teachers and parents indicated that children have the feeling they are able to participate and co-decide. Teachers and parents alike mentioned that through providing children with responsibilities, involving them, and really listening to them and their ideas, children learn to express themselves very well and learn to analyse problems beyond themselves and their own personal perspectives.

Perceived outcomes for professionals

The programme has an ideological approach. It appeals according to some of the staff (one site coordinator and all of the teachers interviewed) to the motivation why they once chose this profession - namely, to work with children and while doing so, contribute to a better world. The Peaceable School implies a change in the way-of-working. As one of the pre- and one of the afterschool school teachers put it: "*Nowadays, we do not even notice it anymore, as it became our common way of working. This is just how we do things, how we do our work. But in the beginning – I remember – it was quite an adjustment. The Growth chart really helped as a tool to provide children with more space, and transfer responsibility to them. While your reflex is to help children, or solve problems for them",* and: "*It is good, now we even encourage children to take (calculated) risks, to challenge their own boundaries while at the same time making them feel safe and secure -"just jump, I'll catch you!" is one of the themes of the Growth chart"* (interview, teacher 1; and interview, teacher 3). Although professionals are rather an intermediary target group, and not the end-users, the interviewed teachers indicated that the programme provided them with the tools to create for children a democratic context, gain insight into democratic practices and learn children democratic skills and attitudes. They also mentioned that the language and symbols of The Peaceable School provided them with tools to communicate with, and involve parents. However, the primary school teachers mentioned that they experience the curriculum approach and the prescribed lessons sometimes as too restricting; both expressed the wish to use the curriculum more as a source of inspiration from which they can draw whenever a theme becomes topical or when an issue arises in their classroom. On the other hand, again, they see it is very worthwhile to cover a subject school-wide and at the same time.

Perceived outcomes for families and communities

The following quote illustrates how the programme-benefits are perceived to impact the family:

"Of course it is of great impact on the family if your child comes home from school with a smile on his face because he had a good day. And my child is happy! He walks home 'on one leg'!" (interview, parent 3).

The interviewed parents reported to appreciate the way the (pre)school communicates and handles conflicts. Furthermore, they indicated that they appreciated direct contact with the teacher, and also the celebrations and activities organized with and for parents. One parent gave an example of a native-Dutch parent starting a discussion about last years' Eid al Fitr. During those days, Muslim children had holidays, while the other children had to attend school. Instead, with Christmas, everybody had holidays – Muslims and Christians alike. The respective parent suggested this was 'unfair'. As a solution, this year, the school planned teacher study days during the Eid al Fitr and all children had two days off. A peaceable solution, according to the parents, and everybody was happy.

As much as possible, 'differences' are celebrated under the umbrella of unity. Managers indicated that everybody is equally welcome, and all are equal and equally treated and respected. For example, during the school's Summer Festival, special effort was made to involve all cultural backgrounds under the theme of a 'holiday market': what can we expect to do, and what can we eat in all the countries that we may visit during the holidays? Everybody felt welcome, and parents felt involved, irrespective of their background. In many of the interviews, parental involvement and support was mentioned as one of the main challenges of the programme. And according to a programme developer: "*There is not one Peaceable way for parents"* (interview, programme developer 2).

The daycare centre actively undertakes outreach activities, as illustrated in the following quote:

"We are a small community here. We are invited to the annual neighbours' day, and 'strolling through the gardens' as an activity from the neighbourhood. And we are connected to the adjacent elderly care centre. Every Thursday we visit that centre, and a 'grandfather' or 'grandmother' will read a storybook to the children. We also participate in the annual volunteer market in the park. And then we feel we belong to the community. Then, we also meet the parents in a different role. In a larger perspective, that is very important. We carry it forward with each other, that is Peaceable. So also with the library, and the

football club, and the schools, the after-school care centre: wherever children are coming. We aim for the same way of getting along with each other" (interview, site coordinator 1).

Innovative features of the Peaceable School

Some key features of The Peaceable School-programme are specifically mentioned as distinctive and particularly innovative.

Student participation: The classroom and the school become a (part of a) community, in which children feel heard and seen and get a voice. One of the most successful and innovative strategies of The Peaceable School, also mentioned among the interviewees, is children's participation in the form of peer-mediation in conflict situations. This contributes positively to the school's social climate (Pauw, 2013). Children's participation also has to do with (transfer of) responsibilities and giving children space for agency.

Illustrative quote about child participation and giving space:
"The most striking aspect of the program is: letting children do a lot by themselves and let them discover things for themselves" (interview, preschool teacher 2).

Common language: Also innovative, is the Peaceable approach to a 'common language': The Peaceable School is not about language lessons or monolingualism as a norm but about 'creating a common language': a common vision, a common approach, a shared understanding of key words for common concepts, and the use of common symbols that are recognizable and acceptable for everyone involved.

Discussion

The fourth study of this dissertation was a case study of a democratic citizenship programme, The Peaceable School programme, as an example of good practice of a rights-based democratic citizenship approach implemented on scale in The Netherlands. Earlier, this programme was evaluated thoroughly and concluded to be effective as a school social climate intervention (Pauw, 2013, 2017a). Then, what are according to its stakeholders the key features for this programme that achieved the official status of being 'proven effective'? What are the facilitating conditions for replication at scale, in particular in the wider ECEC and afterschool care sector? We assessed The Peaceable School programme as a democratically designed pedagogical practice from a rights-based perspective. We illuminated characteristics that can be considered particularly relevant for practices serving (young) children in daycare and afterschool care in the Netherlands. More specifically, we described the interactions with and perceptions of community representatives and other stakeholders, touching upon processes at the microlevel of the group and classroom to the macrolevel of social and cultural changes. We identified characteristics of citizenship pedagogy regarding inputs, outputs and outcomes following the Intervention Logic Model as presented in Figure 5.1., and identified facilitators, possible barriers, solutions and conditions to make the programme a tool for wider implementation of the principles of child rights and democratic citizenship. Below, we will discuss the most important lessons learned.

General lessons learned

The Peaceable School programme aims at developing social competencies and democratic citizenship skills among children, including openness towards people with different backgrounds, and considers the classroom and the (pre)school as a community in which all children feel equally heard and seen, get a voice, and moreover, in which children learn the meaning of being a 'democratic citizen' and how to handle responsibilities (Pauw, 2013). This is in line with implementing the mutually reinforcing child rights principles of provision, protection and participation, and summarizes an inclusive pedagogy (Hammarberg, 1990). The aims imply a pedagogical approach focussing on the child in its social community, complementing a focus on the autonomous and individually developing child (Woodhead, 2006). Overall, it is recognized that a (pre)school-wide implementation of The Peaceable School programme, and high commitment of all stakeholders (local government, school boards, school and centre management, teaching staff, parents, children) is decisive for its impact. The aim of the programme to shape the social and citizenship skills of children is considered easier to achieve when all children – and their families - in a certain community know, follow, and apply the same skills and rules continuously and across contexts. This is facilitated when messages are made continuously visible throughout the community in communication and symbols.

One of the major lessons learned, in line with the findings reported in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, is that young children are able to participate more than previously assumed, given their age and developmental stage. It was indicated that even the youngest children (from around age 3) are able to chair a meeting, have a clear social perception and can learn very quickly to resolve problems in a peaceable way. These findings contribute to the insight that exercising child rights and citizenship is possible at an already (very) young age. Furthermore, this supports the argument that designing activities based on children's evolving capacities is doing more justice to children's competencies than trying to identify a specific age or assumed developmental stage for introducing child participation and democratic citizenship as an education goal (James, 1993; Lansdown, 2005). More concretely, for young children, this would support an approach not defined in terms of measurable learning outcomes, but a social-constructivist developmental approach including playful activities of experimenting and experiencing informed by an image of the competent child. This may challenge more conventional views on child development as we discussed in Chapter 1, and this would also call into question the assumptions on individual child development underlying the formal statutory pedagogy of the Dutch ECEC system, represented in successive legislations, as we discussed in Chapter 2.

How can we implement a pedagogical approach focussing on the child in its social community, in addition to and complementing a focus on the autonomous and individually developing child on larger scale; and what elements regarding design, implementation and results are important to consider? The case study confirmed several strong points towards this end.

Intervention Logic Model

Regarding programme inputs and design, informants mentioned first and foremost the strong community focus. This focus was included after realising that strengthening the link between school and community was important for implementing a democratic citizenship programme effectively, and for upgrading the quality of the neighbourhood climate (Pauw, 2017a). Cooperation with other stakeholders and partners in the community is stimulated in this regard: these efforts include parents and (semi-)professional organizations directly or indirectly involved with children. Secondly, the programme is demand-driven, based on an experienced need for action and urgency. Though demand for support is said to be more prevalent in large and medium-sized cities, and schools in predominantly disadvantaged communities (with non-Western immigrant and/or native low SES communities), the programme is open to all child centres and primary schools in The Netherlands whenever the need is felt for support in the realization of citizenship goals. And thirdly, children are actively involved in re-creating their schools into democratic communities through key-strategies such as conflict resolution by peer-mediation, taking up joint responsibilities towards the group, and active outreach to the community.

Regarding the outputs of implementation, of particular importance is the approach for a continuous pedagogy from pre-primary up to the primary education level (and beyond). Firstly, through discussing the same themes every year - each time at a deeper level – insight and understanding increases among young children and primary school students. Learning processes are consolidated by applying gained knowledge and practicing learned skills (Pauw, 2017a). Therefore, secondly, children's groups and classes, their centres and schools are organised as democratic practices with children having the opportunity to take responsibility for each other and for their community (class, school and neighbourhood). Child participation is mainly emphasized through a focus on community responsibilities, by eliciting their voices and representation in group discussions, and by fostering peer-mediation skills. Most decisions in group meetings are based on consensus. Also, over the course of the years, children become increasingly responsible for the topics discussed and issues addressed during meetings, and for setting the agenda and governing the democratic process, for example by chairing meetings. The set-up of The Peaceable Programme itself, though, could pay more attention to child participation in planning and designing its curriculum of weekly lessons and activities. Also, regarding the on-going process of reviewing the programme, the child perspective could be taken into account in a more systematic manner: through a children's commission or working group, or child participation in a review commission or steering committee (see also

Chapter 3 on the importance of more formalized, yet developmentally appropriate forms of child participation). Thirdly, participation of parents and other stakeholders in the community is a continuous point of focus while implementing the programme. On a critical note, although the parent and child perspective is considered on-site in the groups and classes, programme developers stress this may still largely depend on the management's and teachers' competence to do so (see also Chapter 3 on the managers' perception of the degree of child influence and teachers implementation of formal child participation strategies).

Regarding the short-term outcomes of the programme, it is perceived by the informants and also documented in evaluation research (Pauw, 2013) that children indeed learn to make decisions in a democratic way, resolve conflicts constructively and increasingly by themselves, increasingly take responsibility for each other and for the community, show openness towards people with different backgrounds, and gain knowledge of the principles of a democratic society. The progress of the programme is monitored through a set of (online) monitoring tools tailored to the school's social climate, and to be filled in by teachers and students on a regular basis. For the medium term, the programme indeed resulted in improvements of the school social climate (Pauw, 2013), as also confirmed by the informants of the present study. Furthermore, the core of the programmes The Peaceable School, The Peaceable Preschool and The Peaceable Neighbourhood is a 'positive education' approach, with giving children a voice as a decisive element, as well as establishing a shared vision for positive development (regarding school and neighbourhood climate). For impact on the longer term, the overall aim is to work towards building a democratic school and community culture. This, in turn, is according to our informants expected to reduce problem behaviour of children; it fills a gap among teachers that previously led to insecurity and inability to provide adequate emotional, behavioral, and educational support regarding social problems and problem behaviour. These goals have been elaborated at the student-, teacher- and school-level, which provides guidance to teachers.

Future prospects

Society is continuously evolving and, according to the developers of The Peaceable School programme, the programme must evolve with it. In 1999, the programme started with a focus on regulation of undesirable behaviour and conflict resolution skills in school children, with a conscious or unconscious choice not to emphasize diversity, and to start from 'togetherness', risking to overlook ethnic-cultural differences and multicultural diversity. Then the programme developed and matured, by including a focus on citizenship education from 2006 onwards, with more focus on participation and inclusion, and creating a common language and a set of overarching symbols to support bonding and bridging of the various domains children enter during the day – including the wider community. Programme developers indicated that a next phase may focus more on critical thinking, dialogue, and stimulating an open, reflective attitude, and beyond: addressing macro-issues like polarisation and increasing segregation in society. This requires even more attention to diversity, and aiming to develop the programme based on actual and current affairs: the importance of critical thinking and global justice oriented participation through for example (social) media literacy.

Concluding remarks

Through an Intervention Logic Model this case study assessed inputs, outputs, and outcomes based on documentary analysis and interviews in order to identify key features of success of an effective child-rights based citizenship curriculum, already implemented on scale in primary education, that could be considered for wider implementation in daycare and afterschool care provisions. Roughly, the findings are consistent with findings in previous research, evaluating it as an effective school and neighbourhood social climate intervention (De Winter et al., 2009; Horjus et al., 2012a, 2012b; Horjus, & Van Dijken 2014; Pauw, 2013, 2017a; Van Dijken et al., 2010). Regarding the general pedagogical context, this study described how a structured, programmatic approach can yield for group climate, child and parental participation, the situation at home and in the neighbourhood. Important elements are repetition, recognizable symbols, gradual transfer of responsibilities and ownership to children, and speaking a ‘common language’ - including the use of symbols. A structured programme can ensure that rights and responsibilities are practiced in a democratic space and provides guidance in an environment that is characterized by mutual respect among children and between children and professionals as the foundation for effective democratic citizenship. These features are as relevant for practices including the youngest children as they are for practices with older children, as long as activities are child-centred and putting the child in relation to its community, based on an image of the child as competent and adjusted according to the child’s evolving capacities. In sum, the main effective features identified in this case study that can inform the way forward in curriculum, pedagogy and social climate interventions at scale are:

- *Commitment* at all levels, especially city government, school board, school management, teachers and parents;
- *Intensive training and coaching* of staff, transfer of knowledge on child rights and democratic citizenship, skills and attitudes;
- *Enactment* of theory into practice;
- *Democratic* school or child centre climate and classroom *practices*: not only instructing but also living by and living through;
- A strong *identity*: a clear pedagogical approach, recognizable ‘one language’ (concepts and consequent use of specific words) and the same system in terms of symbols;
- *Structured approach* (activities, themes) and monitoring of progress;
- An emphasis on *transfer of responsibilities* to children, especially regarding conflict-resolution and peer-mediation, but also through child participation and giving voice to

children by organizing and chairing group-meetings and tasks that they may have in the community;
- A strong focus on *parental and community involvement* (which is considered to be the main challenge at the same time);
- A *continuous adjustment* of the issues and themes *to changing societal challenges*.

