

Vilske Kleva Föräldrakooperativ Förskolan Klinten



Executive summary

The Preschool Klinten

The Preschool Klinten is located in the countryside, near the municipality of Falköping in the southwest of Sweden. In 2000 there were many young families with children in Vilske Kleva, this meant that there was a great need for childcare in the area. The parents wanted easy access to childcare and they didn't want to travel in to the city every day. They formed a working group and made contact with Coompanion Cooperative Development Agency, who acted as adviser in the start-up process during the formation of the cooperative. The preschool was opened in 2003 and is run as a cooperative formed by parents.

Together with other parents, the Board and staff have created the opportunity to run the activities. The parents chose to start a cooperative because they wanted a clear and specific pedagogic focus of their business, and they wanted to take responsibility for their own decisions. All who were involved in the formation of preschool are unanimous when they say: without personal commitment and dedication, this preschool couldn't be possible! The main benefit for the local population is access to childcare in a sparsely populated area, and the members get transparency and commitment in the activities of the preschool. The service area for the preschool is the immediate area of Vilske Kleva (within 20 km).

The parents demonstrate great commitment to the activities; everyone knows everyone. The preschool has chosen to work according to a special pedagogical orientation and their three main themes are nature, culture and environment. They are outside in the forest a lot where the children can express their creativity and their need to move. Spending time outdoors will also stimulate all the children's senses which deepens the experiences and learning. The staff strives to ensure that the children can develop through outdoor recreation, play, movement, excitement, and experiences involving all senses. Children who have the opportunity to be out in the nature learn to respect the environment. The school leaders call nature the world's best classroom – for sustainable development in practice.

They started with 10 children in 2003 and today about 20 children are attending this preschool and they have 15 members, 4 employees, and a turnover of around 1.4 million SEK (140,000 Euro). Thanks to last year's small profit the preschool could employ an additional preschool teacher. This expansion gives them an opportunity to create a more solid business.

There has been little budgetary changes over the years since the preschool receive public/municipal contributions, calculated from the number of children enrolled. Commonly it is estimated that the minimum level to operate a preschool (on the basis of public contributions) is between 15-20 children.

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1. Section 1

1.1. Context and history

In the rural area near Falköping, the small village Vilske Kleva is located, with 350 inhabitants. Falköping and its surroundings have since the Neolithic period been cultivated by farmers. The town's landscape holds memories from ancient times, including a large number of passage graves (megaliths). The town is built where several roads meet, and it was from medieval times to the modern era a venue primarily for livestock. In the time of industrialization, the people of Falköping opened up manufacturing industries with the production of hats, fabrics, blinds, and confectionery goods.

Falköping was for a long time one of the smallest towns in the region, but in the mid-1800s the town received a significant boost, when several railways ran through the urban area and formed an important railway junction. Agriculture has always been important for Falköping, and in the urban area Falköping Dairy Factory is running a significant dairy production.

Sweden's childcare history

In the 1930s and 1940s childcare developed vastly and was established as a natural part of a modern society. Childcare personnel were trained to meet the increasing demands on educational activities.

The number of day-care centres did not expand during the 1950s; however, the so-called "play schools" (for 6-year olds) did. The few hours of teacher-led group gathering were considered to be positive for both the child and mother (a mother who was often in need of "relief").

Childcare developed rapidly and tripled during the 1960s. One important reason was that women entered the labour market in great numbers. There then were obvious requirements for childcare facilities and educational quality.

The expansion of childcare took off in the early 1970s as women increasingly entered the labour market. At the time, there were 90,000 children in different sorts of day-care centres. Twenty years later, the figure was 410,000. Kindergartens are the precursor to preschool. The number of children in school care also increased during the same period from around 30,000 to just over 170,000!

In 1968 the Child Preschool Commission was formed, where the educational forms were established. Children's own thoughts and ideas would now be more central. The documentation gave childcare recognition and status and became the basis for modern pre-schools in Sweden today.

The pedagogical ambition was determined. Now the child could develop their emotional and mental assets. A new view of the children had begun to permeate society. Childcare was now not only for the benefaction of parents, that had to work, but also for the children themselves so that they would grow and develop in a satisfactory manner. The child would be an open, considerate human being with the ability to empathize and capable of arriving at their own views and of problem solving.

