

'Bursting With Activities': Impression Management as Edu-Business in School-Age Educare

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Abstract: Starting from an understanding of contemporary society as occupied with a dominant trend in image-boosting, the study explores how school-age educare centers engage in edu-business when promoting themselves through self-presentations on their websites. Using a qualitative method with an analytical attention directed towards unexpected angles, these self-presentations are problematized in terms of discursive impression management and with a focus on how messages are communicated by using different discursive resources to make the presentations trustworthy and selling. The edu-business logic found on the websites is not primarily about competition between different school-age educare centers, but is instead about competition between compulsory school and school-age educare, as well as the choice to participate or not in the education offered in the school-age educare centers.

Keywords: websites, School-Age Educare, Edu-Business, Image-Boosting Business

Edu-Business the Swedish Way

Sweden has, through a political willingness to stage market-liberal ideas, quickly changed from a state-run, micromanaged and uniform education system to a deregulated and liberal ditto building on a free school choice with a voucher system (Holm, 2013; Hudson, 2011). This transformation can be considered part of an international reform trend in which freedom of choice is highly valued, and where streamlining – along with increased quality for both the individual and society – is a desirable goal. It also implies that greater freedom of choice is equated with flexibility, pluralism and enhanced professionalism among teachers (for in-depth discussions see, for example, Ball & Youdell, 2009; Erixon Arreman & Holm, 2011a, 2011b; Lubienski, 2016; Lundahl, Erixon Arreman, Holm, & Lundström, 2013). This has led to massive activity in terms of visibility, measuring and comparing results and quality based on ideas concerning a customer choice model, where consumers are expected to base their choice on available information about various educational establishments. In this regard, education is considered a product that needs to be marketed for prospective customers, namely children, young people and their guardians (Rönnerberg, 2017). Today, the marketplace where offers about the products and services available to choose from is main-

ly on the Internet. Information technology thereby functions as an incorporation of a freedom of choice system that makes the public sector exposed to competition (Holm, 2013; Lubienski & Lee, 2016). Nevertheless, the system is still tax-funded and therefore currently described as a market hybrid, as public services do not operate on a completely free market. They are today a mix between political decisions and competition. Referring to this form of governing and organization, the term 'quasi-market' is commonly used. Another way of describing this approach is through the now established expression New Public Management (Lundahl, Erixon Arreman, Holm, & Lundström, 2013). Activities that increase visibility and highlight comparisons in this kind of management can be seen as edu-business (Ball, 2007; Erixon Arreman, & Holm, 2011b). Operating in this so-called quasi-market are public (municipal), as well as private, actors. During the school-year 2017-2018, there were a total of 4255 school-age educare centers (hereinafter referred to as Saec) in Sweden. 3552 of these were operated by municipalities and 689 were driven by a private actor. In total, 484 399 children were enrolled (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019a).

In a report, the Swedish National Agency for Education (2000) states that the main problem with school-age educare is its invisibility, something that still seems to be the case today. In comparison to preschool and compulsory school, less attention is paid to school-age educare when it comes to both research and media. Nevertheless, due to recent political changes, including a reinforced regulation of school-age educare in the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and a clarification of the educational assignment in a new separate part of the curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b), it seems that even the Saec need to engage in edu-business, since more and more of these are made visible on websites. With the market as a model, Saec – as well as all other forms of education – need to listen to what the customers want, and to remain competitive it becomes necessary to engage in some kind of marketing to put forward an attractive image. In the fight for a good reputation, branding becomes important (Ball, 2007; Lubienski, 2016; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002).

Previous research about the contemporary phenomenon of edu-business almost exclusively involves upper secondary or post-secondary education, and only in some cases addresses compulsory school (see for example Lubienski & Lee, 2016 and Chapple, 2015). One study examines material similar to what is analyzed here, but in a preschool context (Holmberg, 2018). Thus, as no other such study focuses on school-age educare, this article will take a closer look at this particular institution.

