



Kristianstad
University
Sweden

Kristianstad University
SE-291 88 Kristianstad
Sweden
+46 44 250 30 00
www.hkr.se

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Preschool Staff perception of the pedagogical meal

A mixed methods study of the pedagogical
work with meals in Swedish preschools from
2005 to 2020

Emilia Göransson

Author

Emilia Göransson

Title

Perception of the pedagogical meal: A mixed methods study of the pedagogical work with meals and the change over time in Swedish preschool

Supervisor

Maria Nyberg

Examiner

Elisabet Rothenberg

Abstract

Meals in Swedish preschools has undergone change between 2005 and 2020 regarding meals as important pedagogical tools. Due to new guidelines for conducting preschool meals presented by the Swedish Food Agency an increased focus has been placed on pedagogy during the meals to help develop the minds of young children. Previous research has shown that preschool staff had little to no education on food and meal or how to conduct pedagogical meals. To understand how the preschool staff, perceive the pedagogical meal and how it has changed over time, a convergent mixed method with a survey and interviews was used. The results showed that the staff does not have formal education on food, meal and how to conduct pedagogical meals, but instead rely on peer learning. They perceive themselves as role models in forming a positive relationship with the social and nutritional aspects of food and meal. While their job has many positive aspects, they face challenges with stress and increasing child groups. As the role of preschool staff has changed, from making sure children eat, to socially participating in the meal, the guidelines have changed alongside the role.

Keywords

Preschool, Pedagogical meal, Swedish food agency guidelines, Swedish food agency, preschool staff, Swedish preschool

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Preface

My mother has worked at preschools my whole life. When I started studying Food and Meal Science and opened my eyes to the subject of the pedagogical meal in preschools, we had a whole new topic to discuss. Since we came into the topic from different backgrounds, it helped develop us both by discussing and sharing our respective thoughts and insights.

I would like to thank my mother, Marie Göransson for opening my eyes to how interesting the preschool meal is. I would also want to thank my supervisor Maria Nyberg for the much-needed support I needed along this journey. I could also not have done this thesis without the support of my boyfriend Olle Öman, who provided proofreading and emotional support through my struggles with dyslexia.

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Emilia Göransson 2021

Introduction

To create dietary sustainable and varied eating habits, it is important to start promoting children to learn at an early age (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). The meals, including lunch, breakfast, and snacks which children are served in preschool makes a significant contribution to dietary and social behaviours since they come in a time in their upbringing where eating habits are being formed (Lucas, Patterson, Sacks, Billich, Evans, 2017). In Sweden, preschool meals are accessible and free of charge for all children attending the preschool. This makes them an opportunity for the preschool staff to teach children positive and diverse eating habits from an early age.

The preschool meal is supposed to combine the educational efforts of the teachers with accessibility to good food (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). This means that the food service staff are meant to supply the children with food items and the teachers are meant to educate the children on the food and meal. This is also the essence of “pedagogical meals”. Since children learn about food and food behaviors such as table manners or preferences and attitudes regarding food at an early age, the pedagogical meal is an important tool for learning (Sepp, Abrahamsson, Fjellström, 2006), and preschool staff can use these meals to help children learn about various subjects. Sepp, Abrahamsson and Fjellström (2006) write that a major part of early socialization takes place at the preschool table.

Since preschool staff is responsible of teaching children it is important that they know what impact their teaching will have. It is important to expose children to different kinds of foods and dishes to give them an expanded view of food (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Children need to have good experiences with food and to feel positive and encouraged to try different things. This means that the food service staff should present the food in ways that are positive for the children and the teachers should have to use methods that invoke positive feelings in food and meal situations (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

However, previous knowledge has stated that there are uncertainties among preschool staff regarding how to work with food and meals in their everyday life (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Sepp & Höijer, 2016). This is in part based on lack of knowledge about food and meals, but also based on the lack of tools on how to act in relation to the meals with the children and what their role should be (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Sepp & Höijer, 2016).

In 2007 the Swedish Food Agency published their first set of guidelines for meals in preschools titled “*Bra mat i förskolan*” (eng. Good food in preschool) (Livsmedelsverket, 2010). These guidelines focused on feeding children nutrient and in their words, “a positive and natural way to promote a healthy lifestyle with good eating habits in our children” (Livsmedelsverket, 2010, p. 2). In 2016 the guidelines “*Bra måltider i förskolan*” (eng. Good meals in preschool), (Livsmedelsverket, 2016) were published. This change in guidelines presented by the Swedish Food Agency also represents a shift in focus regarding what is a meal in preschool settings and what important aspects that should be included in the meals served. Therefore, it is of interest to study if and how this change in the guidelines also might have changed the way preschool staff work with the pedagogical meals in preschool. Moreover, it is of relevance to investigate how the staff perceive the pedagogical meals and their roles in these meals today, as well as if there has been any change during the last 10-15 years, which is the time span from when the guidelines “*Bra mat i förskolan*” was published and until today. In order to investigate this in more detail, a mixed method study has been conducted to gain quantitative data from a broad number of preschool staff through a web-based questionnaire, as well as qualitative data using semi-structured interviews to understand the subject in more depth. This knowledge is relevant for both current preschool staff as well as in the educational system for those that plan education for future preschool staff.

Background

The background section is divided into three main parts. In the first part a short overview of meals in Swedish preschools is provided, including the different guidelines for the meals served in preschool and the meal model, presented by the Swedish Food Agency. In the second part the pedagogical meal and the idea of using the meal as a pedagogical tool is presented, as well as previous studies on the role of and level of education about food and meals among the preschool staff. In the third part children as meal consumers are highlighted, where children and neophobia as well as changed roles and expectations of children in relation to the preschool meal are included, as well as how the child is presented in the different guidelines of preschool meals (Livsmedelsverket, 2007; 2016).

Meals in Swedish preschools

In Sweden, all children are provided food during their education (Osowski & Fjellström, 2019). Historically, school meals in Sweden started as a welfare project to keep poor children fed and in school (Gullberg, 2006). Since the mid-1900s, schools have been offering free meals to every child attending compulsory school (Gullberg, 2006). Today, parents in Sweden commonly work full time meaning that children usually start attending preschool at the age of 18 months (Gullberg, 2006). This means by the time children start compulsory education in school they are already used to eat in a public setting. Over time, the meal has changed from sustenance and as a way to keep compulsory school possible (Gullberg, 2006) to today where it is given expectations and an educational value (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Osowski and Fjellström (2019) write that the school meal in Sweden is an arena where historical, cultural, structural, and critical factors interplay while at the same time they are also occasions for teaching good habits such as sustainable eating regarding both health and environment.

Guidelines for meals in preschool

For long, the meals in preschools as well as in schools were focusing on the nutritional values, also apparent in previous guidelines for food in preschools. In 2007, the National Food Agency in Sweden presented the guidelines for food in preschools based on the Nordic Nutritional Recommendations in the report called "*Bra mat i förskolan*" (eng. Good food in preschool) (Livsmedelsverket, 2010). Here, the focus was mainly on nutritious food suitable for children attending preschool. Six years later this report was published in a revised version, titled "*Bra måltider i förskolan*" (eng. Good meals in preschool), (Livsmedelsverket, 2016) with a much broader focus on *the meal* as an educational and integrated part of the preschool. These ideas were based on the meal model (Image 1.), where the meal consists of six different pieces all important to acknowledge in relation to the meals served in preschool. The guidelines presented in this recent report have a bigger emphasis on the meal and that a meal is more than what is on the plate, including aspects such as the room, the company and the atmosphere (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

The meal model in the report "*Bra måltider i förskolan*" (Livsmedelsverket, 2016) is presented as a puzzle consisting of six different parts; tasty, integrated, pleasant, nutritious, sustainable, and safe (Image 1.). Compared to the previous guidelines

(Livsmedelsverket, 2010) integrated, pleasant and sustainable are new additions (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).



