



# - The Näktergal Project in Växjö 2009 – 2016

## Report

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**Report: Anja Kraus, Linnæus University, Sweden, Oct. 2016**  
(on the basis of the report of Henrik Nilsson, February 2013)

## Introduction

Näktergal is a mentoring project, designed in the first hand by Carina Sild Lönroth as its executive manager. Students from the university work as mentors for such children in the age of 8-12 who are regarded as non-affine to higher education. Aiming at the development of a child's wish to participate in higher education in the long run, during eight months the mentor meets the child once a week for 2-3 hours and for mutual enjoyment, and learning. Näktergal leaves the planning of the activities to the participants; it provides for an organizational structure (management of the bookings, the matchings and evaluation, meetings, training for the mentors, certification and evaluation).

One can read at the public homepage (see: <http://Naktergalmentoring.org/>) that the Näktergal project started at Malmö University in 1997 and today concerns 25 universities in 7 countries, one in Africa (Uganda), 6 in Europe (Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Norway and Iceland), whereas altogether 5 universities and colleges in Sweden are, or have been involved, such as Malmö, Växjö, Kristianstad, Halmstad, Karlstad. More than 3.500 children and mentors have participated only in the project in Malmö.

Näktergal invites a broad range of general aims, in particular to:

- establish a European forum in order to facilitate cooperation between the participants and the work with mentoring;
- exchange experience;
- improve the general quality of mentoring;
- provide a context which will elucidate the cooperation between universities and local schools throughout Europe;
- offer the members a consistent set of quality standards by certification; to create a collection of relevant data for future research;
- quality ensure the concept.

Seen from this wide perspective, the project is concerned with following-up inclusive undertakings in a multicultural society in general, respectively worldwide, as well as serving the interest in the pedagogical framing of a development of students towards profession in Europe and in Uganda. The main idea behind that is to balance out and work for a recruitment of certain social groups to university and, at the same time, to contribute to the understanding of the social and cultural differences that arise in the relationship between a pupil and her/his mentor. The differences between the both sides are seen as advantages, “[...] as the whole idea was to get to see the other person as an individual and not as a spokesman for a particular group, religion or ethnic identity.” (Sild Lönroth 2007, 5). The focus is thus on impartial mentorship for children who do not have an affinity for higher education, seen as individuals. They shall get supported in developing their positive attitude towards higher education.

In practical regards there is a tendency in Näktergal to cipher out those who do not have an affinity for higher education in terms of being underprivileged and having a migration background. As this opens up for interpretation and belonging to a minority culture does thus not mean automatically being underprivileged and far from higher education, this aspect has been ciphered out differently at the different project locations. In Växjö, the affinity to higher

education in terms of being underprivileged was ciphered out in terms of statistical data on the neighborhood of choice.

Anyway, Näktergal is designed as organizationally framing intercultural learning in a mutual, balanced and equitable relationship between a supposedly highly educated adult and a child who does not yet have a positive attitude towards higher education. As I understand Sild Lönroth, the participants shall be supported in their transcultural learning. 'Trans'-cultural refers to a learning 'across' or 'beyond' cultures, whereas 'culture' is not automatically limited to ethnicity or nationality, but also includes different education.

The intercultural perspective can be found in the Swedish government's integration policy (Regeringens proposition 1997/98: 16). First designed as the idea of integration on a local level, in the recent years the intercultural perspective has been transformed more in favor of quantifiable structural integration, such as school eligibility, labor participation, and the number of income and support (Regeringskansliet, 2009, 2012b). At the same time, the local level of state politics has been politically strengthened. Analogously, there is an intercultural perspective in the policies on the local level (Växjö municipality, 2010), that come to power in the Näktergal project. Nonetheless, in the structural perspective the bidirectional effect of respect, tolerance and understanding between different social groups is not any more stressed, which is the central pedagogical, local aim of Näktergal. Thus, the potential of Näktergal can be seen in terms of a development of policies in the direction of the transcultural perspective as more fitting to the principle of equality than the intercultural perspective. We will come back to that. However, in government politics social integration on the local level is not forgotten; Framtidskommissionen (2012) writes: "A central question for the future deals with the social cohesion and the need for a shared system of values. Most people agree that is important to have a high degree of social cohesion and that, in order to keep society together, at least to a certain degree there should be a shared system of values. The notions of social cohesion and of a shared system of values are both difficult to define. Further, our knowledge about what forms and influences - or also challenges or dangers - the social cohesion and the shared system of values is rather underdeveloped" (Regeringen 2012a, preface). One can say that the most central challenge for an advanced and future-oriented society is here expressed in a quite challenging way.

### **Näktergal Project in Växjö**

In 2009 the project was introduced in Växjö, first as a three-years cooperation between Växjö municipality and Växjö University. The organization is formally divided into a steering committee with representatives from the university and the commune, as well as a management group consisting of school staff and project management. In the case of Växjö, the steering committee right from the start of the project consisted of the deputy president, the head of the board office, a student representative, a headmaster of each school, the project coordinators and an evaluation officer (co-opted). The cooperating schools help the project coordinators with the applications and in terms of ciphering out the prospects of a successful matching of the mentor and the child. The coordinator and leader also provide guidance and training in order to support the university students in mentoring. After 2012, the project was

prolonged for another three years. In 2015 it phased out, because the Växjö municipality decided not to finance it any longer.

