Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raol20

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To cite this article: Anna Larsson & Maria Rönnlund (2021) The spatial practice of the schoolyard. A comparison between Swedish and French teachers' and principals' perceptions of educational outdoor spaces, Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 21:2, 139-150, DOI: 10.1080/14729679.2020.1755704

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2020.1755704

Published online: 04 May 2020.

JOURNAL OF ADVENTURE EDUCATION AND OUTDOOR LEARNING
2021, VOL. 21, NO. 2, 139–150
https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2020.1755704

The spatial practice of the schoolyard. A comparison between Swedish and French teachers' and principals' perceptions of educational outdoor spaces

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ABSTRACT

In this study French and Swedish teachers' and principals' opinions and everyday uses of the schoolyard is in focus: What do they perceive as desirable and undesirable in the schoolyard, what similarities and differences exist between the two groups of pedagogues, and how can these be understood? The study employs a cross-cultural design and is based on interviews with 10 pedagogues. The analysis highlights similarities and differences concerning w*hat* shall take place in the schoolyard and *how* this is to be achieved. Based on a theoretical framework from Lefebvre and Bernstein, the findings are discussed in relation to explicit ideas found in the school curricula and to nation-specific educational contexts and their cultural and organizational distinctiveness.

KEYWORDS

Schoolyard; perceived space; Sweden; France; Bernstein

Introduction

In the literature on schooling, the schoolyard has been referred to as 'a forgotten space' (Burke & Grosvenor, 2003, ch. 3). However, the growing interest for outdoor education and a general and growing interest in informal and social learning in recent decades, has led to more studies taking the schoolyard space into account. From these studies (e.g. Blatchford, 1998; Blatchford & Sharp, 1994; Fiskum & Jacobsen, 2013; Gustafson, 2009; Hyvönen, 2008; Mygind, 2009; Norðdahl & Einarsdóttir, 2015; Rönnlund, 2015a, 2015b, 2017; Villanen & Alerby, 2013) it has become obvious that the schoolyard is an important space for school children's informal and formal learning, and for their negotiations of social relations and identity. We also know from previous research that adults' attitudes have effects on children's outdoor play (e.g. Little, Wyver, & Gibson, 2011; van Rooijen, Lensvelt-Mulders, Wyver, & Duyndam, 2019). Therefore, it is of interest how pedagogues view and understand the schoolyard space. Although a few studies concern pedagogues' thoughts about and ambitions regarding the schoolyard (e.g. Fägerstam, 2014; Larsson, Norlin, & Rönnlund, 2017; Norðdahl & Jóhannesson, 2016; Rönnlund, 2017; Tuuling, Õun, & Ugaste, 2018), we know little about national similarities and differences, as cross-cultural studies are rare. Furthermore, it seems likely that, compared to other educational spaces, the schoolyard is less surrounded by intentional pedagogical choices and more by taken-for-granted knowledge and unreflected preconceptions. This is an additional motive for why this study is important. With the ambition to understand the entire school environment as an arena for learning, it is important to make explicit how pedagogues think about the schoolyard and its practices on an everyday basis.

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With this study, we highlight pedagogues'—teachers and principals—opinions and uses of the schoolyard. To be able to discern patterns and to develop a foundation for reflections on this topic, we designed the study as a cross-cultural comparison between the two national contexts of Sweden and France. Based on our previous research in Swedish schoolyard contexts (Larsson, 2013; Larsson & Norlin, 2014; Larsson et al., 2017; Rönnlund, 2015a, 2015b, 2017), the choice of Sweden was natural. The choice of France as the contrasting case is motivated by mainly two reasons. First, we speak and understand French. Second, comparative studies are methodologically facilitated by cases that are different enough to be interesting, but not too different. Sweden and France have similar educational systems and institutions and overall guiding educational principles (Dobbins, 2014), but they have different cultural traditions when it comes to views on children and the relation between children and adults (Boverket, 2015). Based on this, we assumed that there might be significant similarities and differences between these two groups of pedagogues that might be discerned through a comparative study.

By contrasting how Swedish and French pedagogues talk about the schoolyard, the aim is to go beyond taken-for-granted knowledge and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the schoolyard as a social and pedagogical space. In this work, we specifically analyze what Swedish and French pedagogues perceive as desirable and undesirable in the schoolyard and how similarities and differences between the two groups can be understood.

