

## Early Childhood Educational and Care Institutions (ECECs) as Learning Organizations

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A RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM  
Leadership perspectives from near  
and far – from Australia and Europe

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## Background

Recent developments in the ECEC sector in Norway:

- ▶ Changes in curriculum (framework plan) , child and parental participation, goal of full coverage, requirements to become a learning organization,
- ▶ ***To day full coverage and low payment: 400 Australian Dollars pr. month!***
- ▶ From quantitative development to qualitative development
  - Focus on staff qualifications
- ▶ New Public Management: the right choice of services, competition between providers, business principles, new management principles



## ECEC Policy in Norway

- ▶ Learning at the organizational level is emphasized in the national curriculum (framework plan) from 2006 and 2011
- ▶ Through this plan, the ECECs as learning organizations is introduced into the sector  
ECECs should be learning organizations prepared to meet the new demands and challenges
  - Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks (Ministry of Education, 2006, p 16):  
*“As educational institution in society should ECECs be a learning organization with a knowledge-based management”.*



- ▶ It is interesting to note that although the concept of a learning ECEC- a learning organization - is held up as an important concept, it is not properly defined, elaborated on or explained in the official documents
- ▶ This means that those who work in ECECs, to a large extent, must themselves translate the concept into working methods that promote the development of the ECEC as a learning organization.



## Research Questions

- ▶ *How do managers in ECECs interpret the concept of ECEC as learning organizations?*
- ▶ *How can ECECs evolve to become learning organizations?*

### Methods:

- ▶ The study is based on interviews with 10 directors in ECECs in Mid-Norway
- ▶ I also have some preliminary findings from a national survey – 1320 directors has responded – response rate – 57 %



## Theoretical approach

The Learning organization - the legacy from (Drucker, 1959; Penrose, 1959)

- ▶ Knowledge as a key factor in organizational competitiveness
- ▶ The Learning Company (Pedler et al. 1991)

An important foundation for creating a learning organization is related to the view of knowledge and knowledge in organizations. Focus on:

- how knowledge is perceived
- how knowledge can be identified, developed, managed, stored and shared