Image 1: Måltidsmodellen, Livsmedelsverket (2016)

Tasty meals

The Swedish Food Agency (2016) states that the right competence is needed to improve the preschool meal. Kitchen staff engagement and knowledge is needed to serve well tasting meals every day. Livsmedelsverket (2016) further writes that it is important that the staff has knowledge about produce and cooking as well as access to products of good quality. The kitchen staff should be encouraged to keep an open dialog with the children to make the food appealing to them to increase the overall eating experience and the willingness to develop their eating habits (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). A good meal should be inspiring and challenge the children in a positive way (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

Integrated meals

The meals are meant to be a time to be together and to interact with each other (Livsmedelsverket, 2016), and they should give the children an opportunity to both develop their independence and to interplay with each other through conversation (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). The preschool staff are supposed to act as a support and role

model. Livsmedelsverket further writes that when the preschool staff eats with the children, they are encouraged to explore new foods, colours, textures, smells, consistencies, and cuisines from other cultures (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

Pleasant meals

By pleasant meals it is emphasized that the meal environment should be as stress-free, calm, and pleasant as possible since to eat in a good environment increases the chance of the children eating themselves full (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). It is also important to have the children feel the security of keeping a routine and them knowing the follow (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). It is also mentioned that the teaching staff needs to support the positive environment.

Nutritious meals

Preschool meals are also supposed to give the children the energy and nutrients they need to grow and develop. They should also provide the children with a base for healthy food habits (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). It is also stated that the teaching staff and kitchen staff need to understand and follow dietary guidelines from the Swedish Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

eco-smart meals

Sustainable meals described in the guidelines to be achieved through conscious food choices and decreased food waste (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Preschools are supposed to follow the environmental goals set for Sweden which requires the staff to have knowledge of what is sustainable in a meal situation (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

Safe meals

All the food served at preschools in Sweden should also be safe for children to eat (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Having competent kitchen staff and routines for how hazards should be handled and prevented are important. The kitchen must follow the laws and guidelines to provide safe food (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). In the guidelines it is also stated that the teaching staff and kitchen staff must understand and provide appropriate food for children with allergies and other food sensitivities (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

The pedagogical meal

The pedagogical meal is described to have several roles. Osowski, Göranson and Fjellström (2013) write that the aims of the pedagogic meals served at preschools are not only to encourage children to learn about food and healthy eating habits but also to give the Staff and children an opportunity to interact and speak with each other in a meal situation. The children should see the staff as role models in the meal situation (Osowski, Göranson & Fjellström, 2013). However, in the article “Pre-school staffs’ attitudes toward foods in relation to the pedagogic meal” the preschool staff did not recall having any formal instructions on how to do this (Sepp, Abrahamsson, Fjellström, 2006).

The role of the preschool staff in the pedagogical meal

Adults are important role models and provides support for young children during the meals in preschool. (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Sepp (2017) writes that meal pedagogy should always originate in that it should be fun to learn and discover new things. The staff is meant to help the children discover food in this manner. Sepp, Abrahamsson and Fjellström (2006) write that in 2005, during conducting their study, that preschool teachers experienced a change in their role. They experienced their role to be closer to a guide or a mentor which was meant to guide the children towards making good decisions rather than telling them what to eat (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006).

Since most children in Sweden eat several meals in the preschool setting every day with preschool staff present, they have a significant impact on meals, including the food habits and attitudes towards food among the children (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Livsmedelsverket (2016) further writes that there is great pedagogical value in that the staff eat the same food as the children and that it is of great importance that the adults understand their professional role in the meal. To keep improving meal pedagogy, it is important that each preschool schedule time where the staff members can discuss their meal pedagogy and mealtime routines (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

Preschool staff education about food and meals

Previous research has highlighted the lack of education in food and meals among preschool staff and based on that, the challenges in performing pedagogical meals, and be role models during the meals (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Øvrebø, 2017; Blömeke, Jenßen, Grassmann, Dunekacke & Wedekind, 2017). In an earlier study, the

staffs of preschools were stated to have strong opinions and feelings about how food and meal should be integrated in their pedagogical work (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006). However, they were uncertain of their role as teachers in the meal situation due to their lack of or inadequate education about food and nutrition (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006). Most of the staff at that time had the perception that the pedagogical meal meant “helping and encouraging the children to help themselves and serving as an adult model for the children at table” (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006, s.224).

Studies suggest that preschool teachers are generally not given enough opportunities to learn general pedagogy during their education (Blömeke, Jenßen, Grassmann, Dunekacke & Wedekind, 2017). This study was focused on general pedagogy and pedagogy regarding mathematics, but food seems to be another subject that could be disregarded in education. In Norway, as well as in Sweden, preschool teachers do not receive any formal education on nutrition or other food related subjects such as senses, food hygiene, allergies, and food culture (Øvrebø, 2017).

Young children’s relationship with food

Neophobia in children

Neophobia regarding food is the rejection of unknown or novel items of food (Perry, et al., 2015). Neophobia leads to self-restriction and is associated with poor dietary patterns in children as well as poor dietary quality (Perry, et al., 2015). This is an important factor during the preschool meal since food neophobia and ‘picky eating’ peaks around the years where children attend preschool (Dovey, Staples, Gibson, Halford, 2008; Perry, et al., 2015). This age is where children commonly start to explore food without being fed by the parents and pickiness is therefore supposed to work as a defense mechanism against toxic or poisonous food (Laureati, et al., 2016; (Perry, et al., 2015).

Parental food neophobia and pickiness is another factor that has been associated with neophobic behavior in children (Laureati, et al., 2016). For example, studies have found that positive opinions of the food served were associated with children eating more vegetables (Lehto, et al., 2019). Children tend to inherit food aversions from their parents (Faith, Heo, Keller, & Pietrobelli, 2013), however, the preschool has a role in keeping children from developing issues with neophobia and pickiness. Having other adults around them could be crucial to create a positive and good relationship with food. This is

another reason to why it is important to work with neophobia in the preschool environment since it exposes the child to other eating patterns besides the home. Livsmedelsverket (2016) further states that it is important that the adults working at preschool try to inspire and challenge young children to combat neophobia and picky eating, which is also an argument for the pedagogical meals. The chance of the children accepting the challenging food if it is experienced in a calm environment where the adults and children have a pleasant time together might increase (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). It is further explained that the children should not feel forced to try something new. It is better to create a positive experience through curiosity or through 'flavour bridges' meaning serving new food with food the child is already familiar with (Livsmedelsverket, 2016)

The meal and changed view of children's rights

Since meals started being provided in schools, the purpose of the meal has changed (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Livsmedelsverket, 2016; Livsmedelsverket, 2010; Osowski, Göranson & Fjellström 2013; Osowski, Fjellström, 2019; Osowski, Göranson, & Fjellström, 2010). Where once children were only expected to be fed there is now educational value and an opportunity to teach and for children to learn (Livsmedelsverket, 2016; Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Sepp, 2017). In line with the child convention (UNICEF Sverige, 2018), The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket.se, 2020) writes that the Swedish preschool operation needs to root in the perspective of the children. In the curriculum it is stated that for example all evaluation should lift the voices of the children (Skolverket.se, 2020). The Swedish National Agency (2020) further states that the influence of children is ambitiously included in control documents in the Swedish educational system, meaning that children should likewise have the same influence and voice during the meals provided in preschool. Coveney (2018) writes that the changing attitudes towards feeding children changes along the lines of rise of children's rights. As the rights for children has developed to where they are today where children have independence and autonomy, the way children are fed has changed accordingly. Accommodating and supporting children's right to self-governance during the meal while providing them with enjoyable and nutritious food is a new social definition of what makes a parent 'good' (Coveney, 2018). Early advice on feeding children had an approach where children were just expected to eat what was served, it is stated that feeding problems historically did not occur until parents had enough

knowledge to see them (Coveney, 2018). In the earlier guidelines from The Swedish Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket, 2010) not much room is given to anything but nutrition and meal planning which suggests that these were the expectations of the preschool staff. What defined a 'good' behaviour among staff members was that the children had their daily nutrients. Compared to the recent guidelines (Livsmedelsverket, 2016) conducting meal pedagogy is the main goal. This change is of interest to investigate further.