Finally, a major current aim for teachers is to create inclusive classrooms, where differences are celebrated, and problems and issues are allowed and considered opportunities for democratic practice. As long as there is open dialogue and a responsive attitude, all parties can learn and grow from it, as is expressed in the following quote from a site coordinator:

> *"That's how it should be, this is how you want people to get along and work together. That's how it should be in the whole organization and everywhere. No decision-taking about people, but with people"* (interview, site coordinator 1).

6

Chapter 6

Synthesis and general discussion

'Humankind is facing unprecedented revolutions. How can we prepare ourselves and our children for a world of such unprecedented transformations and radical uncertainties? A baby born today ... might even be an active citizen of the twenty-second century. What should we teach that baby that will help him or her survive and flourish in the world of 2050 or of the twenty-second century? What kind of skills will he or she need in order to get a job, understand what is happening around them, and navigate the maze of life?' (Yuval Harari, 2018, p. 259)

Since about 200 years, children have become increasingly recognized and protected as a separate social group with their own specific needs and rights. This can be illustrated by the first laws against child labour in the manufacturing industry (e.g., in The Netherlands in 1874 children under 12 were no longer allowed to work in factories) to the 1920s, when children were identified in human rights declarations for the first time, to the culmination in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989; Cockburn, 2013). Not only are children more and more identified as separate social group, the UNCRC also resulted in a growing and globalised awareness that children from birth onwards should have a voice regarding matters that concern their lives. This emergent notion of child rights implies that children are no longer automatically seen as integral part of a family or as an extension of the concerns of their parents; no longer as *beings-to-be* on their way to adulthood, thus as *becomings*, but as persons in their own right, with their own voice, views, feelings and interests (Alderson, 2008). In view of these developments, a critical question for education and care services is, how children can be supported to take on this empowered status of increased agency and voice. In this thesis, we have argued that fostering citizenship is essential to enable children to participate meaningfully and constructively in a context of major social challenges, including inequality, superdiversity and polarisation. Also, we have dealt with the question which features of pedagogy and curriculum at various levels of the education and care system represent the concepts of child rights and democratic citizenship and how these features may contribute to the well-being, inclusion and social development of (young) children.

In national and international policies, child centres for early childhood education and care (ECEC) and afterschool care are increasingly recognized as unique places to practice rights, responsibilities and democratic interactions from an early age (EC Working Group on ECEC, 2014; De Winter, 2006, 2011; Moss, 2007). Yet, in many countries, pedagogies for ECEC and afterschool care based on child rights and the concept of democratic citizenship are still lacking (Sylva et al., 2014). This also holds for The Netherlands. The present research aimed to contribute to a pedagogical discourse of empowerment of (young) children as owners of, and agents in, their own development and the development of their group *to, in* and *through* child centres as an instrument to practice rights-based democratic citizenship on a daily basis. Therefore, we approached ECEC and afterschool care services from a child rights and citizenship perspective at different levels of the systems around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). During our research process, we have taken many stakeholders on board, including young children themselves. Central research questions were: *What are essential characteristics of a pedagogy based on child-rights and democratic citizenship for young children in ECEC and afterschool care; to what extent are these characteristics represented in formal and implemented pedagogies and curricula; and how do these ultimately relate to outcome quality, in particular child well-being, involvement, agency and belongingness?*

Theoretical framework

In Chapter 1, we developed the theoretical framework for the present study, based on the overall objective for (early childhood) education and care as per the UNCRC: to maximise the child's ability and opportunity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society (UNCRC, 1989; General Comment 1, 2001). The universal principles of the UNCRC offer a normative framework that counts for all children, including the youngest, and includes rights of the individual child as well as respect for the rights of others. This rights-based approach to pedagogy has a wider scope than a needs-based approach that aims at solving specific problems that require immediate attention and rapid action (e.g., language delays among specific groups of children, stunted growth, situations of abuse, et cetera) and tends to focus on the specifics of the problem (Woodhead, 2005). Such a needs-based approach risks to convert the child into a passive subject, who is only considered in this context of deficit or from the perspective of the problem-to-be-solved. While this image of the child in need can be linked to the right to protection, an image of the child as competent is more consistent with other child rights, in particular the right to participation as most explicitly addressed in Article 12 of the UNCRC regarding the right of every child to freely express her or his views (but also addressed in several other articles). A rights-based approach promotes a vision on citizenship, in which all children as citizens are the holders of rights. This vision is based on a multiple and holistic image of the child, which is, as we have discussed in previous chapters, above all an image of the child as competent. This subsequently can be furthered through approaching the UNCRC holistically, considering all rights as universal, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It is also in this sense that ECEC centers and afterschool care services, the focus of the present study, have the potential to provide a unique daily context for children to exercise their rights-based participatory citizenship in a safe space.

In sum, our theoretical framework as explicated in Chapter 1 included the guiding principles of the UNCRC and the explanation that these apply to all children, including the youngest (General Comment no. 7, 2005). It is about a continuous balancing of provision, protection and participation rights (Hammarberg, 1990). It includes a multiple image of the child based on competencies and evolving capacities (Lansdown, 2001, 2005; Smith, 2015), and considers rights *to,* and obtained *in* and *through,* a provision for child care and education (Verhellen, 1993; Lundy, 2012). In child centres, rights and responsibilities can be exercised through aiming for autonomy, increased agency, and empowerment (Moss, 2010b; Alderson, 2000; 2008). These conceptualizations are closely linked to discussions about democratic citizenship and children as *beings* and *becomings* (Qvortrup, 1990), through *practice* and as an *achievement* (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). Three levels of democratic citizenship were distinguished and considered applicable to the field of ECEC and afterschool care: the *personally responsible* citizen, the *participative* citizen, and the citizen aware of *social justice* (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In addition, our framework included policies and practices of bonding (group formation) and bridging (in relation to multiple diversities); and although bridging activities were regarded as more difficult to realize as they require outreach beyond the own group, ideally both dimensions are taken on board in a rights-based citizenship approach to ECEC and afterschool care (De Winter, 2011; Putnam, 2000).

Motive of the research

We started our research from the critical observation that in The Netherlands, public debates and policy discussions around ECEC and afterschool care are mostly about the economic labour market and human capital function, and about structural quality regulations and governance of the system, including its funding, accessibility (universal or targeted) and monitoring. At an ideological level, and also regarding the formal statutory pedagogy of Dutch ECEC and afterschool care, these discussions are often informed by a protection and deficit perspective only, focussing on needs, deficits, and avoidance of possible risks. Discussions are rarely value-driven and do not concretely pin down on substantive processes that could contribute to realizing the four basic pedagogical aims as laid down in Dutch legislation for ECEC and afterschool care. However, recently, some shifts can be noted. ECEC is increasingly considered as a foundational pedagogical provision for all children; also more and more from a perspective of inclusion and equality of opportunities in society (SER, 2021; VNG et al., 2020). Furthermore, innovative projects have been implemented on scale that consider child care as an opportunity for practicing child rights and democratic citizenship, and introduced new pedagogies to increase children's agency in co-creating the care environment in a democratic way (Pauw, 2013; Van Keulen, 2013). In this dissertation, we have attempted to bring these lines together and connect the dots at the level of child centres.

Below, we will briefly recapitulate the four studies that were conducted under the umbrella of this dissertation and describe the main findings regarding the question what a child rights and citizenship approach to pedagogy can contribute for children. Afterwards we will discuss the findings in the light of our central research questions.

Overview of the study results

We conducted four interrelated studies to identify essential and effective features of a child rights based pedagogy of democratic citizenship in early childhood education and care, including preschools and afterschool care. We used Goodlad's curriculum model (1979) to structure the thesis. Starting from theory, outlined in Chapter 1, we considered in Chapter 2 the *ideological curriculum* proposed by international organizations that set standards for ECEC (UNESCO and OECD), and subsequently analysed the *formal curriculum* developed at the supranational European Union and national Dutch policy levels to catch the main discourse and changes therein over time. Next, in Chapter 3, we assessed the *operational,* or *implemented, curriculum* by analysing quantitative interview and observation data of practices in Dutch child daycare, preschool and afterschool care to see to what extent identified aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship pedagogy play a role in the Dutch system, and how this relates to children's well-being, involvement and the quality of the peer interactions they engage in. In Chapter 4, we examined how a rights-based *curriculum is experienced* by young children themselves through a participatory in-depth study. Finally, in Chapter 5, we described how and under which conditions, as *perceived by different stakeholders*, a rights-based curriculum can be implemented on scale in a diverse society through a case study of The Peaceable School programme as an example of a good practice that is widely implemented in over 15 percent of child centres and primary schools in The Netherlands.

In Chapter 2, based on a detailed analysis of documents, we observed increased attention for ECEC (and afterschool care by extension) as a stand-alone policy area since the 1990s. Simultaneously, we observed growing attention for child rights, also since the 1990s, and increasing attention for democratic citizenship as from 2000. This occurred in a context of fast growing enrolment rates in ECEC, including afterschool care, globally as well as nationally in The Netherlands. Regarding the ideological curriculum, we focused on documentation of the UNESCO and OECD as standard-setting agencies regarding ECEC, representing the global community from respectively a human rights (UNESCO) and a human capital (OECD) perspective. We found that in the early 2000s, there was initially much emphasis on child rights and democratic citizenship, resulting in a refinement of a rights-based citizenship discourse and better understanding of what key concepts of this discourse could entail for pedagogy. Often discussed ideological concepts were inclusion and diversity, community (role and ownership), rights *to*, *in*, and *through* ECEC, participation, learning about the views of children as well as of parents and professionals, and empowerment and agency of the target groups of ECEC. Overall, over the years, domains shifted from more service and target group oriented towards governance and system related issues (OECD), and from individualistic or child-centred to a more pronounced community perspective (UNESCO). Attention for empowering rights-based citizenship themes decreased somewhat during the last decade, however emphasis on child and parent participation increased. The concept of participation seemed to be used as a practical, concrete interpretation of the concept of rights-based citizenship.

To answer the question how international standard setting, regarded as the ideological curriculum, translates into formal and legislative curriculum frameworks, regarded as the formal curriculum or pedagogy, we first analysed the EU Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework and the complementing proposal with indicators. We concluded that this framework is strongly emancipatory in its principles, and could serve well as an instrument to implement child rights and democratic citizenship in ECEC. Not because child rights are extensively discussed and elaborated in this framework, but because of the recognition of the multiple image of the child as a unique, competent, active learner, as a co-creator, who is a curious, intelligent, present and future citizen with rights. Besides this, the framework was found to strongly focus on respecting diversities and taking into account the participation (voices, views) of children, parents, families, and communities. By doing so, and by emphasizing that this is fundamental to the development and maintenance of high quality ECEC, we argued that the EC proposal actually went one step further regarding child rights and citizenship values when compared to the standard setting international agencies.

As a next step, we looked at the formal frameworks in The Netherlands. So far, there is no leading national curriculum or pedagogical framework for ECEC. Nevertheless, we found some underpinning support for a child rights and citizenship pedagogy in the Child Care Act of 2005 in the form of three of the four stipulated basic pedagogical objectives - related to personal, social and especially normative and moral development. We noticed that actual implementation of the law and concretization of the pedagogical aims is decentralized to the child care centre level in the Dutch system. As a consequence, in the national governance and monitoring of the system most attention is paid to structural quality (e.g., teacher-child ratio, pre- and in-service education) and somewhat to pedagogical process quality, however with a narrow focus on social-emotional interaction quality. While the attention for the broad theme of child development has increased in successive legislations, this was found to be still mostly informed by a care and protection approach framed in a discourse that pictures the child as passive and in need of protection against risks. The legislation does not address children first and foremost as competent human beings, able to participate actively in matters affecting them. From our assessment we concluded that the Dutch child care system does not yet include sufficient elements of child rights and citizenship principles to be considered as an instrument to further child rights and citizenship as basic values.

In Chapter 3, reporting on study 2, we reviewed child rights and citizenship concepts as reflected in vision, policy, pedagogy and practices of ECEC and afterschool services in The Netherlands, according to the leadership and pedagogical professionals working in these services, using nationally representative data from the National Child Care Quality Monitor. Also, we looked at associations with selected outcomes observed at the level of the child.

In the first analysis, we looked at references in child care organizations' official mission and vision to child rights and democratic citizenship as a basic pedagogical fundament. This analysis showed that referring to these concepts is still not common as only 47 percent of the child care organizations included both a reference to child rights and democratic citizenship in their pedagogical vision and mission. Other indicators assessed were at the level of organizational policy (e.g., systematically embedding child participation), pedagogical procedures (e.g., applying an open door policy to support children's agency) and daily practices (e.g., implementation of child participation, shared responsibilities, attention for cultural diversity in practices, performing tasks and duties for the community). We found that a child rights and citizenship perspective in pedagogical vision and mission of organizations was related to a policy of systematic, 'formalized' implementation of child participation (defined as a form of regular discussions or some kind of survey or otherwise stock-taking). Organizations with a policy of *involving children directly* in matters concerning them, also more often applied an open door policy, allowing children freedom to navigate through the centre and choose playmates. However, these formalized forms of child participation were rare, according to the reports, especially in daycare and preschool centres. Afterschool care provided a slightly different picture: here, formal child participation was practised more often. Overall, when indicators were linked to inclusion and bonding elements, such as shared responsibilities for each other and the group and democratic conflict resolution, scores were high. Far less attention was paid by Dutch child care to bridging elements (e.g., attention for different cultures, performing tasks and duties for the community, global citizenship), both within the group and within or outside towards the community.