Preschool is the general term used since 1998. Today, about 80% of all children and young people in Sweden are enrolled in childcare. More than 100,000 preschool teachers and recreation leaders work within childcare today. There is an entire branch that has been created since the Second World War and today that has a turnover in billions.

1.2. Life cycle

The parents in the small village Vilske-Kleva chose to start a cooperative day-care because they wanted a clear, specific pedagogic focus of their business and they wanted to have responsibility and to take decisions for themselves.

The relation amongst the parents was based on mutual trust, good relationships, and motivation. The decision to start up a parent cooperative preschool was quite easy for them to take. With a clear idea of what type of childcare they wanted, the parents and board/staff together created the opportunity to run the preschool in the area. All who were involved in the formation of the preschool are unanimous when they say: without personal commitment and dedication, this preschool couldn't be possible! The progress and fate of a preschool is dependent on the number of children registered. Following a period with few children registered, the business has developed positively in more recent years and started presenting positive results.

At the beginning, in 2003 they started with 10 children and the number of children has increased slowly. Today the school has 20 children at the day-care and an additional 10 older children arriving from school in the afternoon.



Photo 1.2.1



Photo 1.2.2



Photo 1.2.3

1.2.1. The start-up process.

Key questions, group discussion

- Who we are (presentation)
- Who will be involved?
- Who will be the members?
- Who wants to be a part of the planning process?

Key outcomes:

- An idea of the vision "a member owned day-care centre in our village". Do we have the same vision?
- The objects of the organisation
- Mission statement – principles of the organisation

To work through:

- Stakeholder analysis
- Public information meetings
- Visioning exercise with whole group (use external facilitator!)
- Legal form of the day-care centre and simply governance guide
- Contact with public authorities and future relationships with the community
- Make a SWOT-analysis
- How can the start-up process be divided into different work areas?
- Who is going to take responsibility for which area? Divide the group into different working groups. Have in mind that the process has to take time, don't rush!
- Set the timeline from start to end.
- Do you need any help in this part of the process?

Start to work with the business model:

- What is your product or service; is there a demand for it?
- Exactly what do you want to do and how?
- Who are your customers and will they pay?
- What is your business model?

Finance

- Where is the money and where does it come from? Public contribution, member's contribution, others?
- Do we need money to start up the business?
- Start to work with your business plan (finance section)

Structure for the organisation

- How are we going to run this organisation?
- What are we going to do with any profit?
- How do people join and leave the organisation?
- Answers to the above will allow you to decide:
- What are our options for the legal form for our enterprise?
- What is the most appropriate legal form for our enterprise?

Registration

- Legal structure – start the registration process
- Membership agreements (if necessary) between the organisation and its members (in terms of services, commitment, responsibility, fees etc.)
- Do we need more people and at what point(s) in the process should we involve more people?
- How to recruit new members?
- Managing expectations of members?

1.3. Core business model

Children are different and therefore require different forms of childcare

In order to start an independent day-care the municipality must give authorization. The staff must have suitable education or experience so they can offer good care and educational activities for the children.

Being a member of Vilske Kleva parent's cooperatives makes the parent a part of a creative force and an important part of a democratic society. They build the Community together as they strive to make everything work. This cooperation provides a social network that both parents and children can enjoy for a long time.

The distance between words and action is short at the Preschool Klinten, but it requires that members express opinions and are willing to be part of the implementation. Through an active membership they can influence the activities of the preschool.

Required labour input primarily has economic reasons, and there is a certain possibility to choose the labour input based on a family's opportunities. Most of the parents clean the premises (rolling schedule about 4 times per year); they can also choose whether to shop, cook, do laundry, work in the children's group, and/or be a board member. The labour input provides a good staff density during the day as well as increases the sense of ownership and responsibility for the preschool. However, parents do not replace the work and responsibility of the educated personnel; they complement the activities at the preschool. Adults and children get together one day each term to work on changes and improvements in the outdoor or indoor environment.

The board has several long-term areas of responsibility to the public authorities, the finances, marketing, and responsibility as an employer. Every new Member-family has a mentor family to answer questions and help find an assignment that fits well. The mentor family helps for a year.