Previous research

The significance of the schoolyard as a social and educational arena for pupils has been discussed in research in recent decades, and explored from various perspectives. Our own research both from historical and contemporary perspectives, has highlighted the schoolyard as an important space for children's formal and informal learning, but also demonstrates profound differences in how the schoolyard has been culturally formed and used at different time periods and between rural and urban settings (Larsson, 2013; Larsson & Norlin, 2014; Larsson et al., 2017; Rönnlund, 2015a, 2015b, 2017). In educational and psychological research directed to contemporary contexts, it has been shown that break-time activities are important for pupils' general feelings towards school as well as for their informal learning and social development (Blatchford, 1998; Gustafson, 2009, ; Hart, 1993; Larsson et al., 2017; Thomson, 2007). Identities are negotiated in the schoolyard, for example, concerning gender (Connolly, 2003; Delamont, 1990; Epstein, Kehily, Mac-an-Ghaill, & Redman, 2001; Nordström, 2010; Renold, 2005; Rönnlund, 2015a; 2015b; Thorne, 1993), and important social learning and practicing concerning such issues as conflict resolution also take place there (Blatchford & Sharp, 1994). Pupils' games and playing have also been investigated, and there are patterns in schoolyard play that seem similar across national borders. For example, football and other ball games are common, as well as running games and playing on playground equipment (Armitage, 2001; Opie & Opie, 1959; Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2003; Thomson, 2014).

Teachers' ideas about the schoolyard and about how to act in the schoolyard are less well researched, even though some exceptions exist. Swedish teachers interviewed in the project *The History of the Swedish Schoolyard. The school's outdoor environment as pedagogic and social space* (Larsson et al., 2017) emphasized the schoolyard as an arena for learning (social learning and subject learning) and stressed schoolyard projects promoting pupils' participation and influence as valuable both for children's learning and the overall school atmosphere. They also embraced physical activity in the schoolyard as a means for promoting health and well-being (Larsson et al., 2017, pp. 217–223). Teachers' views on the educational potential of the outdoor environment have also been highlighted in a study by Fägerstam (2014) indicating that teachers associated the outdoor teaching with increased motivation, communication and participation among students. They also regarded activities and shared experiences in the outdoor environment as being valuable for indoor teaching and learning. In a French study, Delalande (2010) found that teachers mainly associated the schoolyard with surveillance and fostering. However, how fostering was emphasized and talked about, and the

role of the teacher in the process of fostering, varied somewhat between different schools and regions. In schools in middle-class urban areas, the teachers tended to emphasize the pupils' autonomy and advocated few interventions in pupils' play, while teachers in two small rural schools both intervened in children's play and initiated educational games among the pupils. The general pattern was however, that the French pedagogues associated their role in the schoolyard with surveillance and monitoring, claiming that intervening too much could hinder pupils' own efforts in, for example, establishing relations with other pupils (Delalande, 2010).

From previous research, we conclude that the schoolyard has been explored only to a small extent from teachers' perspectives and that how teachers should act in the schoolyard is a matter of some discussion. As international comparisons are sparse, our study offers a contribution to the field also in that sense.

Theoretical framework

The study's design and analysis were inspired by Lefebvre's theorizing on the social production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). According to Lefebvre, space is a relational arrangement of ongoing social life, and thus space and social phenomena are produced in relation to each other. When discussing space as a social arrangement and as being produced, he distinguishes between three levels of space: conceptual, perceptual, and lived space. These levels interact in the production of space as representations of space/conceived space, spatial practice/perceived space, and spaces of representation/lived space (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–41). By 'representations of space' he refers to the ideological-cognitive aspect of space, e.g. the space of planners, urbanists, scholars, etc. By 'spatial practice' he refers to space-related manners of behavior, including the bodily experiences and perceptions of physical space. By 'spaces of representation' he refers to spaces of expression communicated by images and symbols that complement the spatial practices and what is perceived. Inspired by Lefebvre (1991), we understand the schoolyard as constantly being produced through these interconnected spatial levels. The way that the schoolyard is experienced and lived is, for example, affected by its physical design and everyday use, as well as by how it is conceptualized and narrated by politicians, architects, and others who are in charge of planning institutional spaces. As such, it is a space constituted by social relations and materialities that are loaded with institutional, political, and pedagogical intentions and expectations, but also a space that those who attend school on a daily basis, i.e. teachers, pupils, principals, etc., perceive, experience, and negotiate the meaning of. When empirically approaching the schoolyard, we focus in this study on the perceived space of teachers and principals, arguing that their perceptions—including their intentions, beliefs, and normative ideas about what activities and social relations are desirable in the schoolyard—interconnect with everyday life in the schoolyard, but also with how it is conceptualized and narrated by, for example, school planners and politicians.