With regard to the outcomes observed at the level of the child, the analyses in this study showed several relationships between aspects of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach and observed child well-being, involvement and the quality of peer-interactions. Particularly, rather consistent positive associations were found between systematic implementation of direct child participation and these child outcomes. Also managers' perception of the extent to which children can influence the centre's pedagogical policy was found to be positively related to these child outcomes. Overall, we concluded that implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles in Dutch child care, including preschool and afterschool care, is still limited. However, if such principles are implemented in practice, also depending on the mission and vision of the organization, children show higher well-being and involvement, and they experience higher quality of peer interactions. To what extent this relationship is causal, still needs to be established.

In Chapter 4, we reported on an in-depth study of the experiences of children. In this Child Voices project we invited young children to express their views on the issues investigated in this dissertation through participatory pedagogical practices. To this purpose, a mosaic of visualizations and artefacts produced by children served as stimulus to elicit verbalizations and other expressions by them. The aim was to assess how children aged 3 to 6 years are perceiving and experiencing central characteristics of a rights-based democratic citizenship pedagogy in ECEC and afterschool care practices, and what young children voice about themes such as inclusion, participation and well-being within a diverse pedagogical environment. Key organizational factors identified for promoting well-being, inclusion and participation were the opportunities for children to freely choose to play with friends and to use several (indoor) spaces. Also of key importance for children's well-being, feelings of inclusion and participation were their social relations, friendships and acceptance to the group, as well as factors regarding their social identity (e.g., children preferred play with peers whom they know well, and with children of the same age and gender). The children in this study did not indicate differences in ethnic-cultural or socioeconomic sense being important to them.

Key factors impeding children's well-being, inclusion and participation, were organizational factors like limitations in time, space and play, and challenges regarding social relations (friendships, exclusion, and conflict). Inferred from children's messages, this study identified as possible transformative factors, with the potential of contributing to a positive change in children's inclusion, participation and well-being: attention for, and recognition, appreciation and acceptance of children's personal and social identity, and special attention for reinforcing continuities between the home-situation and the ECEC-group, between ECEC groups, between ECEC and primary school, and between ECEC, primary school and afterschool care. For young children there are preferably no strict boundaries between these contexts and spaces. Also identified as possible transformative factors were: attention for group identity and working towards a collective purpose or goal, in order to promote belonging to the group and inclusion in a diverse context. These findings may also inform pedagogical strategies to promote the inclusion of less advantaged families and communities in The Netherlands, and support the importance of community-outreach activities.

Concerning the used methodology, combining what children told, visualized, verbalized about their products, and expressed non-verbally through their attitudes towards a particular activity, provided relevant information that led to the outcomes of this study. Besides improvements at outcome quality level (e.g., well-being), children were found to be able to provide valuable information on how to (co-) design pedagogical practices regarding processes, spaces, relationships, identity formation and activities. The methodology developed in this study can be a model for engaging with young children as learners and capable citizens, and may be transferable to a variety of settings.

Finally, in Chapter 5, we reported on a case study of The Peaceable School programme, which is considered an effective (pre)school social climate intervention implemented on scale in The Netherlands. Our aim was to identify, based on the experiences of various stakeholders, the key facilitators of the programme's achievements that may be replicable on scale in ECEC and afterschool care settings, and that may also be relevant for settings with younger children (below 3 years of age). The Peaceable School programme embeds the mutually reinforcing child rights principles of provision, protection and participation within an inclusive pedagogy. To this end, the programme aims at developing social competencies and democratic citizenship skills among children. These include openness towards others with different backgrounds, considering the classroom and the (pre)school as a community in which all children feel equally heard and seen, get a voice, and moreover, in which children learn through practice the meaning of being a 'democratic citizen' and how to handle responsibilities. This implies a pedagogical approach focussing on the child in its social community, instead of an exclusive focus on the autonomous and individually developing child.

Several success features of The Peaceable School programme were identified. This concerned the provision of weekly activities based on annually recurring democratic citizenship themes such as inclusion/belonging, taking care of each other, participation, respecting diversities, and applying democratic conflict resolution strategies. The most innovative feature of the programme, according to the stakeholders, was the inclusion of children as peer-mediators during conflicts, which emphasises child participation and transfers responsibilities to children. Also important were considering the child centre and school as a democratic space where democratic ways of interaction can be experienced and practiced, speaking with ‘one voice’ (one set of messages), using consistently the same symbols (in language and signs), and linking with community programmes outside the school or child centre, using the same approach, language and symbols. Facilitators of implementation on scale, according to the stakeholders, were visible leadership, commitment of staff, the intensive two-year implementation trajectory, integration of the programmatic approach in an overall curriculum framework (as opposed to a short thematic project), bridging resistance of staff or among parents by reframing the purpose of the programme in recognizable language (e.g., bringing the curriculum in line with the six golden rules of Islamic pedagogy, as was reported by stakeholders), as well as implementing parental involvement strategies (e.g., parents informing parents, parent meetings, regular one-on-one contact of teachers with parents). Essential elements for implementation in ECEC, also including children under the age of 3 and children in afterschool care, are: stimulating agency through providing options and choices during the day; child participation; gradually increasing responsibilities in accordance with the evolving capacities of children; using consistently ‘one language’ and recognizable symbols; developing strategies for parental participation and establishing strong linkages with the community.

Overall, this case study revealed that a child rights based citizenship programme originally developed for and implemented on scale in primary education, can with some adaptations also be successfully implemented in child daycare, preschool and afterschool care, and brought to scale.

Integration and discussion

By studying different sub-topics at different levels (from ideology, to policy, to the Dutch situation in terms of organizational characteristics, pedagogical procedures and practices, to the experiences of children and of local communities) we tried to take stock of what a child rights and citizenship approach to ECEC and afterschool care may entail, what contribution it can make, and how it can be brought to scale. In this general Discussion we will focus on what we have learned from the international debate and the national and international study findings for the Dutch situation.

Child participation as the key

The present studies yielded a number of understandings. Regarding a child rights and citizenship discourse, ‘child participation’ appeared a central concept in international (policy) documents and selected standards for ECEC. Other key concepts such as diversity and inclusion, empowerment and agency, and the role of the community in increasingly diverse societal contexts were particularly elaborated in the formal policy of the European Commission regarding ECEC, as laid down in the European Quality Framework (EQF, 2014). The EQF is based on a strongly empowering image of the child, which underpins all quality principles of the framework and stresses the importance of child (and parent) participation as a key to safeguarding child rights, bridging diversities, and bonding local communities (EC, 2014). Child participation also appeared a key feature in the other studies of this dissertation. Article 12 of the UNCRC reminded us already that children have their own perspective on pedagogical issues. Respect for children’s right to participate demands that children are not just viewed as ‘subjects of study and concern’, but also as ‘subjects with concerns’. The right to participate stresses that children’s views are to be respected, not as evidence of their relative competence in relation to prescribed indicators (often based on uniform standards from a developmental-psychological perspective), but as evidence of their unique experiences of the world they inhabit (Prout, 2000). Of course, with the addition that the views of the child should be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Lansdown, 2005; Lundy, 2012). Taking a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective, with a focus on child participation, may be of advantage by setting out a value-based framework from which pedagogy and practices can be formulated and shaped, not as a matter of privilege for children but as a matter of social justice and equality (Alderson, 2008).

Child rights-based governance of ECEC and afterschool care

In the Netherlands, child rights and democratic citizenship principles are still receiving relatively little attention in ECEC and afterschool care policies as compared to international standards and policies. As addressed in Chapter 2, the Dutch legislative frameworks and policy discourses regarding ECEC and afterschool care, lack a clear image of the child as a competent citizen with rights, to start with. Likewise, guidelines for daycare and afterschool provisions do not reflect key principles of child rights and democratic citizenship, including the right to participation. There is no formal national curriculum, apart from broadly defined basic pedagogical aims in the law (Child Care Act, 2005; IKK, 2018). These basic aims reflect a strong focus on the protection of children against any physical or social-emotional risks that may arise in child care on the one hand, and on the other hand assume universal mechanisms of personal and social development that apparently need no further explanation, contextualisation or detailing. The framing of the aims, therefore, is basically content-free and it is left to the child centres to develop and implement more concrete pedagogies and day-to-day curricula of activities to serve these aims. This holds in particular also regarding the fourth aim, which stipulates transfer of the norms, values and culture of current society without addressing the diversity of perspectives in this regard and how to deal with this diversity. The Dutch approach to ECEC and afterschool care is exceptional from an international point of view (Sylva et al., 2015) and reflects a long-standing tradition in the Netherlands of parental autonomy, freedom of religion and philosophical approach, and fear of state education which also characterizes the decentralised Dutch formal education system (De Winter, 2011; Waslander et al., 2016). This approach, however, poses a dilemma for governance and quality regulation: on the one hand, there are no substantive quality requirements or curriculum frameworks, on the other hand there is a need for quality assurance that goes beyond mere health and emotional safety, and aspires more than a minimum level of structural quality, especially in recognition of the fact that the Dutch ECEC and afterschool care system is evolving from an economic labour market support service to a foundational pedagogical and educational provision that should be accessible for all children (Commissie Kwaliteit, 2014; Leseman et al., 2021; Van Rozendaal & Vaes, 2015; SER, 2016).

The dilemma is reflected in the quality monitoring executed by the Municipal Public Health Authorities. On the one hand, the currently used ‘field instrument’ to monitor compliance of service providers to the legislation and statutory quality requirements (GGD GHOR; NJI, 2014) focusses on observance of the statutory structural quality demands such as the age-specific maximum group size and children-to-staff ratio, which is often experienced by the field of practice as too mechanistic and as inefficient in terms of operational processes, and is criticized because of the documented weak correlation with process quality and child outcomes (Leseman et al., 2021). On the other hand, the monitoring system reflects a rather narrow view on pedagogical process quality by predominantly focusing on professionals’ *interaction skills* defined in terms of sensitivity and responsivity to children’s needs and professionals’ general ability to stimulate children’s competence and normative development, however without any further specification of the kind of competencies, attitudes, norms and values that should be stimulated or transferred. This approach places children’s dependencies and vulnerabilities during the foundational years of their lives on the foreground and assumes uniformity and universality in young children’s psychosocial and social-moral development (Woodhead, 2005). Also, it lacks a view on the broader curriculum of practices and activities provided to children in child centres, *in* and *through* which children can acquire the knowledge and skills valued in current society. These practices and activities create a day-to-day context for practicing and experiencing, thus ‘living’, the principles of child rights and democratic citizenship (Moser et al., 2017). The findings reported in Chapter 3 demonstrated the consequences of the Dutch approach. Overall, attention in pedagogical practices to the selected indicators of citizenship activities, (direct, formal) child participation, child agency, community involvement and issues of diversity and inclusion was found to be low, however also with clear variation between centres. This variation between centres could be related to whether or not explicit reference was made in the child care organisation’s vision and mission to child rights and democratic citizenship.

Child rights in organizations' mission and vision

The present findings are largely in line with the findings in other Dutch studies, partly based on the same sample as used in the current study but with a different theoretical frame and set of measures, partly on other samples. These studies show that the child care organization's commitment to the local community, out-reach to parents and official policy of (cultural) inclusion is positively related to the implementation of a holistic curriculum and to attention for diversity and inclusion, while also on standard measures of pedagogical quality (as put central in the official quality monitoring system) better performance was observed in centres high on inclusion and community engagement (Romijn et al., 2021; Van der Werf et al., 2020b, 2021; for similar evidence from the USA, see Bayly et al., 2021). The findings of the in-depth studies reported in Chapters 4 and 5 provided further support for the notion that explicitly starting from a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective leads to practices where key principles of child rights, democratic citizenship, child agency, participation, and community involvement are experienced and lived by children on a day-to-day basis as well as by parents, staff and the wider local community. Therefore, we argue that realization of the pedagogical aims of the Dutch daycare, preschool and afterschool care system as an instrument to foster democratic citizenship and empower communities, requires explicit reference in the law to a universal child rights and democratic citizenship perspective. This should include an empowering image of the child as a competent citizen with evolving capacities who is a member of his or her community, explicit acknowledgement of the diversity of perspectives in current society, and stipulation of the need to strengthen the bonds between children and parents of different communities and bridge their diversities, much in line with international standards and particularly the European Union's Quality Framework for ECEC.

Child participation as a key element of implementing child rights and democratic citizenship principles is currently not regulated in the Dutch system, and it is left to individual child care organizations whether or not, and, if so, how they implement participatory procedures and practices. This was confirmed by the findings reported in Chapter 3, revealing that systematic, 'formally implemented' child participation in the planning and shaping of pedagogical procedures and practices is overall limited in the Dutch system. Although in the field of practice, child participation is increasingly mentioned as a guiding principle (Aguiar & Silva, 2018; Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2006; Van Keulen, 2013), especially also in the context of current developments around integrated child centres (Integrale Kindcentra - IKC's[76]; Slot & Leseman, 2020), so far there is no system-wide implementation of children's right to participate and to be heard in matters that concern them directly and there is a risk that mentioning child participation will be merely tokenistic (Hart, 1997). Although there are innovative programmes of participatory practices in ECEC and afterschool care that have

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[76] An integrated child centre [IKC] is a provision for children (aged 0-13) offering education, daycare, out-of-school care, and welfare activities (sometimes as a combined set of integrated services).

proved to be scalable as reported in Chapter 5, system-wide implementation of child participation in ECEC and afterschool care as per law is still absent.