Photo 1.3.1



Photo 1.3.2

1.3.1. The Preschool Klinten, their own presentation on how they work

The pedagogy of Klinten is characterized by creativity and the use of all of the senses to explore and discover. The children attend an age-integrated group where each child, along with others, learns and develops at his/her own pace, on his/her own terms.

The pedagogy is inspired by, among others, Fröbel (Friedrich Fröbel was the son of a vicar and lived between 1782 and 1852 in the former Prussia) and his thoughts on the importance of play for children's development. Through play, children process experiences and thoughts. During play, children can also practice their social skills, such as communication, conflict, and cooperation. Play is children's way of life, and children need a lot of time to play. The school therefore believes it is important to give children the time to play in an adult's proximity, without being interrupted.

The school's three main themes are nature, culture, and environment. This focus is reflected in the children being outside a lot in the forest, where children can express their creativity and their need to move. Being outdoors stimulates children's senses, which deepens the experiences and learning.

The activities stimulate children to develop, within many different forms of expression, such as singing, rhythm, dance, drama, and creative activities. Each child's imagination and creativity develop through these activities, as do pleasure and pride in their skills. Children use some digital devices such as cameras and iPads to experiment and communicate thoughts, phenomena, and knowledge. It is important to give children all the possible tools and knowledge for the future.

Different forms of expression, such as singing, rhythm, dance, creativity, and drama got more focus in the activities during 2015. For example, the children get assistance to dramatize different activities that they took part in and then reflect on what happened at least once a week.

The preschool is Green Flag-certified, which means that the leaders and teachers work actively with environmental and health issues together with the children to promote a sustainable lifestyle. Our approach is thematic so that the children can follow the main theme of our business. During the school year in 2015, the organization continued to work on its outdoor and nature profile by developing outdoor activities for children. The staff actively works with the children every day to create a stimulating and varied outdoor stay where their curiosity and discoveries are the basis for the activities



Photo 1.3.3



Photo 1.3.4

1.3.2. An ordinary day at the preschool

Breakfast

Most of the breakfasts are eaten indoors. Often with lit candles on the table for the children to have a peaceful and harmonious start of the day. The breakfast varies between different types of porridge, yoghurt, and eggs. They also serve homemade bread. Every week the children bake the bread together with an educator.

Being outside

Every week they have at least one full day when all activities after the breakfast are carried outdoors. These days the children often go on excursions in the neighbourhood, where they can explore nature and wildlife. They can also spend time in the fantastic outdoor courtyard, where they play, climb, run, and examine everything that nature has to offer.

Assembling and pause

Two days a week the staff gather the children in small groups based on each child's development and interests to pursue topics involving the Swedish language, language development, and mathematics. Other days include shared gatherings to strengthen team spirit. Then it's singing, rhythm, movement, and science experiments.

Lunch

The lunch is eaten outdoors all summer. During the winter, when small hands quickly get cold, we eat lunch indoors. The food is cooked outdoors over an open fire, during the days that we are outdoors. The food eaten at Klinten is mostly organic and locally produced.

Rest

When the lunch is finished, the younger children sleep outside in their carriages, all year around. The older children can meanwhile participate in any activity, such as massage or reading together with an educator.

Snacks

Snacks are often eaten outdoors, and during that time the children reflect on what has happened during the day. The school bus arrives in the afternoon to drop off the older children. After the snack, they have time to relax on an excursion in the woods, or to play with their siblings and other friends at the preschool.



Photo 1.3.5



Photo 1.3.6

1.4. Institutional/governance structure

Vilske Kleva is a cooperative formed by parents and the legal form is economic association. Today the preschool has 15 members =1 member/family. The staffs are not members of the cooperative.

According to the statutes, in order to have a child in the preschool, a parent has to be a member of the cooperative—and the membership automatically ends when the child leaves the preschool.

The municipality is not involved in decision-making and is not a member of the Board.

The Board members consist of the parents of the children who attend the preschool. They also live in the local area, and therefore the local foundation was established. In a small village, cooperation is important, and everyone knows each other. Their cooperation benefits the local community, and this cooperation also benefits the children. In this way, the democratic process is put into practice!

The cooperative also act as an employer and therefore they have clear positions of responsibility and routines for everything. The Preschool's CEO participates in all Board meetings in order to be able to initiate and participate in the decisions.