Purpose

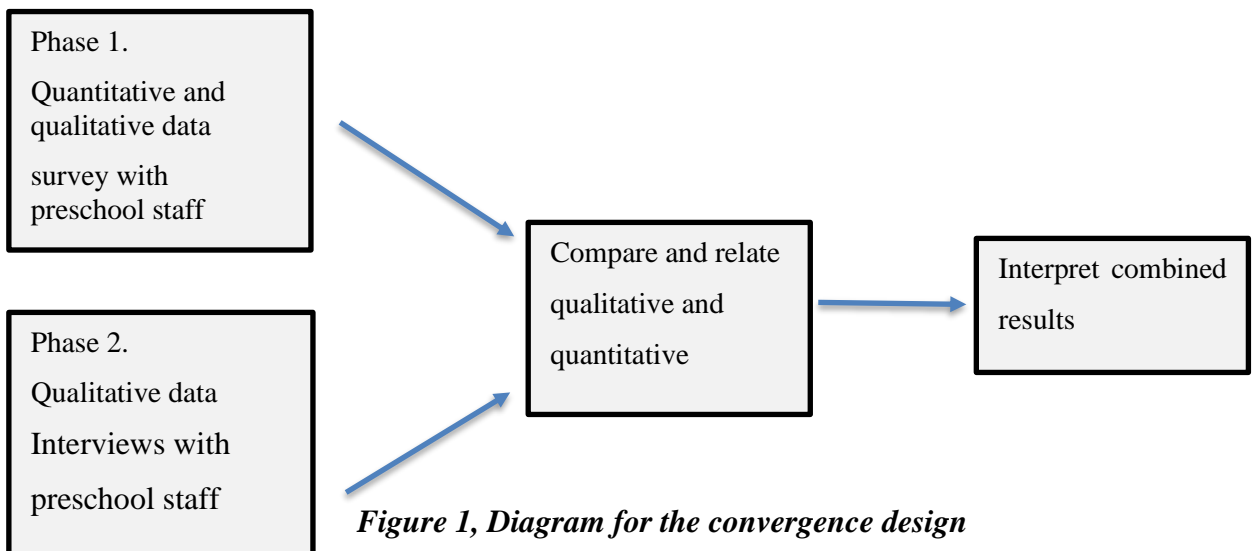
The purpose of this study is to examine current perceptions of the pedagogical meal and education among preschool staff in Sweden, and how they think the pedagogical meal has changed since 2005 to 2020 using a convergent mixed methods design.

Research questions

1. Do preschool staff perceive their education to be adequate in order to perform pedagogical meals?
2. How does the preschool staff see their role in the pedagogical meal?
3. What are the perceived positive and challenging aspects of a pedagogical meal?
4. What differences do the preschool staff see in how they work with the pedagogical meals today compared with 10-15 years ago?

Material and method

This study was a convergence mixed methods design (see figure 1). Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered in parallel through Phase 1, consisting of a survey and Phase 2, which consisted of semi-structured interviews. The data from the two phases was then compared and related to finalized into one interpretation. A mixed methods design was used since only using quantitative or qualitative methods could be insufficient since qualitative data is needed to understand deeper while quantitative can be used to gain some perspective of generalization (Creswell, 2015). The quantitative and qualitative parts of the study were meant to support each other in answering the aim and the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2015)



Phase 1. Survey

The web-based survey consisted of 13 questions. The survey consisted of 3 parts with closed-ended questions and one final open-ended question. The first part consisted of background information, the second part consisted of closed-ended questions on the pedagogical meal based on the research questions and aim, and the third part consisted of one open-ended question where the respondent was encouraged to write down how they perceived that the pedagogical meal had changed since they started working at preschools.

The survey was created online using Google Forms (see appendix 1.). Google forms was chosen due to its easy-to-understand interface as well as it already being used in surveys

for the group members. A pilot study was performed on a preschool staff member where the participant answered the questions and afterwards provided thoughts on the questions. After this minor pilot test, a question regarding if the staff must pay for their meals at the preschool was added.

The final version of the survey was then distributed through a Facebook group with 36000 members belonging to the preschool section of the Swedish Teachers' Union.

Data analysis

The descriptive statistics from the survey was made into tables to display the data. For the last question in the survey, where the respondents answered an open answer question, the answers were analysed qualitatively and translated as descriptive as possible to keep the meaning of the text. The answers were coded and sorted into themes according to thematic analysis guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006)

Phase 2. Interviews

A semi structured interview guide was created with open ended questions based on the research questions (see appendix 3.). The purpose of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the research questions. A pilot study was performed on a preschool staff member where the participant answered the questions in the interview guide and later discussed them. Three participants were asked to participate in the study. One participant was recruited through a convenience sample (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) and the second participant was recruited through a contact at a preschool that was previously asked to participate in the cancelled focus group. The last participant was recruited through snowball sampling (Baltar, & Brunet, 2012) from another recruit. However, this last interview was cancelled by the participant. A total of two interviews were conducted. These sampling methods were used due to the short timeframe.

Only participants who fit the criteria of having worked at a preschool 10-15 years ago as well as they had to be currently working at a preschool were recruited.

In the analysis, the participants were renamed to give the results more personality. Names were chosen from a list of popular baby names during the decade the participants were born. 'Eva' has been working for over 40 years and mostly with 3-5-year-olds during the last 10-15 years. She was currently working at a preschool with six departments with two

shared dining halls where two departments had lunch at the same time in each hall. She participated in the meal in the dining hall but reported to not eat during the meals. 'Lena' had worked at preschools for 24 years and had also worked with 3-5-year-olds during the last 15 years, though she occasionally worked at another department with younger children. Lena's preschool had one dining hall that was shared by 5 departments where the younger children (less than 3 years old, occasionally 3-year-olds) would eat first and the older (3-5 years old) afterwards. Lena reported to always eat together with the children during the meal.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom and were audio recorded. The interview with Eva took 45 minutes and the interview with Lena took 20 minutes.

Data analysis

The data from the interviews were transcribed and thereafter read through several times. The transcribed data was then coded and sorted into themes according to thematic analysis guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006). Quotes were chosen to represent the themes. These quotes were then translated from Swedish to English. The translations were attempted to be as close to what the participants meant as possible and in-depth descriptions to keep the tone and to keep the data as accurate as possible. Comments were added to each quote with clarification of tone, message, and the original quote in Swedish to keep them as accurate as possible through the process.

Ethical considerations

This mixed methods study was performed according to The Swedish Research Council (2017). All participants were informed about the subject of the study as well as that their participation was voluntary, and they at any point could leave the study for any reason. Every participant was required to give their consent before participating (see appendix 2., 4., & 5.).