## The Cartesian split

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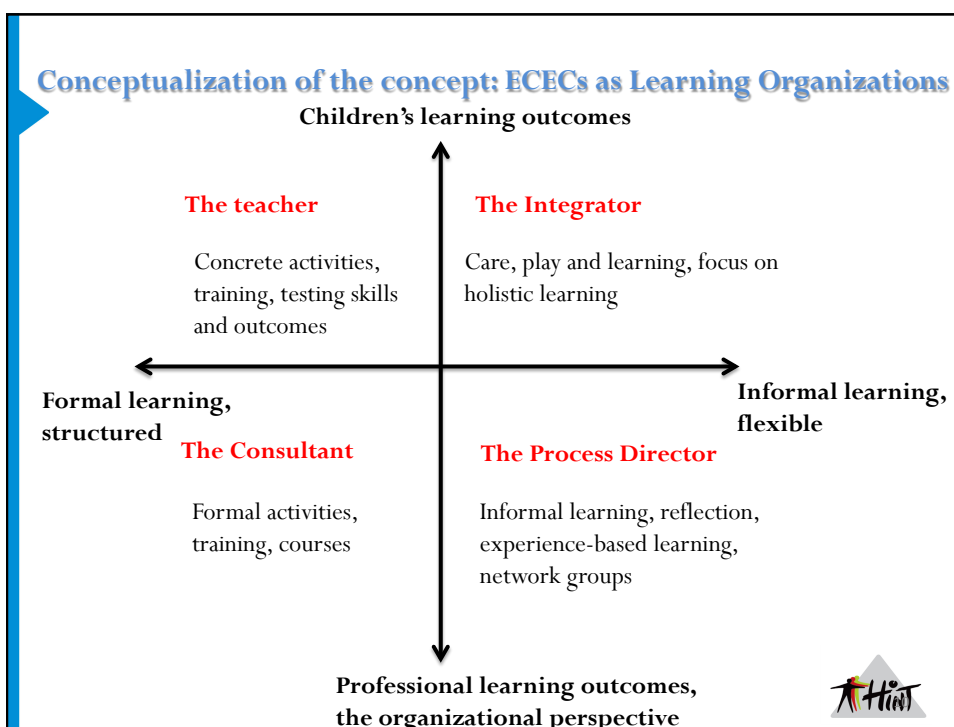
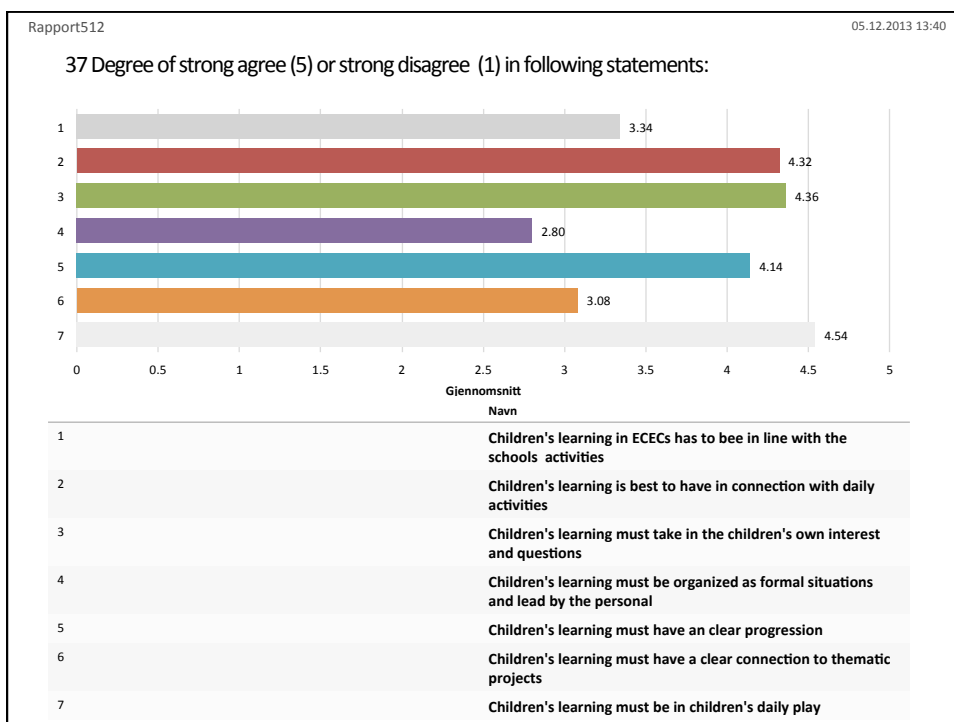
- ▶ *The rational and structure perspective* (Garraat, 1990; Pedler, 1997)
- ▶ *The socio-cultural perspective* (Wenger, 1998; Argyris & Schon, 1978; Schon 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991)



## Some preliminary findings

- ▶ *How do directors in ECECs interpret the concept of ECECs as learning organizations?*
- ▶ *How can ECECs evolve to become learning organizations?*





## Summary

- *Much confusion around the understanding of the concept of a learning organization*
- *Often associated with children's learning - despite the fact that the Framework plan emphasizes learning in an organizational context*
- *Absence of focus on organizational learning, teacher-directed learning, and concrete measurement of learning objectives*



We find predominantly a sociocultural view of learning in the Norwegian ECECs.

- Knowledge is developed with:
  - ▶ Reflection
  - ▶ Use of intuition
  - ▶ Sharing of tacit knowledge
  - ▶ Communities of Practice in the ECECs
  - ▶ Networks between ECECs
- ▶ Strong emphasis on the specific goals of Norwegian ECECs - integration of care, play and learning- not necessarily aligned with goals of early intervention, preparing children for elementary school, and ECECs as key to preventing social inequality in Norway



► Thank you..., and take care....