Aim and Research Questions

This article aims to explore how competitiveness can be discursively managed in the Swedish education system. More precisely, an edu-business logic is studied as found on 350 Saec websites, where self-presentations are available. These are analyzed in terms of impression management and image-boosting business. The analytical focus is directed towards the following research questions:

1. What recurrent basic messages are communicated through the websites?
2. What discursive resources can be distinguished in the self-presentations found on the websites?

3. How are these discursive resources used to make the constructions of school-age education appear trustworthy, convincing and selling?

Theoretical and Methodological Starting Points

The main marketing space for Saec today is their websites. More suitably, these could be described as front pages, because this kind of digital front office is where the first meeting with potential customers often takes place (Wihlborg, 2013). Besides, these can be regarded as public self-presentations, and through the available information knowledge about school-age education is produced. These self-presentations – as well as the Saec – are conditional on the Education Act and the curriculum, in which the political assignment, among other things, is about offering an equivalent education. Simultaneously, the Saec find themselves on the competitive quasi-market and therefore need to stand out from the crowd and appear attractive in one way or another.

To analyze this edu-business logic, the study takes the starting point in a social constructionist understanding of language which assumes that language acts are never passively mediated, but is instead always actively descriptive (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). That is, language use is not a mirroring of an objective reality or a pure image of the world, rather, people construct subjective versions of reality through their use of language. From this point of view, there is no language free from rhetoric, use of language is always a persuasive activity (Billig, 1997; Potter, 1996).

In addition, the study builds on an understanding of Swedish contemporary society as occupied with yet another dominant trend – coherent with the aforementioned one that revolves around freedom of choice – here depicted as an *image-boosting business* (Alvesson, 2013). This concept takes hold of the widespread current focus on creating a nice surface, that is, constructions of illusionistic projects. Spending time and money on impressive representations seems more important than spending it on the quality of actual content:

In today's society, a strong emphasis on 'it must look good', and preferably even shine, is vital for the success of individuals, occupational groups, and organizations. Considerable time is devoted to the right visual approach, the right jargon, and the right mass-media focus, while less attention is paid to considerations about substance, practical viability, and quality. The brand is often more crucial than the actual product, and the CV is more important than expertise and ability. The focus is on the surface (Alvesson, 2013, p. ix).

This image-boosting business establishes a grandiosity consisting of an attractive and well-polished semi-realistic surface within reasonable limits in a specific context in order to enhance status and generate success (Alvesson, 2013). From this point of view, the article deals with how Saec fabricate themselves discursively by directing the impression of the website-consumer in certain ways. This discursive practice will, along with the concept of the image-boosting business, be understood as *impression management*, a concept inspired by Erving Goffman (1990). This discursive management is, thus, seen as a rhetorical marketing strategy available to actors within the education system – as well as in other areas – interested in being visible and emphasizing themselves in a promotional manner. When promoting tempting offers, objective information risks being overshadowed by the impres-

sion management, where branding and a nice surface are key components. When studying impression management, analytical focus is directed at how the staging of self-presentations tends to distort equitable information by blurring the boundaries between information and commercial advertising, since edu-business on the quasi-market encourages Saec, among others, to fabricate themselves in ways that boosts the images of them (Harling & Dahlstedt, 2017; Holm, 2013; Knauf, 2017). The concept of impression management is here used as an analytical tool when examining this blurring as a way to shed light on how Saec "learn to 'say' themselves in ways that are recognizable and 'sensible' to evaluators, 'clients' and 'customers'" (Ball, 2007, p. 145).

The analysis makes no claim to say anything about the actual activities in the Saec or about the website-consumers' reactions. The intention is merely to highlight and problematize how these centers make themselves attractive by conveying specific messages using a certain range of discursive resources.

Material and Procedure

All available (just over 800) school-websites in the ten largest (based on population) municipalities in Sweden have been reviewed in search for information about school-age educare. In these, about 350 presentations of Saec were found and compiled to form an empirical basis for the analysis, an approach that resulted in a non-predetermined mixture of public (municipal) and private actors.