The gathered data was handled according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2016). No names of participants were saved during the study. If names of either staff or children came up during the interviews, these were not included in the transcription. The data material in the form of audio recordings, print etc. will be destroyed when the thesis has been examined and approved. No copies of the audio recording were made. No information will be used outside of the study and will be treated confidentially.

A text which explained the purpose of the study, contact information and ethical information was included in the beginning of the survey (see appendix 2.).

During the gathering of data during phase 1, and phase 2, integrity for the participants and respondents was considered. Information that might be sensitive for the participants was not included in the finished data.

Results

Initially the results from the survey are reported and thereafter the results from the qualitative interviews. The results from the survey are presented in tables as well as through quotes from the open-ended question regarding the change of the pedagogical meal over time. The results from the interviews are displayed through quotes sorted in the themes identified in the analysis: 'The pedagogical role', 'The role of the children', and "The preschool as a meal arena".

Phase 1. Survey

Background data

A total of 53 answers were collected from the survey. No responses were excluded since they all fit the criteria of the study. Almost all respondents answered that they identify as

women (only one answered that they identify as man) (See table 1: Age distribution). In the survey, the respondents were asked to place themselves in age groups with 5-year increments. The largest groups were 31–35-year-olds and 46-50-year-olds (See table 1: Age distribution).

Table 1: Age distribution

Age group	Below 25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	Over 65
Women	3	6	9	6	6	9	6	5	3	0
Men		1								

All the respondents participated in the meals at their preschool but some of them did not eat together with the children. Most respondents (94,3%) answered that they have pedagogical meals at their preschools, and 86.8% answered that they always ate with the children while 7.5% answered that they often ate with the children. 5.7% answered that they sat at the table while the children ate but did not eat themselves (See table 2: Meal participation and meal payment). About half of the respondents (46.2%) reported that they did not have to pay for their meals (See table 2: Meal participation and meal payment).

Table 2: Meal participation and meal payment

Participation type	Number of respondents
Yes, I always eat my lunch together with the children.	46
Yes, I often eat my lunch together with the children	4
Yes, but I do not eat my lunch together with the children	3
Do you have to pay for meals at your preschool?	Number of respondents
Yes	24
No	28

The majority, almost 85%, answered that they had not received any formal education on food and meal (See Table 3: Formal education, number of years worked, and Child group ages).

About half of the respondents (52,8%) had been working at preschools for 10 or less years and 47,1% had worked for over 10 years. The biggest group (39.6%) had worked for 15 years or longer (See table 3: Formal education, number of years worked, and Child group ages). 81,1% of the respondents either worked with ‘younger’ children (1-3 years of age (39.6%) or ‘older’ children (4-5 years) (41.5%) and the rest either worked in mixed preschools groups or alternated between different groups in the preschool (See Table 3: Formal education, number of years worked, and Child group ages).

Table 3: Formal education, number of years worked, and Child group ages

Formal education on food and meal	Number of respondents
Yes	8
No	45
Number of years worked	Number of respondents
0-5	13
6-10	28
11-15	4
Over 15	21
Type of child group	Number of respondents
1–3-year-olds	21
4–5-year-olds	22
Mixed ages	7
Alternating between groups	3

Perceptions of the pedagogical meal

In the survey, the respondents chose from a list of statements what they thought best described the pedagogical meal (see table 4: Perceptions of the pedagogical meal). They could choose as many of the alternatives as they wanted. Most of the respondents thought the pedagogical meal was ‘Important’ (86.8%) and ‘A time for learning’ (88.7%). Many participants also thought the pedagogical meal was ‘Rewarding for the children’ (60.4%), ‘Social’ (73.6%), and ‘A pleasant moment we spend together’ (62.3%). The least chosen options were ‘Annoying/tough’ (1.9%), ‘Time consuming’

(3.8%), ‘Unnecessary’ (0%), and ‘The best moment of the day’ (5.7%). Generally, statements of negative descriptions were chosen a lesser extent, except for ‘Stressful’ (37%) which was chosen more frequently.

Table 4: Perceptions of the pedagogical meal

Statement	Chosen by number of participants	Percentage of agreement
A time for learning	47	88.7%
Important	46	86.8%
Social	39	73.6%
A pleasant moment we spend together	33	62.3%
Rewarding for the children	32	60.4%
Fun	21	39.7%
Stressful	20	37.7%
Time for consuming nutrients	18	34%
Exciting	10	18.9%
Calming	7	13.2%
Difficult	5	9.4%
The best moment of the day	3	5.7%
Time consuming	2	3.8%
Annoying/tough	1	1.9%
Unnecessary	0	0%

The role of the staff during meals

The respondents received several statements to consider regarding their role during the meals (see Table 5: Staff role). Most respondents fully agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement “*During the meal I like to talk about the food we eat together*”, and no one found it difficult to talk about food with the children. Most of the respondents saw themselves as role models for the children during the meal. Talking about what is healthy seemed to be more common than talking about what was unhealthy. Most of the respondents seemed to agree or somewhat agree that they used the meal as a learning opportunity. All the respondents either fully agreed or somewhat agreed that they use the meal to teach mathematical skills, but also environmental issues.

Table 5: Staff role

Statement	Fully agree	Somewhat agree	Do not agree
“During the meal I like to talk about the food we eat together with the children”	37	14	2
“I find it difficult to talk about food with the children”	0	10	43
“I see myself as an important role model for the kids during the meal”	47	6	0
“My most important task is to make sure the children eat properly”	4	31	18
“I talk about what is healthy to eat with the children”	24	22	7
“I talk about what is unhealthy to eat with the children”	12	28	13
“I talk about what the food taste like with the children”	37	15	1
“I use the meal to teach math by for example counting how many peas we have”	28	25	0
“I use the meal to teach the children about the environmental impact of food”	11	30	12
“Table manners is important to teach children in my opinion”	14	33	6

Changes over time

A total of 47% (25 respondents) answered that they saw a difference in the pedagogical meal today compared to when they started working in preschools. 40% (21 respondents) answered that they do not see a difference and the rest did not know. Out of the participants who did see a difference 17 of them were people who had worked in the field for over 10 years. 5 people who had worked 6-10 years answered that they saw a difference and 3 people who had worked 0-5 years answered that they saw a difference. The participants who had worked 0-5 years exclusively answered that they noted differences depending on whom they worked with or the personal situation with the other staff members at the preschool. The themes gathered from analysing this question in the survey were: Changes in the pedagogical role, Changes in the role of the children, Changes in the preschool as a meal arena.

Changes in the pedagogical role

Several comments related to perceived changes in the pedagogical role. Some respondents answered that they saw a change in what they were supposed to teach the children about nutrition and what is healthy to eat.

“New dishes and recommendations about food for children (more vegetarian and climate smart, but no 1,5% or 3% fat milk, less sugar and so on)”.

Some respondents stated the importance of them being role models in forming healthy eating habits but at the same time they put an emphasis on that children should not be too restricted.

“Children must be allowed to be children and enjoy some unhealthy things too”.

Many wrote that they saw a change in the conversation they have with the children nowadays and the overall importance of talking about the food.

“The children’s participation has increased, and we discuss tastes, colours, smell, hearing and also feel when it comes to food. The children get to experience and put words on what they are experiencing and combinations of different flavours. The meals have become more allowing.”.

“How we converse with the children is completely different than before. We see it as a time for education now”.

Some further wrote that they saw a difference in how they go about the pedagogical role, and an increase in consciousness was frequently mentioned.