## **Reports of the Näktergal Project in Växjö**

Näktergal is one of many grass-root initiatives that aim at contributing to this political aim. In the previous reports on the project, the aim of Näktergal has been ciphered out as to improve the socio-symbolic integration of children in order to increase their possibility of structural integration. “Socio-symbolic integration” is the theoretical framework in the reports of the Näktergal Project in Växjö. Socio-symbolic integration is drawn back to social attitudes of individuals and involves attitudinal as well as emotional integration (cf. Trondman, Lund & Lund 2011; Voyer 2013). First of all, social-symbolic integration deals with the change of the social attitudes that are regarded as negative for the social integration of children and young people. Näktergal aims at developing reflexivity among its participants and at their personal development. On the one hand, more individual-centric capabilities are in the focus like the development of self-confidence that can be decisive in life transitions, for example, when somebody decides to go to college and university. On the other hand, it strives for the development of the social and sociocultural skills of all its participants. There is research that accordingly shows that the ability to plan, initiate, and to pursue started things, independence and social skills, beside cognitive abilities play an important role in the development of self-esteem and in carrier planning (Duckworth, 2009). All the evaluation reports on the Näktergal project in Växjö focus on socio-symbolic integration as a pedagogical aim of the project, that is to say, on the experiences of the mentors and the children, and not on the more general and international aims of the project. Evaluations on the local level took place 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2013 and they refer to the mentors’ monthly and year reports, as well as to the questionnaires and interviews with the children participated, and with their parents. The data is analyzed in terms of the hypothesis that in the frame of Näktergal the children, as well as their mentors, especially the children with support from their mentors are in an open, pleasing and appealing way encouraged social, empathetic and cultural competences as well as a positive self-image. Many student mentors themselves have a foreign background, and they may have undertaken a trip to a foreign world by starting to study at the university. The reports focus the general acceptance of the project, and not on transcultural knowledge and learning.

The results of the evaluations can be seen as all over positive and that the project reached the aim. The participating children and their mentors obviously built up near relations and the experiences they shared were giving them a lot. The mentors mention rather deep insights into the children’s lives. They speak of a tacit knowledge they attained and they report that they widened their empathy for children in general, as well as their understanding for different social and cultural backgrounds. Also the children in the interviews express their contentment with the mentors; they speak e.g. of experiences they would not have had without the project. In some cases their mentor became a model for the child. Their parents affirmed the general impression that the children were glad about their mentors and the activities with them. As also the schools profited, one can say, that all the participating groups have shown all over satisfaction with the project.

There are slight differences between the information we get from the data. While the first evaluations of the project focused on the acceptance and the quality of the relationship between mentor and child, later also some of the aims of the Näktergal were discussed in terms of their use for society, and regarding the method for evaluation. Then, the different dimensions of the project like its topic, organization, processes and relations of mentors and children have been further discussed in terms of their influences on the evaluation results.

However, it must be said restrictively that the data does not allow for judging on the degree of the attainment of the goal of developing self-confidence in terms of being able to take responsibility, develop social bonds and transcultural competences, and be successful in school and society as well as in further career. As the oldest children participating in the project's first year have reached only 18 years at the project's conclusion, there is no possibility to account for their attitudes to education in the future.

This report will deal with the conditions for the Näktergal in Växjö (2009-2016) first, that is to say with the procedures, the very circumstances, the number of recruited mentors and children, and the years they ended their cooperation. As the data was already given and only part-wise scientifically developed, for the years 2013-2016 the procedures, methods and results from the evaluation in the year 2013 can only be reported and somewhat completed. The results of the interviews with the children and their parents and the questionnaires, the annual reports of the mentors, the analyses of the ethical dimensions of the project as well as its very circumstances are unfolded. The general impression that the project is well-done will thus in the following be evolved in terms of more specific qualities. In the end, the idea of Näktergal will be discussed out of a broader social perspective. By interpreting its aims an idea of the evaluation is sketched.

In the following, the material and the ideal conditions of Näktergal in Växjö are described.

## **The Setting of Näktergal**

From 2009 to 2015, every year about 20 students from the university in Växjö, first Växjö universitet, later Linnéuniversitetet, worked as mentors for children between the ages of 8-12 years. In 2010, Växjö universitet together with Kalmar College became Linnéuniversitetet and since then the university structures changed a lot. A similar development is true for the first cooperating school. In the first two years pupils from Bokelundskolan in Växjö/Araby<sup>1</sup> participated in Näktergal. This school in 2013 became Centrumskolan. Three more schools, Ulriksbergskola, Växjö Islamiska skola and Pilbäckskola, have been added, all of them situated nearby Växjö/Araby. During the time of the project there has been a quite significant increase of multiculturality in Swedish schools in general.