The economic association is the best legal choice, designed for people who want to work together, to meet everyone's needs and engagement in an open, democratic environment. The cooperative model offers a proven legal framework for governing collective decision-making and for protecting everyone's interests.

Whether the business is operating as a limited company or as a cooperative is of no significance. The choice of mode of operation is mainly of ideological nature and does not affect the everyday life of children in any way.

1.5. External relations

For each child the school receives a contribution (public funding), which depends on the age of the child. The same conditions apply to independent childcare and municipal childcare.

The day-care centre has very good relations with Falköping Municipality and collaborates with producers who can supply them with organic and / or locally produced products.

The independent preschools have a national network for lobbying, knowledge and experience exchange, and additional training opportunities. They also participate in the programs that the authorities offer as applicable to all preschools in the country. All staff has their union membership in the Teachers' Union or Kommunal (the Swedish Municipal Workers' Union).

The preschool is a member of The Co-operative Employers' Association, the employers' organization of Swedish co-operative and popular-movement-owned enterprisers.

1.6. Economic data

The preschool obtains grants from the municipality, which means small differences over time.

| Assets | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Capital | 24307 € | 70769 € | 83460 € |
| Turnover | 147346 € | 154875 € | 158101 € |
| Profit/loss | 10863 € | 17208 € | 7421 € |

Current maximum fee/child/month, full-time childcare is 1200 SEK (128 Euro)

- Assets 776 000 SEK (83 000Euro)
- Capital 650 000 SEK (70 000 Euro)
- Turnover/sales 1,4 million SEK (140 000 Euro)
- Profit (last year) 70 000 SEK (7 500 Euro)

Every penny of the profits (if there is any profit) is reinvested and goes directly into the business. Both the municipality and the members are entitled to have insight in the preschool economy.

- Members `capital contribution: 200 SEK (21 Euro)
- Actual membership fee: 300 SEK/year (32 Euro)

Parents have a number of working hours they must fulfil, distributed throughout the year. The organization also receives donations from parents and relatives, such as toys, extra clothing, etc.

1.7. Policy environment

Applying Cooperative in a company, it is not a business enterprise in the Swedish law.

There is no corporation, partnership or business association, but there is a way to organize and run the company. A cooperative enterprise can be owned by individuals / people, companies and associations in various combinations.

1.7.1. Valuations

Cooperative enterprises are based on the values of self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, democracy, equality, justice and solidarity. Ethical values are also important in the cooperative. The cooperative principles are guidelines for how a cooperative can put values into action.

1.7.2. Economic association is most common

A cooperative business can be operated in the type of business anywhere but the most common are economic association. In a cooperative, there are at least three people, companies and / or compounds which together are shareholders / members. Enterprises shape is designed to fit cooperatives. It makes it possible to both grow and shrink the number of its shareholders / members quickly and easily. An economic association also enables all who are shareholders / members of the company that have the same influence.

1.7.2.1. *Economic association*

An economic association is formed by a minimum of three members. The association is created to enable members to benefit financially from the association's operations, which may – for example – involve producing or trading goods or services. Every member normally has a vote at the general meetings of the association. It is usually said that associations are based on democracy, commitment and responsibility.

Every member pays a contribution and usually an annual membership fee. The association itself decides how large the contribution should be. Members are not personally liable for the association's debts and other commitments in excess of their contribution. However, those who are members of the Board can be held personally liable if they mismanage their assignment.

An economic association must be registered with the Swedish Companies Registration Office before it can start its business. Members of the association start the association and write the association's regulations. The economic association will be given a registration number when it registers with the Swedish Companies Registration Office. Economic association names are protected throughout Sweden. An economic association must have an auditor. The auditor of smaller economic associations does not need to be an approved or authorised public accountant. It suffices if he or she is competent for the assignment.

1.7.3. Shared responsibility in prosperity and adversity

In a cooperative, each owner / member has equal power, and should have an equal exchange with each other. The strength of the cooperative is that more people shares the responsibilities and difficulties as well as the success. No one can gain an advantage by investing more. Instead, the focus is on democracy and the enjoyment of the work.