“Increased consciousness. How we see children and knowledge becomes important factors in how we shape the meal pedagogy”.

“Increased consciousness about meal as a learning situation. We have a greater insight in how other preschools go about both children and meal. We are less closed off to other departments”.

Some respondents commented on how other colleagues were acting during the meal, and by doing so, highlighted way of behaviour during the meal that they dissociate themselves from. This was especially apparent among the respondents that had worked 0-5 years:

“I have had colleagues who thinks that it is important that the children eat everything on the plate and then proceeded to force the food in the children’s mouths. They also forced the children to sit until they have finished everything on their plate. A lot is about the pedagogue”.

“It is different from preschool to preschool on what the pedagogues perceive as important in the meal situation. For example, that you always must finish your vegetables because they are healthy instead of letting the children choose for themselves and encourage them to taste by their own will”.

Many of the respondents wrote that they nowadays must pay for having meals in the preschool, also that they thought they had to pay too much for their meals, which was raised as a problem since some, because of this, chose not to eat during the meal. The amount they pay was also seen as unreasonable since eating lunch is a task they also do as a work task.

“Since we started having to pay for the food I do not eat with the children. It is difficult to talk about flavour and consistency for example. It is difficult to motivate and be a role model. We are noticing that the children eat less when we adults do not eat, especially vegetables”

“we pay unreasonably much to do our work!!!”

Changes in the role of the children and child group

The respondents seemed to agree that how we see children has changed since they started working at preschools and that this also have had an impact on how they do their pedagogical work and how the pedagogical meal is conducted.

“Children today have a bigger influence on what they want to eat and not”.

“Over time the expectations we have on children has become lower. To participate in a meal without bothering their friends is something many children have difficulties with nowadays”.

“They are not used to participating in a meal with calm and conversation from home, it is something they learn here”.

Moreover, the expectations the children have on the preschool staff also seems to have changed, as one respondent wrote:

“The children’s expectations are that we talk with each other during the meal. They are they are set on having a conversation in a different way than in the past”.

Many of the respondents perceived that having pedagogical meals was more difficult now since the ratio of children per adult has increased.

“Too many children per pedagogue. It is hard to have time for everyone”.

“Since we have more children at every table it feels more stressful and not always as harmonious as it should”.

“Over time it has become easier for me to break down the knowledge and to have a form of pedagogical education even for the youngest who are introduced to the preschool. The biggest obstacle for me now is not the knowledge, it is more that we have too many children around the table and it becomes difficult to see the individual needs”.

Changes in the preschool as a meal arena

The comments made in the survey related to perceived changes in the pedagogical meal also concerned how and where the meal itself was held and how this effected the pedagogical work.

“One big advantage with dining hall is that we do not have to deal with food scraps and mess at the department”.

“Since a year back we eat in a dining hall where we have shift and a time schedule which means I get stressed because I have a time we need to finish by. We have many children and few adults. It is not a good situation, but it is better than eating at our own departments. Now we do not need to have dining tables at the departments, and we can have learning environments instead”.

Other respondents expressed that the eating environment had become more stressful and louder since switching to eating in dining halls.

“The children get their food by themselves at a buffet now. This becomes a lot of running to and from the table. I must get up and to help many times and that means I leave the children sitting at the table a lot. When we had table service the children had to listen to each other and practice sharing and sending food to each other and making sure there was enough for everyone. It was a calmer dining situation”.

Two other respondents simply answered,

“Dining hall loud” and “Stressful with dining hall”.

Phase 2. Interviews

The analysis of the interviews resulted in similar themes as in the analysis of the open-ended question in the survey about changes in the pedagogical meal, and these themes also correspond to the aim and the main research questions of this thesis. The themes identified in the analysis of the interviews were “The pedagogical role”, “The role of the children, and “The preschool as a meal arena”.

The pedagogical role

As was also stated in the open-ended question in the survey, both participants in the interviews talked about the importance of having conversations as part of the pedagogical meals as the children today seek conversation during the meal compared to in the past when they were expected to ‘let the food quiet the mouth’.

“The children expect conversation at the table nowadays, especially the older children. The youngest (referring to 3-year-olds) can sometimes be difficult to have a back-and-forth dialog with. The older children (referring to 4-6-year-olds) always want to have a conversation during the meal” - Eva

“I do almost never say ‘let the food quiet the mouth’ now. Only when someone is extremely chatty and forget to eat” -Lena

When asked what they talk about during the meal, both participants said that they talk about anything the children want to talk about. Eva said,

“They often talk about the colours if anything they see which is often the food or maybe their socks or shirts”.

Eva further talked about how they answer the children’s questions about where food comes from:

“We talk about where food comes from and how it comes to us sometimes”.

When asked to name an example Eva said:

“Now, one of the children has many times asked questions like ‘But rice, where does that come from?’. And then we talked about it and afterwards we went and looked at the iPad so they could see what a rice field looked like. The rice looked almost like grass”. -Eva

Eva further said that how they teach has changed over the years and she talked about guidelines for teaching and the curriculum,

“Since I have worked for 40 years, I have tried many (referring to guidelines). In the beginning there was no curriculum or any of that. Then came the ones I have forgotten”.

During the interviews, it was also described how their pedagogical work has changed due to trends, but also expectations of what is supposed to be included in the pedagogical meals.

“some years I have not been allowed to teach children and to only answer their questions. Now it is ‘in’ that we should teach children. That makes me think more about talking about the food, what part of the body it is good for. That different food is good for different things in the body”. -Eva

Neither of the participants has had any education on how to do a pedagogical meal nor have they had any education on anything related to food. Instead, this was discussed with colleagues. During the interviews, the participants were asked if they had any pedagogical tools to tackle the meal.

“Not that I have that many tools, but we discuss among it a lot in the staff group” -Eva

“None of us has had any education on how to actually do a pedagogical meal” -Lena

“we discuss how we should go about food within the group. We give each other ideas and tips too. On what we can talk about during the meal too”.
-Lena

Eva, who did not eat with the children during the meals, said that this was partly due to the high cost of eating at the preschool and said,

“It is too much, we are working. It is during our working hours”. They further explained the consequences at their preschool, “We are seeing that the children eat less vegetables when we do not eat. It happens that you take a piece of vegetable just for the sake of it. Then you cannot say ‘this is good’ without eating it yourself. It feels wrong”.

The role of the children

Both participants perceived that children in general have become pickier with what they chose to eat and not eat, which also challenged the pedagogical meals.

“I think more children are pickier with what they eat today. It is more about encouraging them today. You must make the food more fun. I think that makes a huge difference” -Lena

When asked to explain this further, Lena said,

“I do not know; I just think it is like this now. Before it was more like of course you must eat. You just ate and ate what you had. The last few years there are a lot of ‘I do not eat that’ and ‘That is disgusting’ and ‘I cannot eat that’”.

They talked about how they work with this and Eva said,

“You have to put more effort into making the food more fun and to encourage them to try. I think I do a pretty good job because the children usually give it a taste and then I say, ‘well done’ or ‘really good that you dared to taste’”.

Another thing that was described as challenging in relation to the pedagogical meals was that the groups of children had become larger than before:

“It is difficult to see to the needs of the individual at the table, I do not always have the time when someone is picky”. -Lena

Since both interview participants pointed at the importance of conversation and to talk with the children during the meals, these larger groups of children was also something that Eva found problematic:

“During the meal they have, you cannot say undivided attention since you are sitting with 7 children, but they are set on having a conversation. No matter what we get”.

They both seemed to agree that the larger group makes it difficult to listen to the individual even though the children seek conversation more compared to in the past.