When the project started as a 3-years-cooperation between the Växjö municipality and, at this time, Växjö universitet, it was organised by Nämndskansliet at Växjö Universitet. Since 2012 the faculties carried out the economics for the part of the university (Dnr: LNU 2012/199). There is a 50% to 50% financing model by the municipalities and the university; In 2012 – 2015, also Svedbank has been attracted to finance the project part-wise. The project has been

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<sup>1</sup> Växjö/Araby is one of the 53 "particular deprived area in Sweden" ("mest utsatta områdena i Sverige"), here at place nr.7. With "particular deprived area" means an area with such a high criminality rate that it requires efforts of all authorities in terms of solving the different kinds of social problems.

evaluated regularly. This report is the last one, and it is based on the results from other evaluations. As already pointed out, there has not yet been the possibility for the author to collect new data, and not either to evaluate the degree of recruitment of certain social groups to university. Thus, the evaluations of the Väjö Näktergal project focus merely on its pedagogical aim, and even only on one of its two parts. So does also this report. The evaluation aims at providing guidance concerning the project's acceptance among the participants addressed by it (mentors, children, parents). Besides, some non-systematic hints are given in terms of the project's contribution in increasing the self-esteem of the children and in promoting the understanding of social and cultural differences between the participating children and their mentors from their perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of the parents.

### **Analytical Perspective on the Aims of the Mentor Project**

The aims of Näktergal concern different levels of social integration that are connected to each other. First of all, the project combines social welfare with scientific research on mentoring and provides a scientifically backed further development of this important educational field that until today is rather shadowy and thus a kind of informal education. In special, the project provides data about mentoring of underprivileged children. This is, generally seen, true for three levels (cp. <http://nightingalementoring.org>):

1. On the international level, the cooperation between universities and local schools throughout especially European countries shall be elucidated in terms of the cooperation between the participants, the mentoring and the certification. On this level and on the
2. national level, the aims are to collect data for scientific aims and to offer a consistent set of quality standards.
3. In terms of the local pedagogical aims the project is directed to social integration; this is
  - 3.1 on the one hand ciphered out in terms of the structural aim of a skewed recruitment to academic education.
  - 3.2 On the other hand the project focuses on the pedagogical aim of a sociocultural sensitive framing and development of habits and emotions of the participants in terms of increasing understanding, respect and tolerance between individuals and social groups.

As already pointed out, this report deals with the pedagogical aim of the Näktergal, which at the same time is the aim of its concept, you can also read at the project's homepage:

“During recent years, the question of social and ethnic diversity has come sharply into focus. In order to improve diversity in universities there is a need to recruit students from cultures and societies where there is little or no tradition of children being involved in higher education studies. The Nightingale Mentoring concept is one effective instrument that, in the long run, can help to redress what is at the moment a major imbalance in our society.” (see: [http://nightingalementoring.org/?page\\_id=2](http://nightingalementoring.org/?page_id=2))

The idea is that the mentor gives the mentor child a positive role model by establishing a personal relationship with him or her. This in turn shall help to strengthen the child's personal and social confidence. The goal is that the child will perform better in school and in private and will be more likely to apply for university when the time comes. The concept is based on the idea of 'mutual benefit' – benefit for both child and student.

The vision of the Nightingale Mentoring concept is to work towards greater multicultural and ethnic diversity within society's institutions. The overall aspiration is that mentor children are able to make marked progress both inside and outside of school and that a broader range of young adults will apply for university or college.

The aim is that children:

- Through a relationship with an adult, gain new experience and knowledge.
- Will receive an adult role model – a student at a University.
- Will improve their self-confidence.

The aim is that mentors:

- Will be an adult role model in a close relationship with a child.
- Gain an insight into a child's life (and family), an increased knowledge, understanding and empathy for people who lead lives completely different to their own. This, in turn, will prove to be an asset as they continue their higher education courses and then in their subsequent professional careers.”

While the structural and local integration in the sector of education is manifested in the number of young people studying for higher education and thus is easily measurable, it is much more difficult to grasp the preconditions of these numbers. Näktergal aims at changing these preconditions in order to improve the countable results. The results of the evaluation can thus serve to investigate also the preconditions of educational success in general.

By mentoring as a social setting, habits and emotions of the participants shall be developed in terms of increasing understanding, respect and tolerance between individuals and social groups; the project combines this attitudinal and emotional development with structural integration. The results of the evaluation of its pedagogical aim could thus in terms of the other aims of the Nightingale project provide for sustainability on a more general and overall political level. However, it is up to another report to figure this aspect out.