Lefebvre's theoretical framework on social space helped us to highlight teachers' perceptions and meaning makings as contributing to the social production of the schoolyard. It also served as a framework to interpret the findings in the sense that relating the teachers' perceptions to processes at, for example, the conceptual level helped us to understand the similarities and differences between the two groups of teachers. However, to highlight ideas about power and control embedded in teachers' perceptions, we needed a complementary perspective, and here we used concepts from Bernstein—'pedagogical code', 'classification' and 'framing'. According to Bernstein (1990, 2000), education—including individual choices in everyday teaching situations—is affected by a pedagogical code that is based on organizing principles that can be explicitly expressed in, for example, steering documents, but is also based on a silent and implicit understanding among members of a social group. This code is of a linguistic kind, and it functions as an underlying logic that lends significance and legitimacy to educational choices and works in educational cultural contexts through classification and framing. Classification regulates relations between categories and concerns how firm a categorization is and if it can be questioned and overruled.

Accordingly, categorizations can be classified as being more or less clearly separated from each other. A clearly demarcated area or category is strongly classified and is not open to a significant amount of interpretation, while a category with vague boundaries is weakly classified and is easier to overrule or change (Bernstein, 2000). The power of classification is symbolic and is often not reflected upon or is invisible to the people affected by it. However, when classificatory power is being challenged, its strength can become visible. Framing then describes how relations are regulated within a specific context and how control over conduct, learning, interactions, etc., is exercised. In the case of the schoolyard, this might concern rules about where to play and what kinds of games are acceptable. Strong framing, which can be external (e.g. expressed in formal curricula) or internal (e.g. context bound), implies tight control and distinct power relations, while weak framing implies weak control and weak power relations. Classification and framing thus form a pedagogical code that we understand to have a great impact on the production of the social space of the schoolyard.

As our choices of theoretical tools imply, our analysis is informed by a socio-cultural framework, and this means that we understand educational organizations and traditions as well as the beliefs and ideas that the pedagogues give voice to as socially and culturally situated.

Method

This study was designed as a cross-cultural interview exploration with comparative ambition (cf. Olwig & Gulløv, 2003). Semi-structural interviews were conducted with 10 pedagogues in Sweden and France (2 teachers and 3 principals in each country). Two main principles guided the sample: the pedagogues would work in primary schools (i.e. with pupils about 6–12 years old), and in urban and rural schools (cf. Delalande, 2010). In each country, we included four schools situated in large cities and one school situated in a rural area at a considerable distance from a city. A great majority of the interviewees in the sample were women and had worked for many years in the profession. The interviews were conducted between June 2015 and May 2016. In Sweden, we contacted the schools directly, while, due to French administrative regulations, the contacts in France needed to be done on our behalf by officials at the municipal school offices. However, we were careful to point out to the officials that participation was completely voluntary, and that we only wanted contact with schools where the principal and the teachers themselves wanted to participate. All interviews were conducted at the schools and included a walk around the schoolyard guided by the interviewee. The interviews in Sweden were held in Swedish and the ones in France in French. We developed and followed an interview guide. Keeping to a rather detailed interview-guide, but with space for additional questions, was especially important for us, the authors, because French is not our mother tongue, although we do speak and understand it. The guide included questions about how they, as pedagogues, perceive a 'good' schoolyard and 'good' schoolyard activities, but also how they and their colleagues enact and use the schoolyard on regular basis, e.g. whether they participate in children's activities or not, or initiate activities or not. We audio-recorded the interviews, transcribed them and translated the French interviews to Swedish, after which coding and categorizing of interview-data was conducted in a thematic analysis. For this article, we have translated selected Swedish and French quotations into English, and we have made some adaptations to the articulations of the interviewees to put them in a more easily read style. At all schools, we also spent time at the schoolyards during break time walking around and taking field notes of what was happening and how the children and adults were behaving and communicating. The purpose of this was not to use it for systematic analysis but to obtain a contextual understanding to help support the information from the interviewees (Troman & Jeffrey, 2007).