“Looking back on the last 15 years, we have more children per table now. More children per pedagogue, we are one at every table. So, it is much tougher now. You might not have the time to talk to the children as you did when you had for example 5” -Eva

The preschool as a meal arena

As was mentioned in the written comments about changes in relation to the pedagogical meals, the interview participants also talked about the pros and cons about eating in a dining hall as compared to eating with each separate group in their own room.

“It can be difficult sometimes since we have so many children and we sit with almost everyone in the same room. It can be loud and messy, but we do our best to remain calm”. “Before it was much calmer, and we did not get bothered by other tables”. -Eva

However, Lena further explained that switching to dining hall also has positives,

“It is nice that we do not have to deal with food scraps and dirt at the own department. There are pros and cons with both”.

Even so, both participants agreed that the dining hall tends to be loud with talking, which might result in a more stressful meal situation. Moreover, having a kitchen at the preschool was mentioned as important by both participants.

“I have always worked at preschools with kitchens, I think that is important”. -Lena

Discussion

In the discussion section the results are combined and discussed in regard to the research questions and how they relate to the changes that has happened between the two guidelines from the Swedish Food Agency.

The main results of the study showed that the preschool staff perceived the pedagogical meal to be important and a time for learning. However, the preschool staff often lacked formal education on food and meal or how to conduct a pedagogical meal, nor did they reflect on whether or not they would need more education. Instead, they discussed within the staff group how they should handle the meal as part of peer learning. The results further showed that the staff perceived themselves as important role models during the meals. During the interviews it was said that they have had different expectations on their role over the years. Today the preschool staff described how they more often use the meal to have conversations with the children and to teach and help the children to understand subjects such as colour, mathematics, health, and the taste of the meal itself. The staff

also perceived their role to have changed. Before, they were only providing children with food and nutrition. Today, they are role models for children on how to behave during meals. They also encourage children to learn other things besides just eating during the meal. The results showed that the most challenging aspect of the pedagogical meal was stress. Some perceived the change from more private dining rooms to shared dining halls to be more stressful and loud as well as the increased size of the child group. Another challenge some faced was the need to pay for their meals, which might result in the staff not eating together with the children despite them perceiving it as a work task. Positive aspects of the meal were that the meal was a time for learning and an important social moment in their day. It was a time where the staff could sit and talk with the children, which both parts enjoyed. Regarding the change over time, the results showed that there was some acknowledgement of the guidelines changing their perspective on nutrition. They further stated that there had also been a change in the role of the children during the meals over time. The children today have a more active role where they are expected to participate and voice their opinions to develop and learn. Moreover, there is also an expectation that during the meal the staff are supposed to have a conversation about the food and the meal.

Formal and informal education

Most of the respondents had not received any formal education on food and meal which aligns with what previous research has shown (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006; Øvrebø, 2017; Blömeke, Jenßen, Grassmann, Dunekacke & Wedekind, 2017). However, not having adequate education on food and meals or on how to do pedagogical meals did not seem to be an issue during the interviews. They answered that they either did not need more education on the subject or that they had not even considered the option. Previous studies have also stated that preschool staff had been uncertain of their role as teachers in the meal situation due to their lack of or inadequate education about food and nutrition (Sepp, Abrahamsson & Fjellström, 2006). In this study, the subject and issues that came along with it was that they used peer learning as informal education at their respective preschools. When asked during the interview, the participants said that they did not know about the guidelines from the Swedish Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Instead, they relied on each other and discussed meal pedagogy within the staff of their preschools.

This is also what the guidelines suggest (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). To a large extent they seemed to follow the guidelines without knowing about them.

Perceptions on children and how they change the role of the staff

Most of the respondents in the survey saw the pedagogical meal as something important and a time for learning and being social. This was also in line with the newer guidelines from The Swedish Food Agency and that the meals should be “integrated”, according to the meal model (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). No one saw the pedagogical meal as unnecessary. The shift from when the meal was a time for consuming nutrients to today, where the meal is more about also having a social learning experience, was highlighted in both the open answer question in the survey and in the interviews. Staff members who would force children into eating vegetables or not let them leave the table until they had finished everything on the plate, were used as examples of how preschool staff should not behave. It was perceived as something only staff of the past did and not something they would do today. Coveney (2008) writes that in families, obedience has been replaced with cooperation and negotiation between parent and child and this could be seen in the preschool setting as well. As cooperation and negotiation is seen as ‘good parenting’ in the context of the family (Coveney, 2008), this could also suggest that the same goes for preschool staff. Coveney (2008) further writes that picky eaters are a relatively new problem. Changes in attitudes on how children should be fed has changed due to children having gained rights, independence, and autonomy which the adults caring for them need to consider and work with (Coveney, 2008). Since pedagogical meals in preschool is a relatively new concept, it would be sensible that the change from just providing food to a meal with cooperation and negotiation did not happen unless it was suggested in the guidelines. In the survey, few of the respondents answered that their role was to make sure the children ate properly using proper table manner. This could be due to these qualities being less important today. Skills such as social interaction during the meal are considered to be more important in a self-governing child. It is important to understand the pedagogical meal and how to work with meal together with the change in how we see children.

Challenging and positive aspects of the pedagogical meal

In the study, the preschool staff emphasized the change in the roles and expectations of the children, and how this impacted the pedagogical meal in different ways. According to the staff, one of the challenges was that children were perceived to have become pickier with what they ate over time, which was difficult to handle since it requires much attention and effort during the meal. The meal today was about much more than just eating the food and the changes in how children are seen means that children are expected to question what they are exposed to and make their own conclusions on what is edible which might explain why they are seen as pickier and not neophobic. During the interviews it was said that children need to be encouraged and that the food must be made more 'fun' rather than in some way more 'safe' or 'familiar'. This implies that the children prefer to meet new foods in an exploring and positive manner rather than a perspective of something 'scary' or 'unsafe', as would be the case with neophobia. Therefore, it might be perceived as the children are picky when they are actually questioning foods they have not tried before. If the food is something the child is not used to eat at home due to, for example inherited aversions from parents (Faith, Heo, Keller, & Pietrobelli, 2013), encouragement from a trusted outsider is needed, since positive encouragement is associated with for example children eating more vegetables (Lehto, et al., 2019). An aspect that was rooted in self-governing children is that it gives the meal more social aspects which was seen as a positive in the study as children are expecting more conversation today. To help promote the positive aspects of self-government, it is important to support the children during the meal by offering them good tasting meals and challenges by having an open dialog between the staff in the kitchen and the staff who eats with the children (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). Having an open dialog with feedback would help the children to get food they enjoy and the staff able to discuss what works and how to improve. Without feedback, the kitchen would be left relatively unaware of how well the meals work and how to move forward with improvements.

Eating with the children, and by doing so, sharing the meal, was a prerequisite for being able to perform the pedagogical meal. This seemed to be an underlying factor for many of the respondents and participants in the study. The Swedish Food Agency (2016) states that there is a great pedagogical value in that the staff members eat the same food as the children. Therefore, not being able to eat during the meal was stated to be a challenge. A factor which might prevent preschool staff from eating during the meal was having to pay

for the meals they consumed with the children. The respondents in the survey who wrote that having to pay made them stop eating with the children also answered that it was difficult to talk about the sensory aspects of the meal, which is considered an important part of working with the meal as 'integrated' and 'tasty' (Livsmedelsverket, 2016). In the interview, Eva said that since they started having to pay for the meals at the preschool, she saw a decline in how much vegetables the children ate. She also stated that it was more difficult to promote eating vegetables when the staff member did not eat them and would sometimes eat vegetables despite not technically being allowed to. Since both, the survey and the interviews seemed to agree that children have become pickier over time. Having to pay for the meals was stated as one of the reasons, since it makes it difficult to be a role model when they cannot eat the same food as the children. Moreover, the Swedish food agency (Livsmedelsverket, 2016) states that the adults should work as role models meaning they have an expectation on them that they should be participating in the meal together with the children. This puts the preschool staff in a difficult situation where they do not want to spend money to be able to perform their job.