Out of a theoretical perspective and thus precisely seen, the social scenario of this project is quite complex: supposedly, the attitudes of the participating children towards education is not just influenced by their being part of a marginalized social group, but also by their parents' knowledge of school subjects and their own experiences of school. Furthermore, the way teachers in school are used to pass on knowledge and interact with the pupils is in a specific way cultural. There is a specific way to talk with pupils and expect specific responses that are not always consistent with that of the child's family and culture (Broady, 2007). When teachers do not get the response they expect from a pupil, it is possible that they lose interest and motivation to help him/her, especially if combined with the majority's general doubts about schooling and schools in multicultural neighborhoods (Bunar, 2009). However, attitudes and expectations can be erratic on both sides. To meet on this base is not always easy. There are different forms of education, certainly also in non-academic families. One should differentiate them. A child's sociocultural environment does not exactly predict his/her school

career, and prejudices about schools in multicultural neighborhoods should not dominate realism. There is moreover an urgent need that the relationships between teachers and pupils are redefined in terms of all social opportunities again and again. Both teachers and students have to get the opportunity to re-evaluate each other (Holm & Öhrn, 2007), not only cognitively, but also emotionally. Both have to learn to cope with the challenges connected to the tasks of social inclusion. The aim of Näktergal is that the child, in a first step, internalizes beliefs and identifies him-/herself with a community with positive attitudes and feelings towards education (Willis, 1983). For this, the mentor needs to fuse his/her own cultural background with that of the child. That means also that the child must to some extent be made a part of a university student group that is regarded as a community with positive attitudes and feelings towards education. Only then can the child get the *'it could be me who is studying at the university'* - imagination.

This aim can be ciphered out in terms of transcultural knowledge and learning; A paradigm shift from an intercultural to a transcultural perspective can be described as it follows: The intercultural idea of an the interaction between two or more social groups, mostly ciphered out as belonging to different ethnic groups, as well as in terms of high and low culture, minority and majority culture, is replaced by a transcultural idea. Then, the concept of culture as a “[...] learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affect the behavior of a relatively large group of people“ (Lustig & Koester 2006, p.25) gives the way for a more heterogenous idea of culture: „Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. [...] Henceforward there is no longer anything absolutely foreign. [...] We are cultural hybrids. [...] Of course, a cultural identity of this type is not to be equated with national identity” (Welsch 1999). One not any more strives at culture as “[...] a structured environment within which a population can function” (Thomas 2010, p.19), but at general anthropological topics and challenges (Domenig 2007).

Seen practically, Näktergal aims at avoiding social asymmetries by helping increase the children's agency. Therefore, the mentor-project should not be confused with formal education such as help with school-homework, or other issues that create different status. Furthermore, the mentor is intended as a positive example of sociocultural inclusion and therefore mediating an integration-oriented model of higher education. S/he shall develop social trust that helps the child to get the orientation that is requested for social commitment. This puts high demands on the mentor. The precondition for this mental project on his/her side is first of all the ability of empathy and role-taking. That means to see, or to learn to imagine how another person (with another sociocultural background) would respond to a certain situation. Through empathy and role-taking s/he can use this ability like an internal regulator and guide in order to be able to shape up the own behavior constantly (Stensaasen & Sletta, 1997, p.90). Empathetic ability is not always innate, and in any case it needs stimulation. Living in partially different sociocultural environments means not automatically to come in contact with each other. Hospitality, if there is any, may even be only superficial and inauthentic. Such play-acting that characterizes the beginning of certainly most non-formal social contacts should be successively replaced by genuine interest in the other person (cp. Alexander, 2011).

However, realistically seen, the burden of social segregation will forever lie especially on marginalized young people who may very well meet these complications every day in their life. They will never forget the mere factum.



Resilience counts as the profound strategy from the side of the marginalized. Resilience is defined as an individual's ability to successfully adapt to life tasks and cope with them in the face of social disadvantage or highly adverse conditions (cf. Klohn 1996). It is the ability to bounce back from a negative experience with competent functioning. Resilience is not a rare ability; in reality, it is found in the average individual. It can be learned and developed by virtually anyone. Resilience names a process, rather than describing a character or personality. It is a process of individuation through a structured system with gradual and individually practicable discovery of personal and unique abilities. The most important precondition for resilience is an optimistic attitude and positive emotionality. Negative emotions have to be effectively balanced with positive ones. Outer circumstances such as social contacts contribute to resilient behavior. Furthermore, resilience is not innate but trained. It can be built up within a continuous and reliant responsive relationship to a competent adult. Furthermore, the socially marginalized certainly already developed coping strategies, and resilience. Many of these coping strategies (formation of gangs etc.) might be suboptimal in social regards. Then, they need help with changing their behavior. Vice versa, university students must have a sound knowledge of social environments and integrative strategies, and they have to be able to use it in a transcultural way. The aim of Näktergal is to find common activities and contents for the mentor and the child that can function as the opportunity to develop the capacities, as well as functioning as a lubricant in the relation between mentor and child.