Children's evolving capabilities

Child participation, and the underlying image of the child as a competent *being* with evolving capacities, is difficult to reconcile with a protection view and the underlying image of the child as a still immature *becoming*. It may explain the reluctance of a predominant protection approach to ECEC and afterschool care, as in the Netherlands, to stipulate child participation as a right and, therefore, as a basic pedagogical aim in itself and also as a way to foster citizenship skills (Clark & Moss, 2005; Harris & Manatakis, 2013a; Koch, 2021; Mac Naughton et al., 2001; Sommer et al., 2010). However, the findings reported in Chapter 4 on the Child Voices project and the results of the wider ISOTIS Child Study of which this project was part, demonstrate in our view that the contradiction between these approaches is apparent only (Aguiar & Pastori, 2018). Even very young children if appropriately addressed through multiple participatory activities and modes of expression can meaningfully make their concerns clear. If appropriately implemented in a systematic and direct way, child participation likely contributes to well-being, involvement, the quality of peer-to-peer interactions, belongingness to the group and inclusion, as was quantitatively suggested in Chapter 3 and qualitatively in Chapter 4. The findings support the notion developed in Chapter 1 that striking a balance commensurate to children's evolving capacities between the right to protection and the right to participation is feasible and warranted. Of note, the comparative study of national curricula an curriculum guidelines in 11 European countries by Sylva et al. (2015), discussed in Chapter 2, revealed that the systems in several other countries apparently do not struggle with finding this balance between protection and participation. In this regard, the Dutch approach or, for that matter, struggle, is rather the exception than the rule.

Implementing child participation as part of wider child rights and democratic citizenship-based pedagogy in ECEC and afterschool care, requires careful consideration of how to do this. Based on selected findings of the National Child Care Quality Monitoring study reported in Chapter 3, we cautiously argue that probably only systematic, formalized and direct ways of eliciting and hearing children's voices is relevant. Although limited by the available data and chosen operational definitions of child participation in this study, we found links with the actual implementation of formal direct child participation (defined as *a form of regular discussions or some kind of survey with children directly)* with child outcomes. Implementation of formalized but *indirect* forms of child participation (e.g., through asking parents about children's concerns) and *informal* forms of child participation (e.g., through just observing children and inferring from that children's concerns) did not show consistent relationships with child well-being, involvement and the quality of peer-to-peer interactions. These forms of indirect and informal child participation reflecting general child-centredness and parent involvement, may be important for other purposes and recommendable in itself, but do not seem a sufficient implementation of the children's right to participation.

Also regarding formalized direct child participation, the way to shape this should be carefully considered. Formalized forms of child participation such as children's councils or other representational forms may not be suitable, as research on this kind of participatory practices in the UK concluded that in representational forms, child participation does not automatically do justice to the diversity of children's lives. Contrarily, representational forms risk reinforcing inequalities because they are less likely to incorporate the voices of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups (Wyness, 2009; Nolas, 2015). Based on the findings reported in Chapters 4 and 5, systematic, formalized direct child participation requires age- and setting-appropriate multiple and multi-modal forms of both individual and collective group activities designed to elicit all children's views, concerns and suggestions for shaping practice in an inclusive climate.

Child-centred pedagogies alone do not suffice

As reported in Chapter 3, formal forms of child participation were overall rare but informal forms of child participation, operationally defined as the pedagogical attitude of child-centredness and sensitivity to children's needs and concerns, appeared to be common practice in daycare, preschool and afterschool care in The Netherlands, and also letting children resolve conflicts with peers independently in a democratic way was considered important. These findings are in line with the, on average, high quality of Dutch child care regarding the child-centred socio-affective, autonomy supporting climate provided to children (NCKO, 2012; Slot et al., 2018; Slot et al., 2019). However, although informal child participation thus defined, was found to be far more common under the current legislation and quality regulation of Dutch ECEC and afterschool care as it fits the protection approach and developmental-psychological (*becoming*) view well, it risks to be non-committal and not sufficient to create a climate where child rights and democratic citizenship can be practiced.

Evidence for this was found on several indicators of the implementation of rights-based democratic citizenship principles, such as the overall reluctance of child centres to implement an open doors policy which would allow children to navigate the physical space of the centre, change groups and choose peers to play with, to work on collaborative tasks, to attribute community-related responsibilities to children through community activities while bridging the spaces of the home, neighbourhood and child centre, and to pay attention to (cultural) diversity. Typically, these aspects of the pedagogical climate were reported by children in the Child Voices study of Chapter 4 to be key facilitators of their well-being and feelings of belonging and inclusion. Note that allowing children more freedom to change groups during the day, choose peers to play with and navigate the in- and outdoor spaces of the centre, clashes with official requirements regarding group stability, fixed staff per child, and the principle that there should be 'four eyes' at all times in recent legislation (IKK Act, 2018). Thus, we argue that merely relying on a child-centred pedagogy and high quality social-emotional climate within a predominantly protection oriented statutory quality framework, is not sufficient as implementation of children's right to participate. Interesting, once again, was the variation between centres in these regards, reported in Chapter 3, a variation which was also illustrated by the good examples being the focus of the in-depth studies reported in Chapters 4 and 5. There are child centres that do manage to organize all this – for example, an open doors policy – within the constraints of the current legislative frameworks in The Netherlands. In Chapter 3, we found this to be related to explicit references in the child care organisation's vision and mission to child rights and democratic citizenship. In Chapters 4 and 5 we studied centres exemplifying a deliberate choice for an explicit programmatic approach to child rights and democratic citizenship implemented on scale within the Dutch system.

Especially daycare and preschool centres for 0 to 4-year-olds, although on average providing high social-emotional quality, appeared to make little use of forms of formal child participation and, therefore by inference, rarely systematically deployed young children as experts on their own development, and as valuable informants on the processes in their groups, the day-to-day routines of activities, and the arrangements of the care environment. A possible explanation is that child care centres for the 0 to 4-year-olds struggle with formal child participation because they lack age- and setting-appropriate strategies of systematically involving (young) children. In the Child Voices project described in Chapter 4, we demonstrated how formal - in the sense of systematic and periodically repeated - direct forms of child participation can be applied even with very young children. Using a mosaic of forms of participation, appreciating the various 'languages' through which children communicate, this in-depth study demonstrated that children have surprising ideas that can be immediately implemented in practice or at least provide food for thought and discussion with peers and among staff. The applied methodology of the Child Voices study may serve as a model for implementing child participation in systematic way in Dutch child care.

Scalability of a child-rights approach

A key question is whether implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles, including foremost direct child participation, child empowering pedagogies, and attribution of social responsibilities to children for other children, the group and wider community in ECEC and afterschool care, is feasible on scale, beyond a small number of exceptional good practices. To answer this question, we studied The Peaceable School programme as an example of a child rights and democratic citizenship curriculum brought to scale. Based on information from a diverse group of stakeholders in representative child care, preschool and afterschool care settings in a diverse city neighbourhood, we examined the factors that contributed to the up-scaled programme's apparent success. Based on the findings reported in Chapter 5, we argue that implementation on scale, ultimately system-wide, of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach to ECEC and afterschool care is possible if a number of conditions can be fulfilled. Successful implementation on scale requires broad community support including support from the local government, and commitment of all stakeholders to the core vision, empowering child image, and 'content-rich' normative socialisation goals of the approach. Successful implementation on scale is supported by a clear curriculum of principles, procedures and concrete activities, a concomitant teacher professionalization programme, and the consistent use of core concepts and symbols across contexts.

Successful implementation also depends on adaptation to the local context and its particular cultural and religious diversities while maintaining the core principles, values and norms of the programme, and by using bonding and bridging strategies to involve parents and the wider local community. In this way, a child rights and citizenship perspective could offer an alternative narrative to the 'content-free' fourth basic pedagogical aim of the Dutch child care legislation, based on a view of the child as competent citizen with evolving capabilities, who is the holder of rights and responsibilities, and who is an individual subject as much as a member of the group, centre, community and wider society (cf. Woodhead, 2006).

Proof of the pudding is in the practice

We started this dissertation by citing De Winter (2011) that democratic citizenship is not self-evident and does not arise by itself spontaneously. From our studies we have learned that rights and responsibilities are best practiced in a democratic space, that is, in an environment that is characterized by mutual respect among children and between children and professionals. Child rights and citizenship should not just be taught, but should also, and perhaps primarily, be recognized, respected and reflected (cf. Pauw, 2013). They need to be 'lived' in all contexts in which children are situated, with ideally strong continuities between these contexts, that is, between the home, child centre, school, and neighbourhood. Group-based care in early childhood daycare, preschool and afterschool care settings, if arranged as democratic spaces, offer opportunities for the development of social-moral and democratic citizenship competencies in children and can increase children's bonding and bridging capital in a societal context of increasing diversity (Biesta, 2015; De Winter, 2011; Putnam, 2000; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). At a young age, children are open and even eager to relate to others regardless their background, if given the opportunity. Children participating in the study reported in Chapter 4 and also in the international ISOTIS Child Study (Aguiar & Pastori, 2018) did not define their identity in terms of socioeconomic, ethnic-cultural, religious, or language background. Instead, their social relationships and opportunities for playing together across the various social and spatial contexts in which they were situated mattered for them most, and they indicated smooth transitions between these contexts as facilitative for identity formation, well-being and inclusion.

To capitalize on the potential of ECEC and afterschool care to bridge between communities and to support the inclusion of all, policies should facilitate the accessibility to ECEC and afterschool care for all children, ensure whenever possible mixed and inclusive groups (with representation of multiple diversities), increase the diversity of staff, and strengthen the continuities between the most important contexts of the young child by establishing good relationships with parents and smooth transitions from daycare and preschool to primary school and afterschool care. In this regard, the starting points of the Integrated Child Centres (IKCs) in The Netherlands, providing education and care from age 0 to age 13 (Veen et al., 2021; Petri & Doornenbal, 2020; Van Rozendaal & Vaes, 2015), hold promise. However, as a recent small-scale study indicated, the concept of integrated child centres as such may not be not decisive. It is the extent to which integrated child centres in their vision and mission endorse citizenship values, a community orientation, and social-emancipatory engagement that will likely make the difference (Slot & Leseman, 2020). Finally, with increasing numbers of children entering daycare, preschool and afterschool care in The Netherlands – and possibly universal access in the near future (Leseman et al., 2021; SER, 2016, 2021; VNG et al., 2020) – elaboration of a child rights and citizenship approach in the statutory quality frameworks of the system has become urgent.

While a universalist approach based on child rights and democratic citizenship principles is to be recommended, this does not preclude targeted measures in ECEC and afterschool care to reach-out to particular disadvantaged groups to actively stimulate their participation, or at least to take away possible financial and cultural or religious barriers to participation, and to adapt the pedagogy and curriculum whenever needed to the specific needs and preferences of these groups (Broekhuizen et al., 2020). According to Woodhead (2005, 2006), a universal rights-based citizenship approach and targeted measures could actually be seen as mutually reinforcing: targeted measures adapted to the needs, preferences and possibilities of disadvantaged children, families and communities are often needed to assure the child rights of access to quality early education and equity of outcomes in terms of developing to the full potential. A universal right-based equity approach, on the other hand, lends an ethical logic to compensatory measures, supports the overarching goal of targeted programmes to play a bonding role in society by contributing to equal opportunities for all children and communities, and may ensure that democratic attitudes are practiced in these targeted programmes as well. With regard to the latter, we found some indications in Chapter 3 that preschools with targeted education programmes and mainly serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds, struggled more with the implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles than the other types of child care.

Changing professional identities

Children learn to take social responsibility if they are also treated as persons with social responsibilities and if they are provided with opportunities to exercise these responsibilities (Moss, 2008). By being empowered and provided with agency and responsibility in a group-setting, children learn to take control of their lives while respecting the rights of others (Alderson, 2000, 2008; Cooke et al., 2019; Moss, 2008; Oates et al., 2013). Social responsibility roots in the joint coordination of actions, that is, in the cooperative and co-constructive interactions of children with peers and adults when playing together or when working on shared tasks for a common interest (Eckerman et al., 1989;

Rackoczy et al., 2008; Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). In this regard, the interaction skills of professional caregivers and teachers to establish, what we termed, pedagogical feedback loops by hearing the voices of children and acting upon it contingently, are of great importance. This may imply a different role for the professionals in child care settings who may have less direct control over what children initiate and engage in than they might desire. However, the latter may precisely create the space children need to both negotiate their agency and to learn and 'live' their responsibility towards peers, the group and wider community. More generally, implementing child rights and democratic citizenship principles challenges conventional assumptions and professional attitudes towards children's needs. It requires a shift in professional thinking from protecting children against risks (and from focusing on deficits) to supporting children's agency through co-creation of the education and care environments. It implies a shift from a caring or instructional role to a coaching role which is open to children's voices. It asks for a new balance between sensitivity to the needs of individual children and sensitivity to the needs of the group as a collective (Ahnert et al., 2006; Van Schaik et al., 2018).

Limitations

At the end of this dissertation, we would like to address the main limitations of the work. First of all, the central concepts addressed in this thesis – child rights and democratic citizenship – are difficult to grasp and require a multidisciplinary perspective to fully understand and appreciate their meaning and impact. While being aware of doing insufficient right to the ongoing debates under all relevant disciplinary frameworks, we had to limit the scope of our research to where the discourses converged regarding key principles of a pedagogy and curriculum for ECEC and afterschool care. A particular difficulty was that daycare, preschool and afterschool care services are defined differently in the various national contexts, reflecting differences in the structure and governance of the national systems. However, we tried to be as thoughtful and transparent as possible in the process of searching and analysing the standard-setting documents and international research evidence, and the analysis did enrich our understanding of the concepts and matters at stake.

More documents of different organisations from different countries could have been selected for the discourse analysis. However, in keeping with the purpose of the study, the analysis yielded a sufficiently broad overview of the evolving discourse on child rights and democratic citizenship, revealed interesting shifts over time, and resulted in a rich framework of concrete instantiations of universal child rights for early education and care settings, which could be applied as framework for the other studies in this dissertation. Future research could include an analysis of the policy discourses in selected countries with contrasting solutions regarding the design and governance of ECEC and afterschool care, either with or without explicitly taking a child rights and democratic citizenship approach in their national regulations and curricula. This could illuminate how national cultural models, traditions, political orientations, economic and demographic factors interact in policy choices.