The scope of the presentations varies from a few lines up to descriptions of around 1000 words. The information is publicly available, however, since the analytical interest is not aimed at seeking variations or making comparisons between municipalities or centers; no names or web addresses are used in the empirical examples found in the analysis. For the same reasons, the names of persons and specific places that appear in these excerpts have been anonymized. These empirical examples have thereto been translated from Swedish to English by the researcher.

To avoid hampering research rich in meaning which challenges prevailing conceptions, excessive rigorous and systematic interaction with the empirical material has been avoided in favor for a relatively free qualitative analytical approach. Since this not involves any strict coding, the act of interpretation is crucial. The attention is about trying to find unexpected angles that stimulate curiosity when problematizing the empirical content (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Building on this, the initial analytical reading came to be about highlighting recurring basic messages communicated through the websites. Based on these, the material has then been sorted into three analytical categories, presented in the form of headings in the analysis. By these categorizations a picture is portrayed of the recurring selection of content that tends to be included in the self-presentations. In closer readings, the analytical interest has been directed towards how the content in the basic messages are constructed by focusing on how different discursive resources are used, and how the constructions of school-age educare are organized to appear trustworthy, convincing and selling. The picture is nevertheless in no way comprehensive, since all websites differ regarding information given in terms of content and scope. Fur-

thermore, this research-based categorization is not the only conceivable one; rather, it is one of many possible portrayals.

As the terms children and pupils, as well as parents and guardians, occur on the websites, they will all also appear in the analysis. In current policy documents, children who participate in school-age educare are referred to as pupils, and their relatives are described as guardians.

Analysis

In the following three sections, self-presentations found on the websites will be analyzed in terms of impression management and image-boosting business as a way to study how an edu-business logic is present in the constructions of school-age educare. The various discursive resources in play in the self-presentations will be examined throughout the analysis. How they form a specific edu-business logic adapted to a school-age educare context will be discussed in more depth in the concluding remarks.

Discursive Constructions of the Political Assignment for School-Age Educare

Many self-presentations start with basic explanations of school-age educare. In these representations of the given assignment, it becomes clear that general knowledge of school-age educare cannot be taken for granted among the potential readers of the websites:

When school ends for the day, you go to school-age educare. Here, we have snack [mellanmål] every day and continue socializing together, indoors or outdoors. Here you can paint, make crafts [pyssla], or just sit and read or talk. There is time for everyone here! (Saec 1)

Here, an explanation of the Saec as an institution suitable regardless of who you are or what interests you have is communicated in an easy-going and inviting way. Depictions like this often also include information about the personnel working in the centers: “In the personnel group you will find experience, youth, playfulness and a great joy in the work” (Saec 2). Using a direct and thus personal tone, these examples deliver an attractive offer that promises various things and therefore can, potentially, reach different types of personalities among children and guardians. Descriptions formulated in this selling way are examples of how the language in the self-presentations seems to be used to convince possible future customers that the specific Saec is an attractive and suitable place for children to spend time in; that is, they exercise a kind of impression management.

Following the initial and fundamental clarifications, there are usually references to – often combined with quotes from – the policy documents that determine the Saec’s official assignment. Unlike the explanations regarding whom the Saec is directed towards, when you spend time there and attitudes among the personnel, the parts about national guidelines appear more or less taken for granted. There are mostly clarifications that show they exist, rather than explanatory comments about how they are put into practice. The Saec communicate their awareness of these documents and their content and function by using a high level of certainty as a discursive resource in the statements: “The center follows the guidelines that apply” (Saec 3).