The study further highlighted the challenges with large child groups and the increased ratio of children per adults in relation to the pedagogical meals. In the interviews and survey, it was stated that it was more difficult to see to the needs of the individual at the table today compared to 10-15 years ago due to the increase in size of the child groups. This also seemed to be especially difficult when trying to help children who were picky, but it was also perceived to be difficult to keep a conversation, which is an important aspect. The increased number of children in each group also have the added issue of making the sound level higher as well as the whole meal becoming more stressful. Dining halls were also perceived to make the experience more stressful and expose the staff to a loud environment. Dining halls could however have other benefits in other areas, such as they were easier to clean and that the staff did not have to have food scraps in other areas of the preschool. The change from smaller rooms to dining halls were also seen as an obstacle in terms of conversation due to the dining hall environment. Since conversation is an important pedagogical tool during the meal (Livsmedelsverket, 2016), also included as important in the meal model, it needs to be considered more by preschool management systems when designing the meal area. The pedagogical meal is meant to be a social activity where the participants of the meal interplay with each other with conversation (Livsmedelsverket, 2016).

Implications

This study helps to gain a deeper insight into pedagogical meals and how they are conducted. Preschool staff is an important but disregarded factor for children's learning about food and meals. What they learn in preschool will follow them throughout their lives in the shape of food habits. As children have gained rights, the roles children are expected to have, and the expectations adults have on them has changed. The staff has adapted along with this change. Understanding this relation between changes in children's rights and how they need to be met in preschool and the educational system is important when conducting further studies.

Method discussion

Mixed methods were used due to the complexity of the subject. According to Creswell (2015) a mixed methods research design is useful when either quantitative or qualitative methods are unable to explain the research problem fully. The two methods complement each other. The survey provided a base on the current situation while the interviews provided more in-depth answers.

The online survey was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data since it requires a lower amount of time in relations to how much data it can gather (Bryman, 2011). Since the survey was distributed through a Facebook group belonging to the Swedish Teachers Union where the purpose of the group is to help each other improve in their pedagogical role, it is possible that the participants were not a representation of the average preschool staff. They are probably interested in making preschools better and therefore work towards that goal. The survey had a small snowball sampling resulting in a wider spread (Bryman, 2011). The snowball sampling might also have caused some respondents to give similar answers due to them working at the same preschool and therefore reporting similar answers. The survey had an even age distribution among the respondents, almost all of them did work with pedagogical meals and all the respondents did sit at the table during the meal even if all of them did not eat. The uneven gender distribution was expected since only about 4% of preschool staff in Sweden have been men during the last 10 years (Skolverket, 2020). Further questions to gather qualitative data could have been added. For example, a question where the respondents could write their own view on what they perceived to be either challenging or positive aspects of the preschool meal.

Using the Facebook group was a last resort. Prior arrangements had been made with a municipal, but they had withdrawn as the study was about to start. Sending the survey to every preschool in the municipal would have had a more controlled sampling since it would be possible to know more about every preschool that participated. An issue could have been that the answers were from the same area and therefore represent local views that did not represent the whole preschool staff population.

Phase 2 of the study was supposed to consist of focus groups but had to be switched to interviews rather suddenly during the study. This was due to the rise in covid-19 and a decision to cancel any unnecessary meetings. Interviews were easier to plan and conduct with a short notice to fit in the time frame. However, focus groups would have been preferred since it would have provided with a more dynamic and in-depth discussion (Bryman, 2011). It could have been beneficial to gain a broader perspective on the research questions. A third interview would have been beneficial to have since both the participants worked at similar preschools with dining halls. An interview with someone who was currently eating in smaller groups would have been preferable to gain a deeper perspective on the interview questions as well as to represent those who does not have dining halls. However, due to the long working experience of the two interview participants, these interviews still provided important in-depth knowledge about changes in relation to the pedagogical meal.

Relevance for Food and Meal Science

Since the relationship we have to food starts early in life, it is important to make efforts towards making this relationship positive. Preschool staff plays a major role in forming this relationship, their view is therefore important to investigate. In the context of preschool meals, children are exposed to food outside of the home on a regular basis. This makes preschools the arena where they learn to conduct public meals and setting them up for managing this task by themselves when entering school. This means that the preschool is a relevant arena to study in the field of Food and Meal Science since it is a place where lifelong healthy habits can begin to take shape alongside the habits of having social meals. To provide this task, preschool staff must be competent and supported with the right tools and access to guidelines. Research on how the preschool staff perceive the pedagogical meal gives insight into how this is done, but also in how well equipped they are with education and support. It is also a way to see how well the guidelines are serving their

purpose as the preschool staff knew what was in the guidelines but without having read the guidelines. It also gives insight into what happened in the period between the two latest guidelines from the Swedish Food Agency where 'food' became 'meal'. This study is useful for the field of Meal Science and Food culture but also for preschool management, future pedagogical meal guidelines, as well as preschool staff.

Suggestions for future research

This study touched on perceptions of pickiness. A future study could have gone further in depth on why the staff perceived an increase in how picky the children were and provided explanations to the phenomenon. The staff perceived the children to be pickier over all but especially when staff members did not eat what the children ate. A further study could give insight into this phenomenon. Another further study outside the field of Food and Meal Science would be to focus on why the staff members did not consider further education and if this could be because of dissatisfaction towards their previous education or other reasons.

Conclusion

Preschool staff perceived the pedagogical meal to be a time for learning and an important opportunity for having conversations about food and eating with the children. Preschool staff saw themselves as important role models. Since few of them had formal education on the subject they were expected to experience a lack of knowledge.

However, this was not seen as a problem since they used peer learning. Having to pay for the meals, increased groups, and shared dining halls were perceived as challenging aspects of the pedagogical meal. However, dining halls had the benefit of being easy to clean. The social aspects of sitting down and sharing a meal, and the opportunity for learning were other perceived positive aspects. Those who had worked since before 2010 saw a change in children that changed how they should act in relation to the meal.

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Appendix 1, Survey questions

Bakgrundfrågor

1. Kön
 - Kvinna
 - Man
 - Annat
 - Ville ej svara

2. Ålder
 - Under 25 år
 - 26–30
 - 31–35
 - 36–40
 - 41–45
 - 46–50
 - 51–55
 - 56–60
 - 61–65
 - Över 65 år

3. Ingick någon formell utbildning om mat och måltider på förskolan i din utbildning?
 - Ja
 - Nej

4. Hur länge har du arbetat inom förskola?
 - 0–5 år
 - 6–10 år
 - 11–15 år
 - Över 15 år

5. Vilken typ av avdelning arbetar du på just nu?
 - Avdelning med små barn
 - Avdelning med stora barn
 - Blandad avdelning
 - Jag alternerar mellan olika avdelningar

Frågor om den pedagogiska måltiden

6. Deltar du under lunchen på förskolan?
- Ja, jag äter alltid lunch tillsammans med barnen
 - Ja, jag äter ofta lunch tillsammans med barnen
 - Ja, jag äter ibland tillsammans med barnen
 - Ja, men jag äter inte samma maträtt som barnen
 - Ja, jag sitter med under lunchen men jag äter inte
 - Nej, jag deltar inte i lunchen på förskolan
7. Har ni pedagogiska måltider på er förskola?
- Ja
 - Nej
8. Behöver du betala för att äta lunch på förskolan?
- Ja
 - Nej
 - Vet ej
9. Hur länge har du arbetat med pedagogiska måltider i förskolan?
- 0–5 år
 - 6–10 år
 - 11–15 år
 - Över 15 år
10. Jag tycker att den pedagogiska måltiden är (Välj de alternativ som stämmer bäst in för dig)
- Svår
 - Viktig
 - Jobbig
 - Givande för barnen
 - Tidskrävande
 - Rolig
 - Social
 - Stressig
 - Spännande
 - Onödig
 - Tid för näring
 - Den bästa stunden på dagen
 - En trevlig stund där vi umgås
 - Rogivande
 - Ett tillfälle för lärande
11. Vilka påståenden stämmer bäst in på dig?