Näktergal refers to the analysis of the socially inappropriate model of a skewed recruiting to universities by starting from the hypothesis that a more equal recruiting system cannot become reality, if the groups who are currently dominating education neither react to, nor understand the inequality within educational systems. It is the existing power structures that are supposed to create a lack of agency on the side of those who do not belong to the ruling social groups. There is not least a controversy about the degree of teachers' autonomy. Apple (2007) describes teacher autonomy shifting from licensed to regulated, and according to Lundström (2015) teachers are expected to adjust to the scope of action given to them (cp. also Wermke & Salokangas 2016). Lack of agency creates a feeling of meaninglessness and social exclusion that may influence the attitude towards education and possible career paths. Lack of agency in this sense is a social problem. In practice it is moreover performed on the individual level in terms of missing self-esteem, as a feeling of not-belonging and marginalization. There is a need to contribute with all means to reverse these consequences on a most of all emotional level. In order to work against social marginalization, e.g. skewed recruiting to higher education, agency has to be strengthened on both sides, on the side of the educated and of those dominating education, and on the side of the newcomers. The building up of relationships between the think tanks of education, the main society and the socially marginalized groups seems as a probate means for this. Especially, dense contact between representatives of higher education and underprivileged children can be seen as an ideal precondition for supporting the children and gradually developing their confident and affirmative relation to education. Structurally given asymmetrical social situations like the ones in school should then be avoided as much as possible. The requested contact should moreover be based on voluntary participation and distant from formal education such as the teacher-student relationship that is structured by the school's mission (Hernandez de Anda, 2001). Näktergal starts from the hypothesis, that only if a child feels trust and solidarity with

his/her mentor on the said basis, s/he can imagine her-/himself advancing in society, e.g. studying at college or university. Putting up a mere series of activities is not enough. As already pointed out, first of all, the child needs feedback, and the continuous experience that the mentor is genuinely interested in his/her personality.

Regarding skewed recruitment to college and university in Sweden, there are some statistics available, especially when it comes to the progress of children whose parents are low educated. General quantitative data on structural integration on the national and on the local level in Sweden is provided by Universitetskanslersämbetet och Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB): According to their latest report (2014-12-18) in 2013/14 the number of beginners under 35 years with educated parents (that is to say parents who at least spent 3 years of studies after the gymnasium) is highest in the fields of higher education (38 %). Even if there is tendency that the numbers go down, this still counts as socially skewed recruiting to the Swedish academic education. In terms of the academic background in the families of the university students, there is a variation in the diverse colleges/universities from 30 % at the Högskolan Väst up to 73 % at the Handelshögskolan in Stockholm. There also some significant differences between the diverse study programs in the distribution according to the educational level of parents. The largest part of educated parents (66%) is found in the study programs of the medical doctors and of architects. In other academic educations, the distribution according to the educational level of the parents is more alike that of the general population.

Education depends on the fact that “educationally intended action must be convincing” (Kraus, 2016 p.31). Education is only then successful, if it becomes self-education and lifelong learning. Higher education is a possibility to prolong education in a formal way and, when it comes to professional qualification and reflected citizenship, it is also an important means of structural integration. Higher education is, however, voluntary. Therefore there must be a will of prolonging education formed out by the individuals. All social relations first of all include shared values and devaluations. The social upbringing environment largely shapes the schooling of children and young people, as children usually identify rather easily and immediately with adults or older persons who are caring and responsive towards their needs, desires and utterings, whoever and however this is proceeding. Their socio-symbolic integration obviously sounds in their sense of belonging; Furrer & Skinner (2003, p.148) state that “[...] a sense of belonging may function as a motivating resource when children are confronted with challenges and difficulties”. In social relations there is a continuous balancing out of the common values and claims, such as education, with the very interests of the individuals. The patterns of this balance differ a lot from one social group to the other. It is self-understanding that in underprivileged social groups the balancing of values is different from that in social groups that always and continuously profit from society. This quite realistic, principal and persistent anticipation of failure may be one reason for the tendency of underprivileged people to devaluate education. If the attitudes of the young towards school in home and in the wider social environment do not match the expectations at school, there is a high risk that they even develop an anti-school behavior. - An often quoted research survey (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004) shows that school motivation consists of two dimensions: firstly, the children are supposed to be engaged in activities that are knowledgeable and social. Secondly, their emotional engagement in relations to teachers, classmates, as well as their knowledge of school should be confident and affirmative. Also

cognitive engagement including reflection and motivation to understand complex subjects, contexts and ideas is important.

By making it possible for the child to identify with a representative of the socio-culturally successful, that is to say, with a studied mentor, Näktergal provides for the chance to help the child to imagine and to develop his/her expectations towards his/her own future in accordance with this role-model. Already small children need to feel attitudinally and emotionally welcome in the context of education. A central precondition for their integration is that they get a chance to develop positive relations to school and society in general. There also can be a necessity of a change in the attitude of some pupils who are already in an early age on their way to develop an anti-school behavior. The project aims at strengthening the general competences of the children in terms of forming a basis for creating an image of the college and university before their eyes and enabling them to imagine themselves studying. Emotional engagement may mean that the child identifies with school, education, with the teachers and, in our case, with his/her mentor. The cognitive engagement is not just about intelligence, but also about the abilities of self-regulated learning strategies including belief in oneself, self-discipline, the ability to listen to what others say, to cooperate in a planned activity, but, above all, not to give up in spite of failures. Duckworth (2009) points out that these abilities allow children to be successful at school in spite of other adverse factors. Children who can rely on another person who helps them get along with specific challenges and difficulties in a knowing, flexible and constructive way can learn to do this him-/herself more easily than children without such a resource.