The cross-cultural design of the study had methodological implications because it forced us to reflect on our own cultural biases. Because we have studied Swedish schools and schoolyards for many years as researchers and are native Swedes, our contextual knowledge about Swedish conditions and prerequisites is much deeper than for other contexts. In order to balance this and to achieve a better familiarity with the French context, we also visited other French schoolyards that

were not part of the interview study, talked to pedagogues, and studied policy documents. The analysis was directed towards both similarities and differences, although the differences indicated by the material will be more discussed here.

During the planning, setting up, and implementation of the study, we carefully followed the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (2017). The participating teachers and principals were informed about the study verbally by researchers in person and were given extensive written information. The information focused on the scope of the study, including details about the type of interview questions and the length of the interviews. They were also informed that we wanted to take a tour of the schoolyard, preferably when children were out playing. Because children were not in focus in the study, informing parents about our school visit was voluntary. After oral approval by individual participants, the study was conducted according to the promised methods. During the schoolyard tour, we did not interfere or communicate with the children. Information about the participating schools, teachers, and principals has been kept confidential during the research process, including when reporting the findings from the study.

The two cultural contexts

Sweden and France have similar educational traditions, institutions, and guiding principles such as equality and the fostering of social citizenship (Dobbins, 2014). However, while the French system has remained strongly centralized, Swedish education has taken on the broader international trend towards decentralization and is today highly decentralized in international comparisons. Swedish public schools enjoy much more autonomy over monetary and staff resources and planning, as well as over pedagogical issues, than French schools do (Dobbins, 2014). For example, in both Sweden and France the schoolyards (and school buildings) are owned and administrated by the local municipality; however, the state regulations and recommendations for their construction, maintenance, equipment, etc., are much more detailed in France. The Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, for example, recommends 200 square meters for a primary school class and an extra 100 square meters for each additional class (Le Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, n.d.). Such detailed figures do not exist in the Swedish context. Since the 1990s, the Swedish state regulation of the schools' outdoor environments has weakened, and detailed recommendations regarding size and equipment have been removed. Existing recommendations focus more on the importance of providing spaces and materials that encourage and augment pupils' physical activity as part of their physical and mental well-being and on the importance of designing and modeling spaces that fit and strengthen pedagogical activities (Boverket [National Board of Housing], 2015b, p. 1).

In practice, both Swedish and French schoolyards vary in size and design, not least because of geographic location. School playgrounds in urban inner cities are often small and enclosed with limited space for physical activity, while the school grounds in suburban and rural areas can be large in size and can include uncultivated areas. A general difference between the two national contexts is that the Swedish schoolyards, like in other Nordic countries (e.g. Norðdahl & Einarsdóttir, 2015) are much more furnished with fixed play equipment than French schoolyards. In the French context, this is related to state regulations—preschool yards but not primary and secondary schoolyards are required to be equipped with fixed play equipment. In the Swedish context, the presence of such equipment is related to the fact that most Swedish schoolyards serve as public playgrounds outside school hours, which is not the case in France, where the schoolyard is strictly a school space, with clear demarcations to the local environment, often physically visualized through high fences and locked gates and signs that prohibit outsiders from entering the school ground, something that is rarely seen in Sweden. Another general difference regards the organization of recreational activities. Since the 1990s, Swedish recreation and activity centers have been formally under the organization of the school institution, and their activities are highly integrated into the school day, which means that teachers and recreational staff collaborate in both indoor and outdoor activities during the school day. In France, the two

organizations are not integrated to the same degree. For example, the recreational staff take care of the pupils during the long lunch break, while teachers monitor the pupils during the shorter morning and afternoon breaks.

Findings

The findings from the interviews were analyzed and categorized into three themes. The first concerned the schoolyard as a *regulated space*, and showed strong consistency between the the French and Swedish pedagogues. The second and third themes, *activity* and *adult intervention, showed* differing perceptions among the French and Swedish pedagogues. We consider the theme of 'activity' as a matter of content—*What* is to take place in the schoolyard?—and '*adult intervention*' as a matter of pedagogy—*How* is this to be achieved?