References to the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and its request that Saec stimulate pupils' development and learning, and offer a meaningful leisure and recreation based on a holistic view of the pupil, can be found on most websites. It seems, however, that it is not selling enough to represent the centers by only stating that the assignment is managed. Another recurring discursive resource in the image-boosting business of the self-presentations is to follow up such statements with words such as 'beyond' or 'also', as if it is not enough to do only what is expected:

Beyond the curriculum and the school's guidelines we at the Saec want to:

- Protect and develop the children's personalities and talents.
- Encourage a good character and order amongst the children.
- Develop a good cooperation with the parents concerning the children's schooling, and in collaboration with the school teachers. (Saec 4)

In this way the Saec present themselves through a subjective modality (a visualization of the perspective of a person/organization expressing oneself) – yet another common discursive resource – as ambitious, propulsive, and as centers that provide added value beyond the necessary. Whether or not the extra content is already in demand in the policy documents does not seem to play any major role. In the excerpt below, for example, play appears as something added in extension to the curriculum, even though this document prescribes play as a central part of the centers. Again, a subjective modality is used and directs focus to the extra value that this specific Saec adds: "Our objectives for the school-age educare are based on the curriculum. Also, we attach great importance in being outdoors, play and sports, and in meeting the children's imagination and creativity" (Saec 5).

A further component in the discursive re-presentation of the political assignment is local operationalizations. These consist of school-age educare definitions similar to the ones found in policy documents, but are communicated in a slightly more accessible and easy way by a common and generally established use of language. 'Pleasant life' is, for example, an expression not found in education policy parlance, but it occurs on the websites: "Our work is to ensure that the children feel good and have a pleasant and active life in and after school" (Saec 6). A concept used by The National Agency for Education (2019b) is 'meaningful leisure', something, which among other things, seems to be operationalized into 'pleasant life'.

In addition to paraphrases with a more informal tone, there are re-presentations that go a bit further: "[Name of the Saec] aims to be the best Saec in [Name of municipality]" (Saec 7). To distinguish oneself through the aim of being better than everyone else might be rewarding for marketing purposes, but from a national perspective it is risky in relation to the requirement for equivalence in school-age educare (Holmberg, 2018).

Widened depictions of the official assignment are also made in the form of visions, seemingly as part of an image-boosting business:

Our vision that will lead us through the darkness: "That every day becomes a good day for everyone". With that vision, we work in this way: We want to create a school-age educare environment that we all want to participate in. (Saec 8)

The pleasurable framing visible in this vision is a frequently occurring discursive element in the self-presentations, something that often includes not only the children and personnel but also their parents: "Our Saec should simply be a wonderful, exciting and inspiring place

for you as a child, you as parent and for us as personnel!” (Saec 9). Again, the message is addressed in a direct, personal and enthusiastic way that seems appealing in a promotional manner.

Yet another central component in the staging of the assignment in the self-presentations is talk about safety. Creating safety in the group of pupils is part of the political assignment (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). In the Saecs’ own words, the concept becomes a recurrent buzzword launched as a need that the Saec can satisfy. Here it is communicated with an objective modality (in which it is not clear who is expressing the opinion) as an almost universal statement: “In the afternoon, many children need a safe and home-like place to go to” (Saec 10). Safety is linked together with the home, which means a slippage in comparison to create safety between pupils, who in turn do not need to have anything to do with homeliness. Safety and calmness are thus promoted as something needed after school hours:

[Name of Saec] offers calm moments and safety after the school day. Each child receives a personal reception. We read every day and provide opportunities for undisturbed homework. (Saec 11)

In addition to the safety offered, homework is also a common selling point. Talk about homework is not to be found in the policy-documents, but it is used extensively on the websites. Therefore, homework opportunities may be regarded as a way to offer something extra in an image-boosting business.

Discursive Constructions of Time in School-Age Educare

The second basic message distinguished in the self-presentations is constructions of time. The policy documents denote this time span as ‘leisure time’: The Saec should “offer a meaningful leisure time” (SFS 2010:800, 2§). Some Saec choose to literally follow these guidelines, and – with a high level of certainty – portray the time span taking place in the centers as leisure time: “It’s Their leisure-time” (Saec 12, upper-case in original). Somewhat contradictory, institutionalized education is referred to as leisure. Many Saec even go one step further when they claim that it is “childrens’ free time” (Saec 13):

In the Saec, the children are in charge of their free time, but is offered different activities. The Saec puts great emphasis on the child’s social development, and to both fill the free time with optional stimulating activities and to ‘just hang out’ with friends. (Saec 14)

Despite the institutional framing it seems possible to describe school-age educare as ‘free time’ by claiming that it is a period of time with a child-centered focus, even though it is simultaneously regulated by Swedish law and the curriculum. ‘Free time’ appears to be an important sales argument in the context, a kind of blurring information-giving and promotion as part of an impression management. The tone is usually inclusive, making the self-presentations appealing regardless of what the website-consumer is looking for, whether it be social development and stimulating activities or just time to hang out.