1.7.4. Companions Agreement

A partnership agreement may be good to have, depending on the activity and legal form the members choose. The agreement is tailored to a member's particular business and creates conditions for how the member will act when unexpected events occur that may affect the business. Partnership agreements regulates how wages are paid, how decisions are made and what happens if someone leaves the company.

1.7.5. Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education and the Education Administration is the government body that is ultimately responsible for childcare. The Childcare is governed by the Education Act (formerly the Social Services Act) and the State is responsible for the overall goals and guidelines, but it is the municipalities that are responsible for implementation.

The quality and safety shall be maintained at the same level as that of corresponding municipal childcare. The operators must also be familiar with the governing documents for childcare, preschool curriculum, and general areas of operation.

1.7.6. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate inspects schools and assesses applications to run an independent school. Citizens can also turn to the Swedish Schools Inspectorate if they think that a school has done something wrong.

The activities of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate consist of several different facets. The overall objective is to help engender good education in a safe environment.

It is the principal organizer of a school, a municipality, or the operator of an independent school that is responsible for its quality and results. The role of the Swedish Schools Inspectorate is to monitor and inspect. In connection with these supervisory and quality auditing activities, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate provides advice and guidance as to what a school needs to rectify on the basis of the requirements of legislation.

1.7.7. Regular supervision

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate conducts regular supervision of all municipal and independent schools, from pre-school to adult education. Activities are inspected on a number of points. Any decision states in which areas a school is failing to meet national requirements. At a seminar with those responsible from the municipality and school, the people concerned discuss the areas where improvements are needed.

The Swedish Schools Inspectorate may make use of penalties and apply pressure so that a principal organizer rectifies its activities. If the principal organizer does not take action or seriously disregards its obligations, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate may decide to impose a conditional fine or measures at the principal organizer's expense. In the case of an independent school, its license to operate may be revoked.

1.7.8. Quality audits

Quality audits deal with well-defined areas, for example a special matter or problem area within the school. Every school inspected receives a decision about what it needs to develop and improve in that area. The experience that is gained and the good examples are summarized in a joint report, which other schools will also find instructive.

1.7.9. Licenses and applications

A license is necessary to be allowed to start or extend an independent school. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate makes decisions about these licenses and also follows up to make sure that the school work in accordance with the license conditions. The Swedish Schools Inspectorate also receives applications from schools, independent as well as municipal, which want to conduct some of their lessons in English, operate compulsory school education without applying the timetable, or implement proficiency testing from year 4.

2. Section 2: Analysis of the case

2.1. Impact analysis

The cooperative has an important role in society because it allows people, and families with children in particular, to continue to live in rural areas.

Many small villages suffer from depopulation; rural store is closed down and then the school; and result will be that people move away from the area. It is therefore essential to keep the nursery! Of course, preschool is vulnerable because it is dependent on public subsidies and families with children who choose to have their children in daycare. It is essential to maintain their special educational focus to provide an alternative to other daycare in the area. Good relationship with the local population is also essential and makes everyone feel responsible for their preschool regardless of whether they have children there or not. It was the desire to work together and create something in common that made daycare center became possible; the democratic way of working and commitment among members is something they constantly work to maintain and strengthen.

Public support for school/child care is regulated by law, there is no indication that it will disappear. It can of course be changed, which is difficult to predict but the daycare remains as long as a sufficient number of children is continuing to get there.

2.2. Looking towards the future

The activities in a small village are vulnerable. As children grow up and enter school, it is important that new children come to the day-care centre. On the other hand, if the preschool has a good reputation and is liked, new families will become established in the area.

The possibilities and the conditions for preschools to continue their activities with official support may suddenly be changed by political decisions.

Preschools powered cooperatively (economic associations) reinvest their profit to develop their business, which is not the case with many other private schools.

Additional material

www.forskolanklinten.se

Glossary

Childcare vouchers

Municipal grants accompany every child no matter what kind of childcare the parents choose, municipal or private. The childcare voucher is valid for approved pre-school childcare and educational care.

The model of resource allocation

There is a regulatory framework for the distribution of tax money to the different preschool activities within the municipality.

Parents pay a fee for having their children within the childcare system. It works as a subscription; parents pay for the location, not the number of hours the child is there. The fee is based on the parents' income and there is a limit that specifies the maximum fee allowed.

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