In both national contexts, it was obvious that the pedagogues saw the schoolyard as a *regulated space* that they controlled. They regulated when to spend time there, what equipment and activities were permissible in the schoolyard, and where different activities should take place. In some cases, there were also regulations regarding time, e.g. that certain areas and certain play equipment could be used only during defined hours. Some rules were decided in dialogue with the pupils, while others were not negotiable. Choosing to stay inside the school building during break time was, for example, not an option in any of the schools.

While the first theme demonstrated something that was prevalent in both national contexts, the following two themes clearly showed differing perceptions. Starting with, *activity*, this appeared to be more central to the Swedish pedagogues than to the French. From the Swedish interviews it became obvious that children's physical activity was one of the main goals for break times and for the use of the schoolyard. Principal 1 commented: 'It is good to get some exercise; being sweaty after the break is good.' Teacher 1 said: 'To be physically active is good. There is a tremendous difference when the children come to class after the break; there is a sense of calm after they have romped around and played, and they can focus on what they are doing.' Teacher 2's comment on this was similar: 'The more they get to move during the break, the better they manage their schoolwork later.' In the context of commenting on desirable and undesirable schoolyard activities, the same Swedish teacher commented: 'What I find bad is when the children sometimes don't do anything, they just walk around and talk and then stupid things are coming up. It is best if they are active in some kind of play.'

Among the French pedagogues, in contrast, rest and staying calm seemed to be one main goal of the breaks. Principal 2 stressed the importance for the children to relax and to engage in calm activities. According to this principal, school children have long and stressful school days followed by evening activities, and therefore it is good if the breaks can be an occasion for calm recreation and not of strenuous physical activity. The argument was that because the children have such a scheduled life, they need to relax during the breaks in the school day. Principal 1 commented: 'Recreation means re-creation; its' goal is to regain energy and creativity.' She encouraged children to bring a book and to sit down and read and discuss the book during break time, and she said that older children more than younger children used the break time in this way. As a response to our comment that Swedish pedagogues rather emphasized activity during break time, she argued that French children have so many activities throughout the day that they need calmness and relaxation during the school breaks. This way of thinking was also reflected in the interview with teacher 1, in which the teacher stated that she saw the break time on the schoolyard as 'a moment for the pupils to relax and socialize with friends.'

A third French pedagogue, principal 3, indirectly highlighted this value of staying quiet as she, with a laugh, commented that they had 'failed' to stop the older boys from playing football on the schoolyard. 'However,' she said, 'there are also many who do sit down and chat.' Seemingly, the boys wished to play football but the school tried to encourage calmer activities.

In one of the French schools, there was a defined area behind one of the school buildings that was used for playing football under the supervision of a teacher. However, in general there was a shared

resistance towards football among the French pedagogues, which seemed to be connected to an understanding of football as mainly a boys' activity and to the idea that playing football often leads to boys dominating the schoolyard space and girls being pushed to the periphery. Among the Swedish pedagogues, this was not obvious. When the Swedish pedagogues talked about football, the activity seemed to include both boys and girls, and the issue of girls being pushed to the periphery was not raised, something that might be connected to the fact that there were more often clearly defined spaces for playing football in Swedish schoolyards than in French schoolyards. Thus, it appears as a central value in both national contexts that schoolyard activities should be gender-neutral, or at least include both boys and girls.

The second theme, *adult intervention*, also indicated a difference between the Swedish and the French interviewees, and related to whether teachers are to intervene in the children's activities in the schoolyard or not. In both national contexts, teachers were scheduled to be in the schoolyard during a certain number of breaks. But, what this task included seemed to differ according to the interviewees. In France, the surveillance function was stressed when discussing what they did and how they acted in the schoolyard. In answering a direct question as to whether teachers participate in the children's activities, one French principal 3 said: 'No. Never when on guard duty. When you are a break-time guard you have to surveil and nothing else, and you are responsible for all children. You have to be very strict and have to keep an eye on everything.' A similar answer was given by principal 1: 'No, never. It's also a break time for the teachers, and of course a moment of surveillance. No, we don't play with them. It's surveillance, only surveillance.'