Grander & Sild Lönroth (2011) propose the use of theory of Buber for the evaluation of Näktergal. Buber describes dialogic relationship between two persons as a deep recognition for each other. According to Grander & Sild Lönroth's (2011 p.19) interpretation of Buber it is not enough to "share the other's perspective, but also to know and develop empathy". This means in practice that the mentor needs not only to pay attention to what the child says, but also to take body language, mimics and gestures into account. "The approach represents Buber; the teacher should not strive to anything specific, but should be open to spend time with the child, interacting with him/her, approaching the child by entering into relationships, listening and affirming the child", write Grander & Sild Lönroth (2011 p.20).

### **The Social Background of the Children Participating in Näktergal Växjö**

Students from the university work as mentors for children in the age of 8-12 whose being underprivileged has been ciphered out as underprivileged area of origin.

### **District and Schools of the Children**

Araby is situated north of the center of Växjö. It was built in the years 1963-1972 in a very fast tact (even up to two houses per month). The district consists of Araby, Dalbo and Nydala, there is an area of detached houses and another one with apartment houses. Since the 1970s there was hardly any construction activity, but in the 1980s there was some completion in

Täljstenen and Dalbo centrum. There were also some modernizations. Today there are 2 466 apartments in the district and all of them are rent apartments. In the last years, very few new apartments have been built, except for one bigger project of social housing (bostadsrätthus with 16 floors). Since 2007, a campaign for development formed Arabyparken to a social meeting area with possibilities for diverse sports and other activities, as well as diverse support agencies are financed. - Some numbers about the social situation in Araby (SCB) at the state of the start of the project:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Araby</b>		<b>Växjö city</b>
Inhabitants, total number	5 960 (2010)		61 197 (2010)
Aged 5-14 (%)	723 (2010)		8929 (2010)
Migrant background (%)	30,6 (2010)		18,6 (2010)
Working population (%)	45,7 (2010)		76,8 (2010)
Female (%)	50 (2010)		77,9 (2010)
Male (%)	48,8 (2010)		75,6 (2010)
<b>Qualification Araby 2010</b>	Female	Male	Both
Gymnasium (%)	52,2	54,1	53,3
University or alike (%)	89,7	68	79,6

The population of Araby is comparatively young. Many of the youngsters and young adults are unemployed, and/or not educated. While in 2010 the population in Araby was 5739 inhabitants, in the beginning of 2015 it was already 6477 inhabitants. Within only five years the population in this district has increased by more than 10%. Facing low construction activity, the already cramped conditions of housing have increased, and this certainly has negative consequences for social integration, also for the children's efforts (like homework). There is a very high unemployment (only 45,7 % working population in Araby, compared with 76,8 % in all Växjö). A great part of the inhabitants of Araby are recipients of benefits from the state (försörjningsstöd or bistånd). The percentage of inhabitants with a migration background increased from 30,6 % in 2010 to 38,6 % in 2015. The education level of the population of Araby has decreased 2015, compared with 2010. - Some numbers about the social situation in Araby (SCB) in 2014/5 (there is no latter data available):

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Araby</b>		<b>Växjö city</b>
Inhabitants, total number	6510 (2015)		65 383 (2015)
Aged 5-14 (%)	877 (2015)		10 430 (2015)
Migrant background (%)	38,6 (2015)		21,1 (2014)
Working population (%)	50,7 (2014)		77,3 (2014)
Female (%)	56 (2014)		78,3 (2014)
Male (%)	44,7 (2014)		76,2 (2014)

<b>Qualification Araby 2015</b>	Female	Male	Both
Gymnasium (%)	51,2	50	50,7
University or alike (%)	....	57,1	73

Bokelund, now Centrumskolan, is situated in central Araby; in the year 2009 it covered preschool to 6th grade. In 2009 there were about 200 pupils, 90% of them were not born in Sweden. In the years 2009-2012, there were severe problems in terms of cognitive efforts of the 3rd and 5th graders.<sup>2</sup> In 2013, because of these school results and a significant decrease of the numbers of registration, Bokelund was restructured and became Centrumskolan. In the years 2011-2012 three more schools were included to Näktergal: Ulriksbergskola, Växjö Islamic School and Pilbäckskolan. In the year 2009 Ulriksbergskola had 271 students, Pilbäckskola 360 students and Växjö Islamic School around 120 students (Växjö Municipality, 2009). In terms of student composition, the Bokelundskola the Växjö Islamic School have similar preconditions. All the students at Växjö Islamic school are either born abroad or born in Sweden to parents who immigrated. However, the number of different nationalities is less at Islamic schools than at Bokelundskola. At Ulriksbergskola one third of children have a foreign background. The number is slightly higher in the lower age groups. The pupil composition of Pilbäckskolan is similar to that of the Ulriksbergskola. However, the parents' general socio-economic background as well as the cognitive results of the pupils at Ulriksbergskola and Pilbäckskolan differ quite significantly from the ones at Bokelundskola.<sup>3</sup> This can be read as a sign not to overestimate the migration factor in terms of social inclusion when it comes to school results and economic welfare. However it is an open question, how far social cohesion and a shared system of values are reached. There is certainly a need to work on these aims. This is a good reason for not to restrict the Näktergal project to the *poor and uneducated migrants*, which in itself prolongs a bias (see above). Whereas in Norway, the school staff selects the children who are in need of a mentor and only children from minority backgrounds are taken under consideration and there is a limited recruitment of mentors to the socially oriented programs at colleges and universities around Norway (cf. Bakketeig, Backe-Hansen, Seeberg, Solberg & Patras, 2011), Näktergal in Växjö as well as in Malmö is more open for all children as well as for other students than student teachers to apply for becoming a mentor (Grander & Sild Lönroth, 2011; Rubinstein Reich, 2001). The evaluation of the mentor project in Norway focused thus mainly on the extent to