The empirical studies of this dissertation were conducted in the context of larger national (National Child Care Quality Monitor, on child care quality) and international research projects (ISOTIS, on equity and inclusion), which were not specifically set-up for the current topics. Clearly, several key principles of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach were addressed in these projects, and the studies of this dissertation together gathered support for importance of including direct forms of child participation in pedagogical policies and practices. However, there were several limitations to the data.

The quantitative study reported in Chapter 3, based on the Dutch National Child Care Quality Monitor, included several direct and indirect indicators of the implementation of child rights and democratic citizenship principles in Dutch ECEC and afterschool care. Also the observational measures of child outcomes (well-being, involvement, quality of peer interaction) were relevant for the current purpose. However, the operationalization of the child rights and democratic citizenship framework was not optimal and only partial, while in addition to the observations of general well-being, interviews with children and other ways of hearing their 'voices', could have strengthened the research. As a consequence, we may have missed out on important linkages between child rights-based policies and practices, and outcomes at the child level. Moreover, the correlational design of the study did not allow for causal conclusions. Nonetheless, the fact that the data were based on a relatively large nationally representative sample and included child outcome measures, provided a unique window on the Dutch system and confirmed conjectures following from the document analysis in Chapter 2. Future research could include more refined indicators of direct child participation (through different forms of expression), democratic conflict resolution, outreach activities to the community, attributing responsibility to children, and more specific (observational) measures of how diversity in the group is being dealt with in daily practices, preferably split into bonding and bridging practices (cf. Van Schaik et al., 2018). In addition, stronger research designs are needed to establish the causality of the links between participation, and rights-based practices in general, and child outcomes.

The qualitative studies of Chapters 4 and 5 raise the question of the validity and generalizability of the findings. The study sites were selected as being exemplary practices of a child rights and democratic citizenship approach and due to the in-depth design, only small numbers of children and other stakeholders could be included. However, this flaw was partly compensated by the richness of the resulting data, while the focus on exemplary practices at least showed what in principle is possible. Regarding the Child Voices study of Chapter 4, the intensive in-depth mosaic approach and methodology led to a rich compilation of different forms of expression around various individual and group-based participatory activities, and this was actually a strong feature of the approach (cf. Clark & Moss, 2001; Clark, 2017). Attesting to the validity and generalizability of the findings reported in Chapter 4, was the fact that we found strong convergence with the other Child Voices studies conducted in other countries within the ISOTIS project (Pastori et al., 2020). Regarding the case study of the Peaceable School programme reported in Chapter 5, the validity and generalizability of the findings was confirmed by convergence with the findings in previous larger-scale research on this programme which is currently widely implemented in The Netherlands in primary education and increasingly in neighbourhoods and ECEC and afterschool care as well (Horjus, 2021; Pauw, 2013, 2017). As such we are confident that our conclusions regarding the scalability of a child rights and citizenship approach to child care, and what is needed to facilitate up-scaling, are solid. However, in future research, more settings and more cases of a varied nature should be assessed to further strengthen the conclusions drawn from this study.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

The present research supports the view that in the pedagogical context of child care and education, the participation of children is important. Children are valuable sources of information to improve the quality of care and education. They are owners of their own learning and development, and should be treated in that way as a precondition for acquiring democratic citizenship skills. Children's participation rights are best framed within a discourse of entitlements, evolving capacities, autonomy and interdependence, while emphasizing (young) children's agency and citizenship. This creates a strong image of the child as a competent co-creator and not just as a passive recipient of care and education. In this regard, the balance between the right to protection and the right to participation needs to be thoroughly considered. It is recommendable to extend protection-based quality concepts with an image of the child as a competent citizen with evolving capacities to exert its rights. It is recommendable to develop a statutory quality framework that mandates implementation of systematic child participation and provides concrete guidelines how to implement child participation, also for the youngest.

A rights-based citizenship approach should not be narrowed down to an over-romantic (individualistic) view of the child as a unique competent individual who should be fully in charge, but should equally entail the (collectivistic) value of social responsibility towards peers, the group, and wider community. The present research revealed that supporting individual agency and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, in concrete pedagogical practices, they can reinforce each other by strengthening the autonomy and agency of the young child through the child's participation in co-creative processes with others (peers, teachers, parents, community members) in relation to the 'outside world' of the local community and society at large. Including in prevailing quality concepts and legal quality frameworks the value of social responsibility towards others and the wider community and society is to be recommended in view of the public function of the child care system.

This dissertation contributes in several ways to the translation of a universal child rights and democratic citizenship perspective into concrete pedagogical principles for shaping child care spaces and practices. We demonstrated how direct child participation can be realized through various playful activities, accompanied by open, semi-structured conversations with children. For young children, we described a mosaic of activities including the making of artefacts, that could support these conversations. If implemented well, such direct participation will likely contribute to children's well-being, involvement, quality of peer interactions, and feelings of belonging and inclusion. We identified pedagogical practices that can support children's agency *and* social responsibility. This concerned, for instance, the importance of allowing children freedom to navigate through the centre's spaces and to choose with whom to play which opposes the idea of strict group stability and fixed staff per group (stemming from a protection perspective), but we also discovered the importance of doing collective work to support children's social responsibility. We described concrete activities, based on the existing Peaceable School programme, of practicing democratic citizenship, such as child-chaired group conferences and peer-mediation in conflict resolution, which have proven to be scalable. In this regard, the universal and internationally agreed-upon child rights and democratic citizenship perspective, when translated into concrete pedagogy, provides a 'content-rich' definition and elaboration of the basic pedagogical aim of socialization, that is, of the 'transfer of the norms and values, and the culture of society' as it framed in the Dutch child care legislation, as was also argued by Biesta (2015) and De Winter (2011).

In this dissertation, we critically reviewed the Dutch approach to early childhood education and care, and afterschool care at the national policy level. The Dutch system has evolved over the past decades from merely fulfilling an economic function to being a foundational pedagogical provision with the potential to contribute to urgent societal issues, and is now on the eve of becoming a universal, at least partly free of charge, service to all children and families (Leseman et al., 2021). Legislation and quality regulation have not kept pace with these developments. We recommend a fundamental change of approach. We argue for extension of currently dominant quality concepts and the statutory quality framework and monitoring system they inform, with a child rights and democratic citizenship perspective, along with the introduction of curriculum guidelines that specify the aims and standards of socialization practices in child care in the light of an internationally agreed value base, underpinned by an image of the child as a citizen with rights and evolving capabilities to exert these rights. The UNCRC (1989) and especially the European Quality Framework (2014) may be worthwhile to consider in this regard.

List of abbreviations

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	Education for All
EQF	European Quality Framework
GC	General Comment
IKC	Integrated Child Centre [Integraal Kindcentrum, IKC]
LKK	Dutch National Child Care Quality Monitor [Landelijke Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang, LKK]
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Socio-economic Status
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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Appendices

Appendices to Chapter 2

Table A2.1

Key theoretical dimensions of coding categories (theoretical framework, Chapter 1)

General classifications	
Year	1989-2019
Country/region	Global / International/ EU / NL
Definition and child age range	0-6+ years
(Institutional) setting	General, day-care, preschool, kindergarten, primary school, home-based care
Target population	General / Specific (e.g., girls, abuse, cultural minorities, low / high SES, et cetera)
Images and discourse of the young child (Woodhead, 2006)	Developmental perspective Political and economic perspective Social and cultural perspective Human Rights perspective
Child image	In need of protection, Citizen, Innocent, Developing, Competent, Teacher, Learner, Creator, ..
Children's rights language	Reactive: needs-based (protection) Proactive: rights-based (empowerment)
Recognition of (mutual reinforcement of) provision-protection-participation	Yes / More or less / No
Pedagogic themes within democratic citizenship	Democracy, Diversity, Community, Conflict resolution, Shared decision making/participation
Focus on citizenship	Citizenship-as- achievement Citizenship-as-practice
Citizenship approach (Putnam, 2000)	Bonding Bridging
Type of citizenship (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004)	Personal citizenship Participatory citizenship Justice oriented citizenship

Table A2.2

A-priori Coding Scheme

Elaboration of key theoretical dimensions in an *a priori* coding scheme:

	Concepts	Thematic elements
A	Perspective *to, in, through* ECEC policy and provision	0 – Misc. 1 – Child rights / UNCRC 2 – Democracy 3 – Governance 4 – Economic investment 5 – Social justice, equity 6 – Gender equality, equity
B	Inclusion	0 – Misc. 1 – Social inclusion: values, culture, purposes, approaches 2 – Inclusive education / pedagogy 3 – Inclusive practices 3 – Inclusive system: policies, organization, services, facilities
C	Diversity	0 – Misc. 1 – Diversity in children's backgrounds 2 – Diversity among children as learners 3 - Diversity of the needs of children
D	Community	0 – Misc. 1 – Community engagement (as stakeholders) 2 – Community outreach (to involve children and parents in service) 3 – Community-based services (community ownership) 4 – Community as setting (ecological surrounding) 5 – Community as a group
E	Rights	0 – Misc. 1 – (Young) children's rights 2 - Human rights 3 – Rights of people with disabilities 4- Rights of vulnerable and minority populations 5 – Family rights
F	(Dem.) Participation / Voices	0 – Misc. 1 – Child participation: presence in education/learning processes 2 - Child participation: monitoring children's' views 3 – Parent's participation 4 – Community participation
G	Citizenship	0 – Misc. 1 – Democratic citizenship 2 – Democratic citizenship education
H	Empowerment	0 – Misc. 1 – Children's empowerment / agency 2 – Empowerment of parents / families / communities
I	(Whole) Child Development	0 – Misc. 1 – Singular 2 – Holistic 3 – Holistic and multiple
J	Children's Needs	0 – Misc. 1 – Young children's needs 2 - Needs of diverse learners 3 – Needs of children and their families

Table A2.3

Overview of sources – documents included in the analysis

Organization	Period	Title
OECD	**1990-1999**	-
	2000-2009	Starting Strong (Early Childhood Education and Care, 2001) Starting Strong II (Early Childhood Education and Care, 2006)
	2010-2019	Starting Strong III (A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care, 2012) Starting Strong IV (Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care, 2015) Starting Strong V (Transitions from Early Childhood Education and Care to Primary Education, 2017)
UNESCO (UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank)	**1990-1999**	World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action, 1990 Dakar Framework for Action, 2000
	2002-2009	UNESCO Policy Briefs: -*Early Childhood Care? Development? Education?* 2002 -*Integrating early childhood into education: the case of Sweden*, 2002 -*Women, work and early childhood: the nexus in developing and developed countries I and II*, 2002 -*Home-based early childhood services: the case of New Zealand*, 2002 -*PNGs vernacular language preschool programme*, 2002 -*Social transformations and their implications for the global demand for ECCE*, 2002 -*Re-forming education and care: the case of England, Scotland and Sweden,* 2003 -*Mandatory funding for early childhood education: a proposal in Brazil*, 2003 -*Planning for access: planning a data-system first*, 2003 -*Cross-sectoral coordination in early childhood: some lessons to learn*, 2003 -*School children in families with young children: educational opportunities at risk,* 2003 -*Lifelong learning and social policy for early childhood*, 2003 -*Re-forming education and care workforce: the case of England, Scotland and Sweden*, 2003 -*The impact of AIDS on early childhood care and education*, 2003 -*The role of early childhood care and education in ensuring equal opportunity*, 2003 -*Early Childhood care and education reform: Korea, part 1: early childhood school*, 2003 -*Early childhood care and education reform: Korea, part 2: early childhood education law*, 2003 -*Early education financing: what is useful to know?*, 2004 -*Curriculum in early childhood education and care,* 2004 -*Quality information for a quality early childhood care and development,* 2004 -*The early childhood workforce: continuing education and prof. development,* 2004 -*The early childhood workforce in developed countries: basic structures and education*, 2004 -*Funding strategies for equitable access to early childhood education: the case of New Zealand*, 2004 -*Inter-ministerial collaboration in early childhood training in Singapore*, 2004 -*Access, public investment, and equity in ECCE: the nexus in 9 high-populated countries,* 2004 -*Encourage private sector: preschool education reform in Marocco*, 2004 -*Enrolment gaps in pre-primary education: the impact of a compulsory attendance practice*, 2004 -*Supporting the poorest: Vietnam's early childhood policy,* 2005 -*Integration of care and education: the challenge in Brazil,* 2006 -*Pre-primary education: a valid investment option for EFA*, 2006 -*Impact of free primary education on early childhood development in Kenya,* 2006 -*Ensuring equitable accessto preschool education: Kazakhstan's experience*, 2006 -*Payroll taxes for child development: lessons from Colombia*, 2006 -*Bite off as much as you can chew: Gambia's policy for early childhood*, 2006 -*The training and working conditions of preschool teachers in France,* 2007

		-*Partnership with non-public actors: Singapore's early childhood policy*, 2007 -*Jordan's strategies for early childhood education in a LLL framework,* 2007 -*Results from the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy 1998-2006*, 2007 -*Preschool class for 6-year olds in Sweden: a bridge between early childhood and compulsory school,* 2007 -*Good governance of early childhood care and education: lessons from the 2007 EFA report*, 2007 -*Strategies for reaching EFA goal on ECCE,* 2008 -*What approaches to linking ECCE and primary education?,* 2008 -*The impact of global migration on the education of young children*, 2008 -*Inclusion of children with disabilities*, 2009 -*ECCE and non-formal education: widening the reach to all children*, 2009 -*What is Your Image of the Child?*, 2010
	2010-2019	Investing Against Evidence, the global state of Early Childhood Care and Education 2010-2018 (2015)
European Commission	Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care : *Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.* Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission, 2014. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture: Monitoring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care – Complementing the 2014 ECEC Quality Framework proposal with indicators. Recommendations from ECEC experts. European Union, 2018. Sylva, K., Ereky-Stevens, K, Aricescu, A.: CARE Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European Early Childhood Education and Care: Overview of European ECEC curricula and curriculum template, 2015.	
Government of the Netherlands	Act of 9 July 2004 regarding compensation for childcare costs and guaranteeing the quality of childcare (Wet Kinderopvang / Child Care Act, 2005) 'Development opportunities through quality and education' Act, 2010 Child Care and Preschool Harmonization Act, 2018 Innovation and Quality in Child Care Act and Decree on Quality Child Care, 2018 Pedagogical Framework 0-4 years (Singer & Kleerekoper, 2009)	