From the interviews it was obvious that the French pedagogues considered surveillance as their main task in the schoolyard, in particularly when they were on 'guard duty'. They seldom participated in or intervened in children's activities. Intervention was predominantly associated with the surveillance task, they intervened when children violated rules or hurt each other. Based on what principal 2 said, however, the level of intervention could differ between different schools depending on the area and whether conflicts between pupils were common. Furthermore, there seemed to be an ongoing discussion in the French context about the issue of teachers interacting and playing with the pupils: 'We have had a discussion among the teachers about the role of the break-time guard. There are teachers who think we should organize play and have a more active role, while others think the pupils should handle their relationships themselves.' This principal was of the second opinion. There were also statements that revealed an ambiguity towards the pedagogues' role in the schoolyard. The French interviewees emphasized surveillance, but also the importance of teaching the pupils social interactions and collective playing. Teacher 1 said for example: 'We surveil, but we also help children to solve problems. We remind them where to play, about rules, and how to use the play equipment.' To a direct question about intervening, teacher 2: 'Sometimes we help them to get started playing with each other, at least that happens at the beginning of the term. We also always have new pupils at the beginning of the term who we keep an extra eye on in order to help them find their place.' Still, when being asked again if this meant interacting and playing with the pupils, the answer from this teacher was: 'No. If there is a child who needs help in joining the children's games, I ask other children to make that happen, to keep an eye on him or her, so to speak. No, I don't think it's a good idea that adults should intervene too much.'

Among the Swedish interviewees, the idea that pedagogues should participate and engage in the schoolyard activities seemed evident and not questioned. Principal 1 reasoned: 'We are to offer different types of play [and to be] model adults, [and] not always the same person is to lead the same activity.' Good schoolyard activities were, according to this principal, led by an adult. Principal 2 claimed that 'when an adult jumps rope with the pupils or plays bandy or joins hide and seek, it leads to a different tone between teachers and pupils.' The third Swedish principal told us that they had had the ambition of arranging adult-led activities every day, but due to practical issues had been forced to restrict these activities to two days a week.

Interpretation and discussion

The comparative analysis presented here indicates both similarities and differences in the spatial practice of the schoolyard in Sweden and France. In general, the highlighted similarities are related to control over activities and relations in the schoolyard, and both Swedish and French pedagogues took it as a fact that adults are in charge and pupils have to adapt to the rules of the adults. Put into Bernstein's terminology, the studied schools in both countries follow a similar pedagogical code and there is strong internal framing in both contexts. In both the French and the Swedish interviews, adults controlling activities and interactions was a prominent feature (cf. Bernstein, 2000). Because the schoolyard in Sweden and France, as in many other national contexts, is a school space and is part of the general schooling system in which adults teach and govern children, this seems natural and unsurprising.

The differences that we found indicate more complex relations. Concerning which activities that were considered as most desirable in the schoolyard, we found that while the Swedish pedagogues emphasized the importance of physical activity, the French rather emphasized relaxation and calmness. So how can this difference be understood? Following Lefebvre, we regard the spatial practice of the schoolyard to be in interaction with the 'planned space,' i.e. how space is conceptualized and planned by policymakers, architects, and local authorities (Lefebvre, 1991, ch. 1). Through national and local policy documents and plans, the schoolyard is loaded with institutional and social intentions and expectations, which in turn have effects on how the schoolyard is perceived among those who spend time there on a daily basis. Physical activity is strongly emphasized in Swedish policy documents, and the Swedish curriculum emphasizes physical activity during the school day as a way to foster pupils of all ages into a healthy lifestyle (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The importance of physical activity and of encouraging and providing physical activities through spatial and material arrangements, e.g. fixed play and sports equipment preferably combined with open natural land and a varied landscape (cf. Larsson et al., 2017), is also stressed in regulations and recommendations from Swedish governmental agencies in order to improve outdoor environments for Swedish schools and pre-schools (Boverket 2015, p. 8). Physical activity is also important in the French context but seems, compared to the Swedish case, more connected to developing the motor skills of young children (Delalande, 2010). For example, fixed play equipment is by French regulations to be provided only to pupils of younger ages (école maternelle with children 2–6 years old). From this perspective the French and Swedish pedagogues' views and comments reflected cultural norms, traditions and policies, and emphasised teachers and principals as important reproducers of norms and traditions, which in turn had implications for schooling in a wider sense, mediating discourses about the 'ideal schoolyard child' (cf. Rönnlund, 2017). However, it is worth noting that children's learning, which is emphasized as being important in some other studies where teachers were interviewed (e.g. Fägerstam, 2014; Norðdahl & Jóhannesson, 2016; Tuuling et al., 2018), was not particularly prominent when we asked the teachers about what a good schoolyard and good schoolyard activities represents. Instead, being physically active or relaxed was emphasized.