<sup>2</sup> In the year 2008/2009 a 2/3 of the 3rd graders did not reach the goals for the subjects Swedish and English. In the 5th grade it was 1/4 in Swedish and 1/3 in English, 1/8 in Mathematics. 90 % of the pupils in the primary schools in the Växjö municipality reached the goals in these three subjects. 2010/2011 1/3 of the 3rd graders did not reach the goals for the subjects Swedish as Second Language and Mathematics in the Bokelundskolan. In the 5th grade it was about 50 % of the pupils that did not reach the goals for the subjects Swedish and Mathematics. In Swedish about 5/3 did not reach the goals. However, the kids like their school (see Bokelundskolans kvalitetsredovisning, 2010-2011; see: <http://www.vaxjo.se/upload/Grundskolor/Bokelundskolan/kvalitetsredovisning%202010-11%5b1%5d.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> At Ulriksbergskola, more than three-quarters of the students in grade 3 and 5 who studied Swedish as a Second Language approved in Swedish. 90% of the students with Swedish as Mother Tongue approved (Ulriksbergskola quality report, 2010-2011). Pilbäckskolan shows similar results in their knowledge assessments (Pilbäckskolans quality report, 2010-2011).

which the project managed to compensate for weaknesses in the Norwegian language and in the social and emotional development linked to the home. The mutual way to consider mentoring in Sweden differs somewhat from what the responsible of N aktergal in Norway have chosen to emphasize (cf. Bakketeig, Backe-Hansen, Seeberg, Solberg & Patras, 2011).

## **Empirical Study**

The author of this report did not have any influence on the data collection. This report is more or less only a copy and completion of the empirical study by Henrik Nilsson in 2013. The methods, research setting, the results, as well as the quotations are taken from his study, added is some information from latter data, collected by the local project leader. All the data is case studies that do not allow for generalizations.

## **Method**

In terms of the evaluation of the mentoring project, different data has been used according to the different methods for evaluation used during the time of the project. The data was collected according to the ethical principles of the Swedish vetenskapsrådet (2011). The mentors' and childrens' impressions are analyzed. In addition, an inventory of formal activities carried out during the mentoring year and the resources for them is made. To learn about the mentoring project also the formal content project leader and coordinator have been interviewed and analyzed. Also, individual and group interviews with the children and their parents were held only in the first three years. In 2015 there were interviews with a group of children. However, the interviews, according to Nilsson 2013, are the most giving source for analysis and evaluation. Included in the assessment base are the questionnaires the mentors have completed each year. Their annual reports of the project are studied, in which they reflected the activities in the year and the training they received within the project. In the first and in the second year, the children were interviewed in focus groups. In the third year they were interviewed together with their parents.

To repeat it again, the study focuses mostly on general acceptance as well as on the pedagogical aim of the project to contribute to an understanding of social and cultural differences between the pupils and their mentors in order to balance out and work for a recruitment of certain social groups to university. Differences between the two groups are seen as advantages by acknowledging the other person as an individual and not as a spokesman for a particular group, religion or ethnic identity (see above). Accordingly, in 2008 the Växjö University and the Växjö Municipality agreed on the following purposes and objectives of the project specified for the mentor and for the children. The general idea is that the friendship between the child and the mentor will lead to...

...better understanding, respect and tolerance for mentors and children and the mentors through their mentoring to counter distorted recruitment in colleges and universities, and thereby contribute to a leveling of social and educational differences.

The mentors are offered the possibilities to...

...be an adult role model in a close relationship with a child;

...acquire insights into a child's life (and family) and knowledge, understanding and empathy for different social living conditions, that is a "knowledge that cannot be read to."

In terms of the children, the project aims to...