	Instämmer helt	Instämmer delvis	Instämmer inte alls
Under måltiderna pratar jag gärna om maten vi äter			
Jag tycker det är svårt att prata om maten med barnen			
Jag ser mig själv som en viktig förebild för barnen under måltiden			
Min viktigaste uppgift är att se till att barnen äter ordentligt			
Jag pratar om vad som är hälsosamt att äta med barnen			
Jag pratar om vad som är ohälsosamt att äta med barnen			
Jag pratar om hur maten smakar med barnen			
Jag använder måltiden för att lära barnen matematik genom att till exempel räkna hur många ärtor vi har			
Jag använder måltiden för att lära barnen om matens påverkan på miljön			
Bordsskick är viktigt att lära barnen enligt mig			

12. Tycker du att de pedagogiska måltiderna har förändrats sedan du började arbeta inom förskolan?

- Ja
- Nej
- Vet ej

13. Om ja, på vilket sätt?

Appendix 2, Missive letter for survey

Till dig som arbetar med den pedagogiska måltiden i förskolan – En enkät om uppfattningar om och arbetet med den pedagogiska måltiden

Jag heter Emilia Göransson och läser magisterprogrammet i Food and Meal Science på Högskolan Kristianstad. Denna enkät är en del av mitt examensarbete som handlar om den pedagogiska måltiden i förskolan. De allra flesta barn mellan 1 och 5 år går idag på förskolan i Sverige och förskolan är därmed en viktig måltidsarena för många barn.

Syftet med studien är att undersöka den nuvarande uppfattningen om den pedagogiska måltiden, samt hur arbetet med maten och måltiderna i förskolan upplevs att ha förändrats över de senaste 10–15 åren.

Det är helt frivilligt att medverka i studien och du kan när som helst avbryta din medverkan. Enkäten beräknas ta 5–10 minuter att besvara. Materialet från enkäten kommer att hanteras och behandlas konfidentiellt och det kommer att förvaras så att ingen obehörig kommer att kunna ta del av det. Inga enskilda personer eller förskolor kommer att kunna identifieras i examensarbetet.

Har du några frågor så hör gärna av dig till:

Studerande:

Emilia Göransson

emilia.goransson0013@stud.hkr.se

Handledare:

Maria Nyberg

bitr. professor, Mat- och måltidsvetenskap, Högskolan Kristianstad

maria.nyberg@hkr.se

Appendix 3, Interview guide

Bakgrund och den pedagogiska måltiden idag

1. Hur länge har du arbetat inom förskola?
2. Vilken typ av avdelning har du arbetat på mest? (åldersgrupper?)
3. Äter du pedagogiska måltider? Hur ofta äter du samma mat tillsammans med barnen?
4. Hur skulle du beskriva de pedagogiska måltiderna på din förskola? Vad fungerar bra? Vad fungerar inte så bra? Hur brukar de se ut?
5. Vilken roll tycker du måltiderna ska ha?
6. Vilken roll tycker du att personalen ska ha under måltiden? Finns det några svårigheter? Är det alltid personalens roll?
7. Vad tycker du är det viktigaste syftet med måltiden på förskolan?
8. Vad brukar ni prata om med barnen under måltiden? Finns det någon strategi kring detta eller är det spontant? Vad vill ni lära barnen under måltiden?
9. Skillnader mellan hur gamla barnen är och dess roll (och personalens roll)?

Förändringar kring den pedagogiska måltiden

1. Om du tänker på hur måltiderna var på förskolan när du började arbeta (10–15 år), tycker du att de är annorlunda idag? I så fall, hur tycker du att de har förändrats?

Har den *pedagogiska* måltiden förändrats? (den pedagogiska idén med måltiderna?) Ser man på måltiderna på ett annat sätt idag på något sätt eller är det samma? Om skillnad – vad beror då denna förändring på?
2. Om du tänker på ert arbete med måltider, finns det någon faktor som försvårat ditt arbete utifrån? Till exempel beslut från kommunen, ändringar i riktlinjer eller andra utomstående krav. (Eventuellt referera till att många i enkäten behöver betala för maten)
3. Finns det någon faktor som har gjort ditt arbete lättare? Till exempel hjälp från kommun eller ledning eller riktlinjer från till exempel livsmedelsverket?
4. Hur upplever du miljön i rummet på förskolan? Har den förändrats?

I min enkät är det flera som uttryckt att miljön blivit mer högljudd på grund av att till exempel barngrupperna har blivit större eller att de äter i matsal – vad är dina reflektioner/tankar kring detta?
5. Upplever du att du har fått tillräcklig utbildning om och verktyg för att arbeta med pedagogiska måltider? Känner du att du hade velat ha mer utbildning? I vad?

Appendix 4, Missive letter for the interviews

Intervjustudie om pedagogiska måltider

Jag heter Emilia Göransson och läser magisterprogrammet i Food and Meal Science på Högskolan Kristianstad. Som en del av mitt examensarbete genomförs intervjuer med personal på förskolan kring den pedagogiska måltiden. De allra flesta barn mellan 1 och 5 år går idag på förskolan i Sverige och förskolan är därmed en viktig måltidsarena för många barn.

Syftet med studien är att undersöka uppfattningar om den pedagogiska måltiden, samt hur arbetet med maten och måltiderna i förskolan upplevs att ha förändrats över de senaste 10–15 åren.

Det är helt frivilligt att medverka i studien och du kan när som helst avbryta din medverkan. Intervjun beräknas ta **max 45** minuter. Intervjun kommer att ske över Zoom där ljudet även kommer att spelas in. Allt material kommer att hanteras och behandlas konfidentiellt och det kommer att förvaras så att ingen obehörig kommer att kunna ta del av det. Inga enskilda personer eller förskolor kommer att kunna identifieras i examensarbetet. Studien har registrerats på Högskolan Kristianstad i enlighet med lagen om hantering av personuppgifter (GDPR). Efter godkänd uppsats kommer materialet att förstöras.

Har du några frågor så hör gärna av dig till:

Studerande:

Emilia Göransson

emilia.goransson0013@stud.hkr.se

Handledare:

Maria Nyberg, bitr. professor, Mat- och måltidsvetenskap, Högskolan Kristianstad

maria.nyberg@hkr.se

Appendix 5, Consensus form

Jag har informerats om studiens syfte, om hur informationen samlas in, bearbetats och handhas. Jag har även informerats om att mitt deltagande är frivilligt och att, när jag vill, kan avbryta min medverkan i studien utan att ange orsak. Jag samtycker härmed till att medverka i denna intervjustudie.

Ort/Datum/År

Namnunderskrift

Namnförtydligande

Forskarens Underskrift

Namnförtydligande