Table A2.4.1

Number of references and relative coverage in the main text per document/period (UNESCO)

	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture									
			1990		2000		2001-2010		2015	
Concepts & conceptual elements	**Files**	**Ref.**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**
Community role		303	8	1.58	36	1.67	104	4.59	155	0.72
Community engagement	4	78	3	0.8	23	1.2	22	2.24	30	0.61
Community group	4	65	1	0.26	2	0.11	26	2.94	36	0.62
Community outreach	4	20	1	0.38	2	0.08	5	2.03	12	0.26
Community setting	3	69	0	0	3	0.11	24	2.43	42	0.76
Community-based services	4	69	3	0.34	6	0.28	27	2.09	33	0.67
Diversity	4	89	2	0.73	25	1.03	25	2.94	37	0.75
Diversity among children as learners	4	13	1	0.4	7	0.36	3	2..39	2	0.04
Diversity as part of pedagogy	3	18	0	0	5	0.28	4	1.85	9	0.2
Diversity in children's backgrounds	4	33	1	0.33	7	0.27	7	0.86	18	0.36
Diversity of practices	2	6	0	0	4	0.18	2	1.02	0	0
Diversity of the needs of children	2	11	0	0	0	0	5	2.34	6	0.15
Empowerment or Agency	4	113	2	0.53	24	0.9	58	3.56	29	0.61
(Whole) Child development	3	71	0	0	5	0.26	50	3.52	16	0.34
Agency, empowerment of children	3	11	0	0	4	0.23	0	0	7	0.2
Empowerment of parents	3	12	0	0	7	0.36	2	1.09	3	0.11
Empowerment of staff	2	2	0	0	1	0.04	0	0	1	0.02
Community Empowerment*)	4	13	1	0.36	6	0.4	5	3.56	1	0.02
Inclusion	4	95	5	1.97	27	1.02	24	2.67	39	0.84
Inclusive pedagogy	2	7	0	0	6	0.18	0	0	1	0.03
Inclusive practices	3	16	0	0	4	0.19	6	1.68	6	0.13
Inclusive system	3	31	0	0	9	0.41	8	3.17	14	0.31
Social inclusion	4	39	5	1.97	8	0.28	8	1.94	18	0.38
Participation Voices Views	4	105	3	0.64	58	2.42	19	1.71	25	0.59
Child participation	3	18	0	0	7	0.3	5	1.92	6	0.18
Community participation	4	42	3	0.64	29	1.31	3	1.06	7	0.13
Democratic citizenship	3	25	0	0	17	0.97	3	1.09	5	0.11
Parental participation	3	13	0	0	3	0.07	5	1	5	0.15
Staff participation	2	5	0	0	2	0.15	3	0.97	0	0
Rights	4	199	6	1.62	66	2.75	36	2.03	91	2.04
Children's rights	4	96	1	0.35	17	0.77	28	1.42	50	1.1
Rights in ECEC	2	4	0	0	2	0.15	2	0.93	0	0
Rights through ECEC	2	6	0	0	4	0.19	2	1.26	0	0
Rights to ECEC	3	12	0	0	1	0.08	10	1.2	1	0.03
Human rights	4	77	2	0.63	34	1.77	6	1.76	35	0.91
Parental or family rights	2	5	0	0	0	0	2	2.16	3	0.06
Staff rights	1	1	1	0.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
Right to Education*)	2	17	2	0.45	15	0.57	0	0	0	0

*) Included for UNESCO only

Table A2.4.2

Number of references and relative coverage in the main text per document/period (OECD)

	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development											
			2001		2006		2012		2015		2017	
Concepts & conceptual elements	**Files**	**Ref.**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**	**Ref.**	**Cov. %**
Community role	5	257	79	1.99	78	1.03	32	0.87	12	0.5	56	1.31
Community engagement	5	53	19	0.57	19	0.31	8	0.25	2	0.05	5	0.22
Community group	5	64	15	0.51	20	0.35	13	0.33	1	0.08	15	0.5
Community outreach	3	16	6	0.22	7	0.14	0	0	0	0	3	0.08
Community setting	5	75	26	0.84	19	0.29	10	0.28	7	0.27	13	0.36
Community-based services	5	48	13	0.31	12	0.23	1	0.03	2	0.1	20	0.55
Diversity	5	125	45	1.19	42	0.61	26	0.61	1	0.08	11	0.25
Diversity among children as learners	4	18	3	0.08	9	0.13	5	0.15	0	0	1	0.03
Diversity as part of pedagogy	4	19	6	1.18	4	0.07	7	0.19	0	0	2	0.06
Diversity in children's backgrounds	5	55	16	0.48	23	0.33	8	0.16	1	0.02	7	0.14
Diversity of practices	3	42	21	0.53	10	0.13	11	0.27	0	0	0	0
Diversity of the needs of children	4	19	6	0.18	5	0.09	5	0.12	0	0	3	0.05
Empowerment or Agency	5	77	14	0.63	38	1.07	14	0.63	2	0.11	9	0.32
(Whole) Child development	5	51	3	0.21	35	0.98	9	0.43	2	0.11	2	0.07
Agency, empowerment of children	5	42	9	0.44	16	0.55	9	0.39	1	0.06	7	0.25
Empowerment of parents	5	9	2	0.05	4	0.16	1	0.03	1	0.06	1	0.04
Empowerment of staff	1	4	4	0.12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community Empowerment*)												
Inclusion	5	59	17	0.22	21	0.21	11	0.16	2	0.05	8	0.23
Inclusive pedagogy	5	7	2	0.04	2	0.03	1	0.01	1	0.02	1	0.01
Inclusive practices	4	24	7	0.17	6	0.07	6	0.11	0	0	5	0.12
Inclusive system	3	17	5	0.04	8	0.07	4	0.05	0	0	0	0
Social inclusion	4	21	9	0.13	9	0.09	0	0	1	0.03	2	0.09
Participation Voices Views	5	238	35	1.12	56	1.24	66	1.98	23	0.92	58	1.97
Child participation	5	96	14	0.48	17	0.47	14	0.52	18	0.73	33	1.26
Community participation	4	32	3	0.09	11	0.26	16	0.42	0	0	2	0.08
Democratic citizenship	4	76	23	0.94	35	1.02	10	0.62	0	0	8	0.31
Parental participation	5	103	18	0.61	16	0.35	37	0.85	12	0.42	20	0.77
Staff participation	5	18	4	0.12	4	0.1	5	0.13	3	0.13	2	0.08
Rights	5	105	39	0.83	31	0.6	21	0.52	6	0.2	8	0.24
Children's rights	5	68	27	0.51	21	0.37	8	0.26	4	0.13	8	0.21
Rights in ECEC	5	20	1	0.02	8	0.23	5	0.18	1	0.03	5	0.15
Rights through ECEC	2	13	5	0.11	8	0.21	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rights to ECEC	5	25	14	0.28	4	0.07	3	0.08	3	0.11	1	0.02
Human rights	3	10	1	0.02	7	0.15	0	0	0	0	2	0.06
Parental or family rights	5	34	10	0.24	10	0.17	12	0.29	1	0.02	1	0.03
Staff rights	3	6	2	0.05	0	0	3	0.07	1	0.05	0	0
Right to Education*)												

*) Included for UNESCO only

Table A2.4.3

Frequency of concepts, thematic elements and sub-elements coded in EC documents

	European Commission Current policy 2014 / 2018	
Concepts & conceptual elements	**No. of files**	**No. of references**
Community role	2	16
Community engagement	2	7
Community group	0	
Community outreach	2	5
Community setting	0	
Community-based services	2	3
Diversity	2	48
Diversity among children as learners	0	
Diversity as part of pedagogy	1	2
Diversity in children's backgrounds	2	35
Diversity of practices	1	1
Diversity of the needs of children	1	2
Empowerment or Agency	2	24
(Whole) Child development	2	16
Agency, empowerment of children	1	3
Empowerment of parents	0	
Empowerment of staff	0	
Community Empowerment*)		
Inclusion	2	15
Inclusive pedagogy	1	1
Inclusive practices	2	3
Inclusive system	2	4
Social inclusion	1	5
Participation Voices Views	2	64
Child participation	2	26
Community participation	1	3
Democratic citizenship	2	5
Parental participation	2	25
Staff participation	2	5
Rights	2	11
Children's rights	2	9
Rights in ECEC	0	
Rights through ECEC	0	
Rights to ECEC	2	2
Human rights	0	
Parental or family rights	1	1
Staff rights	1	1
Right to Education*)		
*) Included for UNESCO only		

Appendices to Chapter 3

Figure A3.1

Identified child-rights and citizenship variables composed of survey-items in the LKK 2017-2019 questionnaires for managers and teachers

Early Childhood Education (ECEC) and Afterschool Care	**Characteristics**	**Concepts of Child rights and Citizenship - Children as empowered, evolving, and connected human beings**		
		Personal citizenship / Rights in, to ..	*Participatory citizenship / Rights in, to ..*	*Justice oriented citizenship / Rights through ..*
	Identity	*Child image / the (individual) child*	*Bonding: the the group*	*Bridging: The wider community*
	Structural characteristics	Location/region, seize and legal form, staff cultural and educational background, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of client-families, main type of provision		
	Vision & Organizational policy	Child rights Democratic citizenship	Issues regarding organizational democracy: organizational hierarchy, staff voice, diversity within the organization, parental involvement	Social role /CSR
	Pedagogical procedures	Child agency: Child influence Open door policy Child participation, voices: Formal (direct / indirect)	Aspects of Diversity/Inclusion (special needs, multilinguality, etc.)	Outreach to the community
	Practices (teachers)	Child participation, voices: Informal Child agency: Open doors	Responsibility for eachother & group Democratic conflict resolution	Attention for different cultures in the group Social and moral tasks Global citizenship

▨ *Primary concepts and variables*

☐ *Not included in study (beyond scope)*

Table A3.1

Pearson correlations of organizations' policy variables (reported by managers) with outcome quality indicators

		Process quality indicators					
Organizational variables		**Well-being**	**N**	**Involvement**	**N**	**Quality of peer interactions**	**N**
Formal child participation	All	.102	217	.113	217	.235**	193
	Daycare	-.119	78	-.039	78	.020	57
	Preschool	.104	76	.161	76	.050	75
	Afterschool care	-.114	63	-.104	63	.008	61
Informal child participation	All	.006	217	.014	217	.197**	193
	Daycare	-.205	78	-.022	78	.275*	57
	Preschool	.021	76	-.014	76	.198	75
	Afterschool care	.021	63	.001	63	-.032	61
Open door policy	All	.130	219	.110	219	.116	195
	Daycare	-.008	79	-.035	79	.052	58
	Preschool	.011	76	.078	76	-.031	75
	Afterschool care	.158	64	.148	64	-.025	62
Child influence	All	.117	217	.070	217	.160*	293
	Daycare	.128	78	.224*	78	.328*	57
	Preschool	-.012	76	-.096	76	-.048	75
	Afterschool care	.034	63	-.033	63	-.122	61

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table A3.2

Pearson correlations of the teacher-reported indicators of child rights and democratic citizenship outcome quality indicators

		Process quality indicator					
Child rights and citizenship variable		Wellbing *r*	N	Involvement *r*	N	Quality of peer interaction *r*	N
Direct formal child participation/voices	All	.320**	245	.208**	245	.372**	222
	Daycare	.063	83	-.032	83	.148	62
	Preschool	.214*	86	.106	86	-.047	86
	Afterschool	.102	76	.087	76	.029	74
Indirect formal child participation/voices	All	.000	245	.048	245	.029	222
	Daycare	-.069	83	-.096	83	-.011	62
	Preschool	-.062	86	.093	86	-.065	86
	Afterschool	-.011	76	0.02	76	-.051	74
Informal child participation	All	.093	245	.114	245	.030	222
	Daycare	.011	83	.149	83	-.215	62
	Preschool	-.010	86	-.006	86	.078	86
	Afterschool	.198	76	.189	76	-.066	74
Open door policy	All	.209**	248	.097	248	.228**	224
	Daycare	.000	83	-.039	83	-.161	62
	Preschool	.162	87	.030	87	.172	87
	Afterschool	.044	78	-.043	78	.012	75
Stimulating self-reliance	All	.074	236	.028	236	.088	214
	Daycare	.085	81	.048	81	.115	61
	Preschool	-.012	83	-.096	83	.204	83
	Afterschool	.188	72	.134	72	.050	70
Democratic conflict resolution	All	.130*	236	.022	236	.035	214
	Daycare	.212	81	.016	81	.305*	61
	Preschool	-.018	83	-.042	83	-.091	83
	Afterschool	.159	72	.030	72	-.130	70
Shared responsibilities	All	.043	236	-.048	236	.-007	214
	Daycare	.108	81	-.075	81	.149	61
	Preschool	-.007	83	.004	83	.092	83
	Afterschool	.137	72	-.028	72	-.075	70
Social and moral tasks / daycare and preschool	All	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Daycare	-.005	78	-.060	78	.186	58
	Preschool	-.014	78	-.243*	78	-.044	78
	Afterschool	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
Attention for different cultures/daycare and preschool	All	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Daycare	.029	78	.003	78	.034	58
	Preschool	.013	78	-.138	78	-.075	78
	Afterschool	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
Social and moral Tasks / afterschool	All	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Daycare	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Preschool	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Afterschool	.084	70	.030	70	.151	
Attention for different cultures / afterschool	All	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Daycare	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Preschool	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Afterschool	.094	70	.086	70	-.185	68
Global Citizenship / afterschool	All	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Daycare	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Preschool	n.a.		n.a.		n.a.	
	Afterschool	-.042	70	-.052	70	.128	68