Time spent in Saec is also constructed in a way that distinguishes it from time spent in school, meaning a discursive construction that specifies that it is school time that school-age educare is free from: “School-age educare comprises school-free time, which the child is entitled to from the year it starts in preschool class” (Saec 15). Institutionalized school-free time is presented as a right for children, which differentiates this definition of time

from the obligation that comes with school time. This kind of time – involving the part of the day not spent in school and not at home – seems like a blurry in-between: “For us it’s important to give the children good care and safety during the school-free part of the day” (Saec 16). There are even petitions claiming that children’s days should include a ‘school-school-age educare time’ (skolfritidstid). During this sort of time the school is meant to be impregnated with the value added by the Saec, here communicated in a convincing way through both an objective and subjective modality and with a high level of certainty:

The Saec should stimulate the pupil’s education and learning, and offer them a meaningful leisure and recreation, based on a holistic view on the pupil and its needs. Under the school day we do this by offer school-school-age educare. In school-school-age educare the pupils get other experiences and knowledges than they usually get in the classroom. (Saec 17)

The scope of interpretation does not end with this. The ingenuity in the impression management surrounding the time concept continues with, for example, ‘workshop time’: “Coherent school day means that we “blast in” school-age educare in the school day to make the children’s school day more varied. The school-age educare during the school day for children in year 1 and 2 is called “Workshop time”” (Saec 18). There is obviously no uniform or common view of the concept of time; local variations occur on many websites. Moreover, there does not seem to be any agreement about whether children’s days are to be run seamlessly, or if there should be clear breakpoints. This is an ambivalence closely connected to descriptions of school-age educare as either completely separated from school or built into the ordinary school. Time spent in school-age educare may even be depicted as an “extension of the school” (Saec 19), and the relevance in the children’s day as coherent is here emphasized through a subjective modality:

For us it’s important that the children perceive that the school day is interrelated. Therefore, we have integrated the school-age educare into a natural extension of the school day and the mandatory activities. (Saec 20)

On the other hand, there are constructions where the weight is on the opposite side, where children’s ability to notice the difference between various parts of the day is emphasized by a direct appeal to the website reader, and with a high degree of certainty: “It’s important that your child feels the difference between school and school-age educare. In school-age educare, your child should be able to feel relaxed, have time for reflection and a chance to process all the impressions of the school day” (Saec 21). There are thus self-presentations where time is about managing the aftermath of the school activities, as well as presentations where the importance of some form of school-age educare during school is advocated.

Discursive Constructions of What Happens in School-Age Educare

A large number of the self-presentations consists of enticing descriptions of what happens in the Saec: “Among the various activities, baking, board-games, study visits, needlework, small handicrafts, outdoor play and much more can be mentioned” (Saec 22). The activities listed can be regarded as operationalizations of the so-called central content for school-age educare requested by the curriculum in form of specific areas of knowledge that are to be handled in the teaching (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). The long lists of activities found on several websites can be understood as an assurance that these areas are

covered in the Saecs. However, communicating a broad and varied content can also be considered an image-boosting business to convince potential new customers that the specific Saec has something interesting to offer:

It's bursting with activities in school-age educare; our base is crafting, art and design. We also offer activities such as baking, building with Lego, table tennis and table hockey. Of course, there are board-games, time for reading, or the possibility to just relax. Sometimes we arrange appreciated spa Fridays, and sometimes the children themselves are responsible for the activities and then it might be disco, a movie, costume dressing or face painting. (Saec 23)