The analysis also discerned another main difference, concerning whether to embrace an interventionist approach or not (cf. Thomson, 2014). Also, this finding highlights the pedagogues as agents in the social production of school space—they are participating in negotiating the meaning making of what the schoolyard is and how it should be used, and this meaning making is culturally situated. It is, for example, more common in the Nordic countries to view children as independent and 'competent' beings who learn a great deal through their own play and self-directed experiences than it is in many other countries. In comparison with the Nordic countries, children in France are expected to be more governed by adults. They are also to a higher degree seen as part of the 'safety net' that the family represents rather than as independent individuals (Boverket [National Board of Housing], 2015b, p. 30). As we see it, these differences refer to various understandings of childhood (c.f. Delalande, 2010) and are likely to have an impact on the view on child-rearing, for example, in

expectations of children to take responsibility for their own activities and self-directed play. This might to some extent explain the differences among the pedagogues in this study in approaches to adult intervention. However, there seems to be a paradox here. Although Swedish culture and educational policies more emphasize children as independent and self-regulative beings than French culture does, this study indicates a stronger ambition among Swedish pedagogues to engage in and direct pupils' schoolyard activities than among French pedagogues, who for their part were more keen on emphasizing agency among the pupils and on letting them handle their break-time activities and relations by themselves. Drawing on the cultural differences in the relations between children and adults described above, it seems that it should have been the French pedagogues, not the Swedish ones, who were keener on activating the pupils and initiating and intervening in their activities.

Although our data cannot explain this paradox, Bernstein's concepts can help us to understand it. The French data indicated a strong classification between school activities and leisure time activities. For example, the French teachers associated physical activity mainly to leisure time activities during the lunch break and to after-school activities, which reflects the formal organizational setting with a clear separation between school and leisure time activities. In contrast to France, Swedish leisure time centers belong to the school organization and are governed by the school's curriculum and its stated pedagogical mission. Both leisure time teachers and 'ordinary' school teachers are out in the schoolyard during the breaks in the Swedish school day.

The French data also indicated a stronger classification between pupils' and teachers' roles and activities in the schoolyard than the Swedish data. This was, for example, seen in how French pedagogues put forward a more distinct monitoring role in relation to pupils compared to the Swedish pedagogues. As mentioned earlier, the French schoolyard is strictly a school space, while the Swedish schoolyard often serves as a public playground outside of school hours. Furthermore, in Sweden, the municipality provides collective accident insurance for all schoolchildren during the school day, while in France the local school or the local education authority at the municipality level is to provide financial compensation to families if their child gets hurt in the school area. This might have influenced how the pedagogues in this study viewed and presented their role in the schoolyard. As some of the interview data showed, the matter of surveillance was highly emphasized among the French pedagogues (cf. Delalande, 2010), and particularly among the French principals who expressed a fear that surveillance will fall by the wayside if the pedagogues are too busy playing with the pupils. In Sweden, surveilling and securing pupils was also relevant, but it was not emphasized nearly to the same degree as by the French pedagogues.

Analyzed in relation to curricula and nation-specific education contexts with cultural and organizational distinctiveness, the differences between the two groups of pedagogues become understandable. What is preferred to take place in the schoolyard and how this is to be attained—for example, how physical activity is to be achieved—is informed by institutional and organizational incentives and pedagogical codes.

Conclusion

In this study, we have identified and demonstrated similarities and differences in perceptions of the schoolyard and its practices between French and Swedish pedagogues. The similarities concern teachers' and principals' control of the schoolyard, and the differences concern the level of activity and the extent to which adults intervene in such activity, with the Swedish pedagogues emphasizing the importance of physical activity and interacting with and participating in pupils' activities and the French pedagogues being focused more on pupils' relaxation and teachers' surveillance tasks. Drawing on a sociological theoretical framework, we have argued that the similarities are related to strong internal framing in both the Swedish and French contexts, while the differences can be understood in relation to different degrees of classification. There was thus a similar pedagogical

code regarding framing in the two contexts (adults were controlling activities), but *how* this control was performed was related to different degrees of classification.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the teachers and principals who participated in the study. In addition, they thank colleagues at Umeå University and colleagues in the network *Design, Research and Practice in Educational Spaces* for their valuable comments, feedback and suggestions. The study was supported by Umeå School of Education.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Umeå School of Education.

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