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table A3.3

Predictors (vision and policy) of Child well-being, Involvement and Quality of peer interactions per type of care provision

		Well-being			**Involvement**			**Quality of peer interactions**		
Type of care	**Predictor**	**B**	**SE B**	***β***	**B**	**SE B**	***β***	**B**	**SE B**	***β***
ALL	Formal child participation	.017	.021	.066	.049	.031	.126	.158	.089	.146
	Informal child participation	-.022	.022	-.077	-.021	.033	-.050	.153	.095	.131
	Child influence	.033	.018	.148	.021	.026	.063	.036	.076	.039
	Language needs	-.130	.066	-.137	-.161	.098	-.115	-.485	.281	-.125
Daycare	Formal child participation	-.059	.042	-.236	-.085	.060	-.233	-.170	.154	-.189
	Informal child participation	-.061	.056	-.177	-.071	.079	-.141	.174	.203	.144
	Child influence	.095	.035	.419**	.172	.050	.517**	.260	.133	.309
	Language needs	.067	.156	.057	.206	.222	.118	1.492	.593	.347*
Preschool	Formal child participation	.031	.035	.130	.105	.054	.272	-.001	.090	-.002
	Informal child participation	-.005	.033	-.022	-.002	.052	-.006	.237	.086	.356**
	Child influence	-.012	.028	-.062	-.054	.044	-.178	-.149	.073	-.279*
	Language needs	-.001	.097	-.001	-.068	.152	-.059	.310	.252	.151
Afterschool care	Formal child participation	-.005	.050	-.014	.018	.078	.033	.119	.220	.075
	Informal child participation	.005	.043	.016	.005	.067	.011	-.032	.203	-.023
	Child influence	.024	.037	.097	.014	.057	.036	-.184	.160	-.165
	Language needs	-.109	.193	-.082	-.383	.299	-.185	-1.591	.846	-.265

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Controlled for babies>50% and language needs

Table A3.4

Predictors (practices) of Child well-being, Involvement and Quality of peer interactions per type of care provision

		Well-being			Involvement			Quality of peer interactions		
Type of care	**Predictor**	**B**	**SE B**	***β***	**B**	**SE B**	***β***	**B**	**SE B**	***β***
ALL	Direct formal child participation	.081	.025	.349**	.072	.042	.194	.091	.087	.118
	Indirect formal child participation	-.031	.024	-141	.008	.040	.023	-.105	.083	-.142
	Open door policy	.026	.020	.128	.008	.033	.024	.118	.069	.174
	Democratic conflict resolution	.011	.026	.041	.013	.042	.031	.127	.088	.148
	Language needs	.12	.074	-.017	-.052	.123	-.044	.219	.254	-.089
Daycare	Direct formal child participation	.034	.037	.133	.000	.057	-.001	.090	.145	.087
	Indirect formal child participation	-.055	.043	-.196	-.041	.066	-.097	-.055	.162	-.049
	Open door policy	.021	.029	.093	.053	.045	.158	-.218	.112	-.245
	Democratic conflict resolution	.062	.036	.233	.064	.055	.159	.357	.140	.327*
	Language needs	-.047	.158	-.041	.076	.242	.044	1.306	.593	.290*
Preschool	Direct formal child participation	.087	.029	.376**	.046	.053	.115	.012	.088	.017
	Indirect formal child participation	-.035	.026	-.175	.041	.048	.117	-.044	.079	-.070
	Open door policy	.045	.026	.204	.006	.047	.016	.171	.077	.270*
	Democratic conflict resolution	-.037	.031	-.142	-.044	.056	-.098	-.052	.092	-.069
	Language needs	.028	.083	.041	-.103	.151	-.088	.344	.248	.176
Afterschool care	Direct formal child participation	.056	.043	.227	.077	.065	.208	.154	.204	.134
	Indirect formal child participation	-.043	.046	-.162	-.016	.069	-.040	-.185	.215	-.149
	Open door policy	.012	.024	.069	.004	.037	.013	.018	.116	.022
	Democratic conflict resolution	.064	.032	.271	.078	.049	.221	-.025	.154	-.023
	Language needs	-.160	.188	-.116	-.442	.284	-.213	-1.481	.887	-.233

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Controlled for babies>50% and language needs

Appendix to Chapter 5

Table A5.1

Overview and designation of respondents

Status/role	**No.**	**Location**
Programme developers	**1**	Peaceable School-programme
	2	Peaceable Preschool-programme
	3	Peaceable Neighbourhoods-programme
Site coordinator	**1**	Location manager day care centre
	2	Location manager primary school
Teachers	**1**	Preschool teacher (children aged 0-4). Working with the Growthmeter.
	2	Preschool teacher (children aged 0-4). Working with the Growthmeter.
	3	Teacher BSO (children aged aged 6-8). Working with the Growthmeter and The Peaceable School.
	4	Teacher primary school
	5	Teacher primary school
Parents	**1**	The Peaceable School
	2	The Peaceable School
	3	The Peaceable School

Total number of respondents: 13.

The average age of the respondents: 40.

Average number of years of experience: 15+

Gender balance M/F: 5/8

Educational levels of respondents varied between ISCED 4-8

Summary

Summary in Dutch / Samenvatting in het Nederlands

Inleiding

In een context waarbij wereldwijd steeds meer kinderen al op jonge leeftijd naar centra voor kinderopvang, voorschoolse educatie en naschoolse opvang gaan, is het belangrijk om deze kindercentra te erkennen als unieke voorzieningen waar universele kinderrechten, verantwoordelijkheden en democratische omgangsvormen voorgeleefd, doorleefd, geoefend en verder ontwikkeld kunnen worden. Dit is belangrijk voor kinderen, maar ook voor hun ouders, de gemeenschappen waar zij toe behoren, en de samenleving als geheel. In dit proefschrift hebben we de vraag behandeld hoe de concepten van kinderrechten en democratisch burgerschap op verschillende niveaus van het sociaalecologische systeem rondom jonge kinderen vorm gegeven kunnen worden en, toegespitst op kindercentra, kunnen bijdragen aan hun welzijn, inclusie, en socialisatie. Op deze wijze hebben we geprobeerd bij te dragen aan een pedagogisch vertoog van '*empowerment', het in hun kracht zetten,* van kinderen. Tijdens het onderzoeksproces hebben we verschillende belanghebbenden bij het werk betrokken, waaronder kinderen zelf.

Vertrekpunt van het onderzoek waren de leidende principes van het Internationale Verdrag inzake de Rechten van het Kind (1989) en de nadere uitleg dat deze universele rechten gelden voor alle kinderen van 0 tot 18 jaar, dus ook voor de allerjongste kinderen. Een eerste verkenning, in Hoofdstuk 1, bracht aan het licht dat binnen kindvoorzieningen een centraal vraagstuk is hoe het recht op bescherming moet worden afgewogen tegen de rechten op participatie, autonomie en eigenaarschap. Belangrijk hierbij is het beeld van het kind waar van uitgegaan wordt: zien we het kind vooral als behoeftig, nog niet competent en in-wording als burger (*becoming*) of zien we het kind nu al als competente burger (*being*), met behoeften maar ook met rechten, belangen, ervaringen, ideeën en toenemende capaciteiten?

Een tweede inzicht uit deze eerste verkenning is dat toepassing van een kinderrechten perspectief in het kader van kindercentra altijd drieledig is: het gaat om zowel het recht *op toegang* tot kindvoorzieningen*,* de waarborging van rechten *binnen* die voorzieningen, als de verwezenlijking en verduurzaming van rechten *via* die voorzieningen, door wat deze voorzieningen bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling en vorming van kinderen en aan hun kansen in de samenleving. Toegepast in samenhang, kunnen kinderen in toegankelijke kindvoorzieningen hun rechten en verantwoordelijkheden op dagelijkse basis ervaren en oefenen, en door autonomie, keuzevrijheid en verantwoordelijkheid in de context van een groep te bevorderen, kunnen kinderen hun competenties verder versterken. De ogenschijnlijke tegenstelling tussen kinderen zien als *beings* en kinderen zien als *becomings* kan op deze manier worden overbrugd: door kinderen als burgers te behandelen en een balans te zoeken tussen bescherming en participatie, is burgerschap tegelijkertijd praktijk (being) en doel (becoming).

Als verdere uitwerking hiervan is in deze eerste verkenning onderscheid gemaakt tussen drie niveaus van democratisch burgerschap: de persoonlijk verantwoordelijke burger, de participatieve burger en de burger die zich bewust is van sociale rechtvaardigheid en verantwoordelijkheid neemt voor anderen in de groep, de gemeenschap en wijdere samenleving. Mede in relatie tot het laatste, is hier ook ingegaan op een belangrijk kenmerk van de wijdere maatschappelijke context waarbinnen kindvoorzieningen vorm geven aan kinderrechten en burgerschap: de toenemende diversiteit naar sociale, culturele en religieuze achtergrond. Dit bracht een derde inzicht naar voren: toepassing van kinderrechten en principes van burgerschap in kindvoorzieningen omvat idealiter ook praktijken van *verbinding* (gericht op groepsvorming) en *overbrugging* (in relatie tot diversiteit).

Deze dissertatie

In vier deelonderzoeken hebben we op verschillende niveaus - van ideologie tot formeel beleid, en van organisatiekenmerken en pedagogisch beleid tot de ervaringen van het individuele kind – de vormgeving van kinderrechten en democratisch burgerschap bestudeerd. In deze deelonderzoeken hebben we geprobeerd een beeld te schetsen van wat een kinderrechten- en burgerschapsaanpak kan inhouden; hoe deze op verschillende niveaus kan bijdragen aan het welbevinden van kinderen; en hoe deze op schaal kan worden gebracht. Op deze wijze hebben we geprobeerd de contouren te schetsen van een op kinderrechten en burgerschapsprincipes gebaseerde pedagogiek in centra voor voor- en naschoolse opvang en educatie. De deelonderzoeken hebben een aantal inzichten opgeleverd, die hieronder kort worden samengevat.

Ideologisch discours en formele curricula

In het eerste onderzoek (Hoofdstuk 2) hebben we internationale, Europese en Nederlandse documentatie geanalyseerd om het ideologische en formele (wettelijke) discours rond de toepassing van kinderrechten en burgerschap in pedagogische voorzieningen zoals de kinderopvang in kaart te brengen, en de veranderingen daarin in de loop der jaren. Uit deze analyse kwam naar voren dat het internationale, meer ideologisch geörienteerde, discours aanvankelijk, in de jaren na ondertekening van het Internationale Kinderrechten Verdrag, veel directe verwijzingen naar kinderrechten omvatte (bijvoorbeeld het recht *op*, rechten *in* en nagestreefd *via* kinderopvang), en vanaf het jaar 2000 ook naar (democratisch) burgerschap. Andere begrippen als participatie van kinderen en ouders (in de zin van inspraak en meebeslissen), en de relatie met de gemeenschap, *empowerment* en *agency* van kinderen, en diversiteit en inclusie kwamen tevens veelvuldig aan de orde. In meer recente jaren bleek vooral *participatie* in internationale (beleids)documenten voor kinderopvang een kernbegrip en concrete uitwerking te zijn, naast nadruk op de rol van de *gemeenschap*. Het formele kwaliteitsraamwerk voor vroege opvang en educatie uit 2014, met de status van beleidsadvies, van de Europese Commissie (European Quality Framework), bleek een tamelijk compleet kader te bieden vanuit een kinderrechten- en democratisch burgerschapsperspectief, gebaseerd op een beeld van het kind als competente burger en eigenaar van het eigen ontwikkelings- en leerproces. Ook bleek het

Europese kwaliteitskader het belang te benadrukken van kinder- (en ouder-) participatie in een context van diversiteit, betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap, en een pedagogiek van inclusie. Analyse van de formele wettelijke kaders voor kinderopvang, voorschoolse educatie en buitenschoolse opvang in Nederland gaf een ander beeld te zien. Noch in de wettelijke kwaliteitsregels, noch in de open geformuleerde vier pedagogische basisdoelen bleek systematische aandacht voor kinderrechten en burgerschap, ook niet in de concrete vorm van kinderparticipatie, betrokkenheid van de gemeenschap, en omgaan met diversiteit en inclusie. Concreet vorm en inhoud geven aan de pedagogische basisdoelen, al of niet vanuit een kinderrechten en burgerschapsbenadering, is in het Nederlandse stelsel van kinderopvang vooral een gedecentraliseerde verantwoordelijkheid van de aanbiedende organisaties.