The staging of the content seems, through the easy-going and informal tone, more focused on impression management that suits a wide range of potential customers than proving the content to be consistent with the areas that are to be taught. In these respects, no links between how disco, movies and more relate to children's development and learning are made in the constructions. Instead, the activities are communicated as decoupled and sufficient in themselves: "In school-age educare the children can play with friends, get cozy in a sofa or do homework, but also try on a range of activities – everything from making your own jewelry to skating" (Saec 24). In these discursive passages, expressed by a subjective modality, it appears more relevant to base the activities on the children's interests than to claim compliance with and fulfillment of the policy documents: "The most important thing for us is to listen to the children's thoughts and ideas. Based on the children's interests, we then create the activities in [Name of Saec]. Games, puzzles, circus theme or baking, bingo or movies" (Saec 25). Instead of individual activities, the content is sometimes packaged as courses, selectable for the children:

The school-age educare is given entirely in form of courses, where the starting point is to respond to the children's wishes. There is a lot to choose from, such as art, ceramics, music, drama, cooking and team sports. Often, the courses end with vernissages or exhibitions to which the parents are invited to look at the things the children are doing on daytime. (Saec 26)

Descriptions of courses in, among other things, ceramics and cooking do not differ significantly from commercial advertising. In terms of edu-business on the quasi-market, the self-presentations might actually be considered as such, even though these courses do not involve any costs apart from the fee for the Saec as a social service, as municipalities have the right to charge.

With reference to the constructions of time, there are also discursive constructions of what happens in Saec, advocating that those evening activities children choose to engage in ought to be transferred into the Saec:

We think also, that it's important that the children to a greater extent can engage in their leisure activities early in the afternoons rather than in the evenings. For that reason, we have a well-developed cooperation with associations, as part of our school-age educare. This model makes it possible to create a center with both traditional and association-driven elements that fits the child's individual needs. (Saec 27)

Constructions like this might be understood as a marketing strategy in impression management aimed at exhibiting the Saec as a smart and effective choice by offering activities that free up evening time for the children who participate.

Further, an almost sacred concept in the official school-age educare discourse, as well as in local speech, is play. This is reflected in the self-presentations where play is always a

central topic. The descriptions of this concept are built on taken-for-granted assumptions about what play *is*: “The play is in its nature spontaneous and intuitive, where feelings, a will and thoughts are interwoven. It is, in essence, an important and joyful activity used to create meaning in life” (Saec 28). Play is also portrayed as a given and highly prioritized element in the Saec: “The center is based on free play” (Saec 29). Moreover, it is considered an important element in the specific time that elapses in this education: “The children’s school-age educare-time should be characterized by play” (Saec 30). At the same time, a convincing rhetoric seems necessary in order to prove that play is good. Examples of such rhetorical activity are justifications for why it is central in the context: “Play is vital! Play stimulates the fantasy. Here, one is allowed to be someone else. During play, the children train their ability for empathy. Play is important for children’s development. Therefore, we give high priority to free play!” (Saec 31). An objective modality is used here, giving the statements weight through the certainty conveyed as an impression management. As indicated in the examples, ‘free play’ seems to be the ultimate form of play. This concept does not occur at all in the policy documents, but flourishes on almost all of the analyzed websites. A similarity is, however, that both The National Agency for Education and the self-presentations use the term as a medium for other things. There are rarely any statements saying that play for its own sake is enough. In the curriculum (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b), play is portrayed as a means of promoting different abilities in children. Similarly, the Saec use play as a discursive resource to be able to say that development and learning take place, but in more informal ways than in the school:

Play is the foundation for learning. Except that play provides theoretical knowledge, the pupil works with its organizational ability, and the ability to cooperate with others. [Name on Saec] is based on freedom of choice, and great emphasis is placed on the pupil’s free play. (Saec 32)

In line with the listings of activities in the visualizations of what happens in the Saec, the discursive constructions of play usually consist of an enumeration of things that play is said to generate. This image-boosting business may involve organizational and collaborative skills, or be about children in play who practice “turn taking, endurance and concentration” (Saec 33). The ‘free play’ is also described as stimulating “children to take initiative, imagination, solutions and responsibility” (Saec 34). Furthermore, play is also communicated as developing rules and norms, as well as training children in, among other things, democratic values:

We believe that free play, inside and outside, is very important. Through the play, the children train and practice communication and social skills. Acquired skills are tested. Simultaneously, the children are practicing conflict management, empathy and democratic values. Rules and norms are developed. (Saec 35)

It seems that virtually anything can be accomplished via play – preferably ‘free’ play. Thus, the concept, as a rhetorical panacea, becomes fruitful when it communicates that a Saec conducts the activities required. This can appeal to various kinds of possible customers: those who like the ‘free’ in play, and those who prefer training and learning as well as those who want it all.

Concluding Remarks

As shown in the analysis, the political assignment is re-presented through basic descriptions of what a Saec is today. To reach the website reader with the argument that children's afternoons are best spent in Saec, they are frequently addressed – sometimes explicit towards children, parents or guardians, sometimes implicitly – as if previous knowledge about this education is non-existent. Clear explanations of when and where the school-age educare takes place, how it is conducted and for whom it is intended can be considered a marketing strategy aimed at demonstrating pedagogical professionalism. The information is communicated using references to policy-documents, usually by discursive operationalizations in which the official construction of the role and function is informalized and addressed directly to a potential customer in a way that differs from the language used by the National Agency of Education. Colloquial language use is prominent in the self-presentations along with an easy-going and casual tone. In this way, content offers are provided in a promotional manner that exceeds the necessary and requested content. This image-boosting business is staged by managing an appearance as equivalent but still unique. That is, in their self-presentations the Saec claim to offer the education requested by the steering documents, but simultaneously give the impression of offering something more, beyond the political assignment.

The ambiguity of teaching guided by objectives simultaneously referred to as leisure, allows for a variety of constructions concerning how time is spent in Saec. This results in a time span both intertwined with, and separated from, the school. There is apparently no coherence in how time in school-age educare is to be defined and presented, and therefore it serves as an available element in the impression management. Regardless of the version promoted, it seems important to position school-age educare as anything but formal school. Conceptual development, together with various self-composed terms, seems to try to establish the Saecs' credibility in their own definition of time and in the chosen organizational strategy. In this way, they try to convince the reader that the version presented is the most rewarding one. This is done with a given certainty used as a discursive resource in the process of convincing.

The listing of a large range of activities going on in the centers in many ways fits into the areas of knowledge invoked by the curriculum, as these are widely formulated. Regardless, the discursive constructions do not seem to focus on demonstrating that educational requirements are met, but is rather lined up in a manner that makes the Saec attractive no matter what interests a child has or how the time in the center is preferably spent. The appeal is frequently enthusiastic, just like in the sections about the political assignment. A difference here, however, is that the communication does not have as much focus on a particular addressee but on a benevolent and well-liked sender in the style of 'we encourage...' or 'we arrange appreciated...'.

When made visible, the relatively invisible education in the form of school-age educare exhibits a kind of marketing that differs from the edu-business that takes place between, for example, upper secondary schools (see Harling & Dahlstedt, 2017). There, the element of competition is mainly about staging a school as attractive and selectable in comparison with other schools. When it comes to Saec, the competition appears to focus primarily on distin-

guishing school-age educare from the compulsory school more than to demonstrate that one Saec is better than another, although there are examples of Saec that promote themselves by proclaiming a desire to be the best center in the municipality. Offering something additional to what the political assignment requires is usually about portraying what happens in school-age educare in contrast to the formal activities of a school filled with duty. This is probably due to the fact that the Saec are automatically included in the choice of school. Consequently, the edu-business logic found in the self-presentations is concentrated in the choice of whether or not to take part in school-age educare, rather than choose between various Saec. In other words, what is sold on the websites is institutionalized leisure time in exchange for leisure time spent elsewhere. This time-span is defined as different from time in school, both by being described as offering learning and development (but in ways other than those in the school) and by descriptions of being attractive regardless of the child's interests. That is, in their impressive visual surfaces, the Saec seem to offer a sort of leisure time including everything and more.

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