Kinderrechten en burgerschap in de Nederlandse kinderopvang

In het tweede onderzoek (Hoofdstuk 3) onderzochten we of, in welke mate en hoe in de Nederlandse kinderopvang, peuteropvang, voorschoolse educatie en naschoolse opvang elementen van een kinderrechten- en burgerschapsbenadering momenteel worden toegepast; en of toepassing hiervan verband houdt met het welzijn en de betrokkenheid van kinderen en de kwaliteit van hun sociale interacties. We maakten gebruik van data verzameld in het kader van de Landelijke Kwaliteitsmonitor Kinderopvang in de periode 2017-2019. Iets minder dan de helft van de kinderopvangorganisaties bleken, volgens centrummanagers, in hun missie en visie, opgetekend in de wettelijk verplichte pedagogische beleidsplannen, expliciet te verwijzen naar zowel kinderrechten als democratisch burgerschap. Een groter deel bleek òf naar kinderrechten òf naar democratisch burgerschap te verwijzen; ongeveer een derde van de organisaties deed geen van beide of gaf aan het niet te weten. Verwijzen naar kinderrechten en burgerschap bleek zich te vertalen in meer aandacht voor kinderparticipatie en toepassing van een opendeurenbeleid (kinderen kunnen een deel van de dag vrij kiezen om in een andere groep te spelen; *agency*). Over de hele linie was er volgens pedagogisch medewerkers van de deelnemende organisaties veel aandacht voor goede relaties binnen de groepen en voor het bevorderen van positieve interacties tussen kinderen (in de zin van verantwoordelijkheid nemen voor elkaar en de groep, en democratische conflicthantering; *bonding*). Openstaan voor en het overbruggen van diversiteit (*bridging*) bleek echter beperkt aandacht te krijgen in alle vormen van kinderopvang, en het aanbod aan activiteiten gericht op de gemeenschap of op sociaal-morele onderwerpen was zeer beperkt. Met betrekking tot kinderparticipatie, bleken de kindercentra kinderen vooral vormen van 'informele' kinderparticipatie te hanteren door goed te luisteren naar kinderen en te observeren wat kinderen leuk vinden en daar rekening mee te houden. Er bleek over de hele linie weinig gebruik gemaakt te worden van meer formele en systematische kinderparticipatie, bijvoorbeeld in de vormen van kinderen (of hun ouders) regelmatig op gestructureerde wijze door middel van gesprekken of een vragenlijst om input te vragen. De resultaten lieten verder zien dat toepassing van directe meer geformaliseerde vormen van kinderparticipatie, dus direct met de kinderen zelf, samenhing met hoger welbevinden en grotere betrokkenheid van de kinderen en hogere kwaliteit van hun sociale interacties. Dit bleek ook te gelden voor andere kenmerken van een kinderrechten- en burgerschapsbenadering, zoals grotere keuzevrijheid via een opendeurenbeleid en het geven van verantwoordelijkheid aan kinderen bij het op een democratische manier omgaan met conflicten.

Child Voices: jonge kinderen over welzijn en inclusie

In het derde onderzoek (Hoofdstuk 4) onderzochten we hoe een op kinderrechten en burgerschapsprincipes gebaseerde pedagogiek in kindercentra door jonge kinderen zélf wordt ervaren. Het diepte-onderzoek werd uitgevoerd onder kinderen van 3 tot 6 jaar in centra voor dagopvang en buitenschoolse opvang in een cultureel diverse grootstedelijke context. Via een speciale methode die de verschillende 'stemmen' van kinderen oppikt en de veelvormige informatie als een mozaïek in elkaar schuift, bleek dat kinderen al op jonge leeftijd waardevolle informanten kunnen zijn en relevante informatie en nieuwe ideeën voor het pedagogisch beleid en vormgeving van de dagelijkse praktijk kunnen inbrengen, met name rond de thema's identiteit, welbevinden en inclusie. De participatiemethode bestond uit verschillende activiteiten, zoals een door kinderen geleide rondleiding door het centrum, het maken van een identiteitskaart en het maken van foto's ten behoeve van een groepsboek. De producten werden als input gebruikt voor gesprekken met de kinderen over hun identiteit, welbevinden, het gevoel 'erbij te horen', en de ontvangst en inclusie van nieuwe kinderen. Kinderen in de cultureel superdiverse context van het kindercentrum definieerden hun identiteit vooral in termen van de sociaal-fysieke ruimte van de groep waartoe zij behoorden, niet in termen van hun uiteenlopende sociale, culturele of talige achtergronden. Positief voor hun welbevinden en het gevoel erbij te horen was de continuïteit die zij ervoeren tussen de domeinen thuis, kinderopvang en school, die voor hen op natuurlijke wijze in elkaar overlopen. Belangrijk voor het welbevinden was volgens de kinderen ook de vrijheid om door de ruimte van het centrum te kunnen navigeren en zelf te kunnen kiezen met wie, en waar, zij zouden spelen (deel van het opendeurenbeleid van het centrum) en een zekere mate van flexibiliteit van het dagprogramma. Het onderzoek bevestigde dat activiteiten die binding en het overbrugging van verschillen bevorderen kunnen bijdragen aan het gevoel van inclusie. Kinderen ervoeren tijdens het onderzoeksproces dat ze ertoe doen ('ik'), terwijl ze samen aan iets werken ('wij') ten dienste van een overkoepelend doel ('zij, de anderen') om als groep ('onder ons') bij elkaar te komen.

Een benadering van kinderrechten en democratisch burgerschap op schaal

Het vierde onderzoek (Hoofdstuk 5) betrof een case studie van een op grote schaal geïmplementeerd en effectief bevonden programma voor burgerschapsvorming in het basisonderwijs, De Vreedzame School, met als variant De Vreedzame Voorschool voor kinderopvang en voorschoolse educatie. Betrokken bij het onderzoek waren ontwikkelaars, uitvoerders en ouders van centra in wederom een cultureel diverse grootstedelijke omgeving. Op basis van documentenanalyse en gesprekken met betrokkenen is nagegaan wat de succesfactoren zijn van het programma en hoe deze op schaal kunnen worden gebracht en geïmplementeerd in kindercentra voor voorschoolse en naschoolse opvang en educatie. Het onderzoek bevestigde dat rechten en verantwoordelijkheden het beste kunnen worden uitgeoefend in een *democratische ruimte*, dat wil zeggen in een omgeving die wordt gekenmerkt door wederzijds respect tussen kinderen, tussen kinderen en professionals, en tussen professionals en ouders als basis voor effectief democratisch burgerschap. Belangrijke aspecten om mee te nemen bij implementatie van een kinderrechten- en burgerschapsperspectief in kindercentra zijn: een gemeenschapsoriëntatie waarbij de groep kinderen, het kindercentrum en de school als één continue democratische ruimte wordt gezien; een intensief en goed begeleid implementatietraject; lokale politieke steun; sterk leiderschap; betrokkenheid van en ondersteuning van de implementatie door alle geledingen; een herkenbare identiteit van de aanpak door het 'spreken van één taal' en het gebruik van dezelfde symbolen in het kindercentrum, de school en daarbuiten, in de wijk; het (geleidelijk) overdragen van verantwoordelijkheden naar kinderen vanaf jonge leeftijd - in overeenstemming met de zich ontwikkelende capaciteiten van kinderen; ouderbetrokkenheid (hoewel ook beschouwd als uitdaging); actief contact zoeken en communiceren met ouders en buurt, aansluiting zoeken bij wijkorganisaties en gemeenschapsgerichte programma's buiten het kindercentrum en de school; en meebewegen met ontwikkelingen in de samenleving door bijvoorbeeld aan te sluiten bij actuele thema's als culturele polarisatie, kansengelijkheid en mediawijsheid. Op deze wijze hebben kinderen de kans om hun rechten (uit) te oefenen in een context van de eigen en andermans rechten, en om democratisch burgerschapsvaardigheden te praktiseren in een zinvolle context. De principes van een burgerschapsprogramma als De Vreedzame School, oorspronkelijk ontwikkeld voor het basisonderwijs, kunnen met enige aanpassingen ook succesvol worden geïmplementeerd en op schaal worden gebracht voor kindercentra.

Conclusies en aanbevelingen

Het onderzoek gerapporteerd in dit proefschrift ondersteunt de opvatting dat in de pedagogische context van kinderopvang participatie en inspraak van kinderen belangrijk zijn. Kinderen zijn waardevolle bronnen van informatie om de kwaliteit van opvang en onderwijs te verbeteren. Op deze manier zijn zij ook mede-eigenaar van hun eigen leer- en ontwikkelingsproces. Het recht van kinderen op participatie kan het beste worden gekaderd in een vertoog van kinderrechten en democratische burgerschap, zich ontwikkelende capaciteiten, en autonomie in de context van onderlinge afhankelijkheid en verantwoordelijkheid. Hierdoor ontstaat een ‘sterk’ beeld van het kind als competente co-creator en niet alleen als passieve ontvanger van zorg en educatie. In dit verband moet de balans tussen het recht op bescherming en het recht op participatie grondig worden overwogen. Het verdient aanbeveling om kwaliteitsconcepten die op een ‘beschermingsvisie’ zijn gebaseerd uit te breiden met een beeld van het kind als een competente burger met zich ontwikkelende capaciteiten om rechten uit te oefenen en verantwoordelijkheden te dragen. In lijn hiermee dient een wettelijk kwaliteitskader ingevoerd te worden dat de implementatie van systematische directe kinderparticipatie verplicht stelt, ook voor de jongsten, en daarvoor concrete richtlijnen geeft.

Een op kinderrechten en de principes van democratisch burgerschap gebaseerde pedagogiek mag niet worden verengd tot een al te romantische (individualistische) kijk op het kind als een unieke, competente persoon met volledige zelfbepaling, maar moet ook de (collectivistische) waarde van sociale verantwoordelijkheid jegens anderen inhouden, jegens leeftijdsgenoten, de groep en de bredere gemeenschap. Uit het huidige onderzoek blijkt dat het ondersteunen van individuele keuzevrijheid en sociale verantwoordelijkheid elkaar niet uitsluiten. Integendeel, in concrete pedagogische praktijken kunnen ze elkaar juist versterken door kinderen autonomie en keuzevrijheid te geven in gezamenlijke co-creatieve processen met anderen (leeftijdsgenoten, leraren, ouders, leden van de gemeenschap), met name in gezamenlijke maatschappelijke activiteiten die gericht zijn op de 'buitenwereld' van de lokale gemeenschap en de samenleving als geheel. Het opnemen van de waarde van verantwoordelijkheid jegens anderen in kwaliteitsconcepten en wettelijke kwaliteitskaders is mede aan te bevelen vanwege de publieke functie van het kinderopvangsysteem.

Dit proefschrift draagt op verschillende manieren bij aan de vertaling van een universeel kinderrechten- en democratisch burgerschapsperspectief in concrete pedagogische principes voor de vormgeving van ruimten, procedures en praktijken in de kinderopvang. We hebben laten zien hoe directe participatie van kinderen kan worden gerealiseerd door middel van speelse activiteiten met verschillende vormen van expressie, begeleid door open en semigestructureerde gesprekken. Indien goed geïmplementeerd, zullen dergelijke vormen van directe participatie waarschijnlijk bijdragen aan het welbevinden en de betrokkenheid van kinderen, aan de kwaliteit van hun interacties met leeftijdsgenoten, en aan hun gevoel van verbondenheid en inclusie. Ook identificeerden we pedagogische praktijken die de keuzevrijheid en sociale verantwoordelijkheid van kinderen kunnen ondersteunen. Dit ging bijvoorbeeld over het belang om kinderen de vrijheid te geven om door de ruimte van het centrum te navigeren en te spelen met kinderen uit andere groepen, wat mogelijk indruist tegen het idee van strikte groepsstabiliteit en een vaste personele bezetting per groep (uit het oogpunt van bescherming). Verder ontdekten we het belang van collectief werk om de sociale verantwoordelijkheid van kinderen te ondersteunen en beschreven we concrete activiteiten voor het beoefenen van democratisch burgerschap, zoals groepsgesprekken onder leiding van kinderen en peer-mediatie bij conflictoplossing. In dit opzicht biedt het internationaal overeengekomen perspectief van universele kinderrechten en democratisch burgerschap, indien vertaald in concrete pedagogische richtlijnen, een 'inhoudsrijke' invulling en concrete uitwerking van het vierde pedagogische basisdoel van het wettelijke kwaliteitskader van de Nederlandse kinderopvang, namelijk de 'overdracht van de normen en waarden, en de cultuur van de samenleving'.

Ten slotte hebben we in dit proefschrift kritisch gekeken naar de Nederlandse benadering van de voor- en buitenschoolse opvang en educatie op nationaal beleidsniveau. De Nederlandse kinderopvang is de afgelopen decennia geëvolueerd van een systeem met een louter economische functie naar een pedagogische basisvoorziening met het potentieel bij te dragen aan de oplossing van urgente maatschappelijke vraagstukken, en staat aan de vooravond van de omvorming tot een universele, mogelijk grotendeels gratis voorziening voor alle kinderen en gezinnen. Wetgeving en kwaliteitsregulering hebben geen gelijke tred gehouden met deze ontwikkelingen. We raden daarom een fundamentele verandering van beleid aan. We pleiten voor verbreding van de momenteel dominante kwaliteitsconcepten en het wettelijke kwaliteitskader en inspectiesysteem die daar uit zijn voortgevloeid, door deze concepten aan te vullen en te verrijken met een kinderrechten- en democratisch burgerschapsperspectief. We pleiten ook voor de invoering van concrete nationale curriculumrichtlijnen die de doelen en normen specificeren van de socialisatieprocessen in de kinderopvang in het licht van een internationaal overeengekomen waardenbasis, ondersteund door een beeld van het kind als een burger met rechten en zich ontwikkelende capaciteiten om deze rechten uit te oefenen. Het Internationale Verdrag van de Rechten van het Kind en vooral de uitwerking daarvan in het Europese Kwaliteitsraamwerk bieden in dit verband goede aanknopingspunten.

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About the author

Curriculum Vitae

Christel was born on November 18, 1972, in Borne, The Netherlands. She moved with her family to Steenwijk, where she obtained her high school degree (Gymnasium α) from RSG J.H. Tromp Meesters. She studied Development Studies at the then Third World Centre (now: Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen) of Radboud University, with a specialisation in global education. After a year of travelling, she returned to university in 1998 for a post-doctoral year in international development (PDOO, now AMID, Nijmegen).

From 1999 onwards, Christel lived and worked in Bangladesh, Mongolia and Pakistan for the United Nations (UN) and for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), first as an associate expert on child labour and later as an advisor on education, gender and development. After her final return to the Netherlands, she started in 2011 as a director of programmes for Het Kinderopvangfonds, a foundation investing in quality issues around early childhood education and care. In the meantime, she also continued taking up international assignments in the field of development and the SDGs for national and international NGOs, the UN and MoFA.

Since the start of this PhD-trajectory in 2017 at Utrecht University, Het Kinderopvangfonds gradually phased out its efforts and committed its last resources to IKC-development. Christel continued at UU, and started The Oaktree, a small agency for research and advice for policy and practice through context analysis, hearing target group voices and including clear narratives for impact and innovation in the (sub-)national and international socio-economic domains.