- ...provide the opportunity for them to create good self-esteem;
- ...provide an exemplary adult role model for them;
- ...give them new experiences and skills in a relationship with a university student;

An evidence for the mentor's contribution to the resilience of a child is, for example, that s/he writes about her/his experiences and reflect in them by also relating them to the own education career. The general aim of a development of mutual understanding, respect and tolerance is operated by two aims: the mentor providing for a good adult role model and acquiring knowledge of the children's and young peoples' diverse upbringing situations. Furthermore, children apply for academic education on the ground of good self-esteem. As there are no scale and no limit for the development of tolerance and understanding and the degree of tolerance and understanding between people and between people and the structures in a society are not measurable, it is tricky to interpret development and change at an individual and at a social level. However, it is possible to investigate the hints of changes in the attitudes of the participants in compliance with the objectives of the project. If it comes e.g. to the project aim that the mentor shall get an idea of the child's (family) life, a proof for a meeting of this target is, for example, that the mentor, being involved in their daily chores, has some knowledge about the family and the child. The mentors show different degrees of reflection, self-awareness, and the ability to empathize with the child's world. If the children describe their experiences in a differentiated and successively reflected way, this is also a sign for reaching the project's aim of mutual understanding and development of self-confidence in the academic culture that up to today is mostly ruled by skills in reflective writing. One can thus assume that the participants, the mentors as well as the children, developed competent functioning, when they joyfully and ardently report what they have experienced together.

There is the following matrix for assessment (see Nilsson 2013):

Aims	Commentary
The mentor had and took the opportunity to serve as a role model for the child	
The mentor got an idea about the child's (family) life and thus an increased knowledge, understanding and empathy for different life conditions.	
The mentor got a complement to his/her university education; "knowledge that cannot be read to."	
The child had chances to build up good self-esteem	
The child accepted the adult role model	
The child made new experiences and knowledge with (academic) culture	
The contact between the child and the mentor had led to a deeper understanding, respect and tolerance for the different social and cultural backgrounds.	
The children's experiences contribute to their wish to study at university. The university and their possible career has been shown to them by the mentor.	



The child developed social competences in terms of taking responsibility and planned future-oriented activities in their freetime.	
The child shows a positive attitude towards learning.	
The child is seen as an individual, not as representing a particular group, religion or ethnic identity.	

The questions follow the goals of the Växjö-project and do not take the details into consideration that have been unfolded only theoretically. It is certainly necessary to also refer to theory in the empirical study and to develop additional criteria for evidence in terms of the goals of understanding, tolerance and respect on both sides. Therefore, these goals will be spelled out again later on the ground of the evidence obtained in the research, notably in terms of school success, again.

### **Results of the Näktergal Project in Växjö**

The result will be presented first of all on the ground of the interviews in the first years and of the annual reports written by the mentors. Besides, there will be an organization description and statistics on the proportion of mentors who participated over the years. The official mentor year runs from October to May. The project established the following routines for planning.

#### **Routines**

March / April - June

Recruitment of the mentors, children and parents apply for the project.

August - September

Interviews with children in groups and selection of children, information meetings with parents and children, matching children - mentor. Mentors get a contract. Mentor training I and II

October

Mentors and children meet for the first time, after that: weekly meetings (until next May).

November - December

Mentors receive mandatory individual tutoring by the project leader and coordinator

January – April

Mentor training III and mandatory individual supervision

May

Finale

Generally, there was a high throughput.

## Throughput Mentors

Essentially, the university students who applied and were matched with the children came from different, mostly socially oriented study programs. The majority of the mentors are in the age of 20 to 25 years. The proportion of men has been about 10% -15%. The number of mentors who cancelled their participation has become something more in-line with the total number of admissions that continuously increased, excepting the years 2010-2011. Just over a third of the interruptions during the years 2010-2011 and (highest in) 2011-2012 have been due to the child and the family; usually the reason for this was that the child preferred other activities. In two cases the child lost interest. The reason for a single dropout was that in this case the relationship between the child / family and mentor did not work. Other irregularities came up due to private circumstances of the mentor; in five cases the mentor quit due to lack of time or for other personal reasons. Reasons for the quite high dropout-rate in 2016 were in three cases the dropout or a lack of time on the side of the child, one student moved away from Växjö. In two cases the mentors had personal problems. The mentors who did not complete their mentoring did not get any fee and certification.

Table 1 Mentors in 2009-2010

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
09-10	64	23	21	2	19 mentors, 16 female and 3 male

Table 2 Mentors in 2010-2011

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
10-11	34	23	23	5	18 mentors, all female

Table 3 Mentors in 2011-2012

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
11-12	70	36	36	7	29 mentors, 26 female and 3 male

Table 4 Mentors in 2012-2013

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
12-13	47	22	22	0	22 mentors, 19 female and 3 male

Table 5 Mentors in 2013-2014

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
13-14	37	25	25	1	24 mentors, 21 female and 3 male

Table 6 Mentors in 2014-2015

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
14-15	56	20	20	1	19 mentors, 17 female and 2 male

Table 7 Mentors in 2015-2016

Year	Interviews & reports	Accepted kids	Begun	Dropouts	Finished
15-16	31	24	24	7	17 mentors, 16 female and 1 male

### Throughput Children

The number of the children from Ulriksbergskola is the largest, followed by Pilbäckskolan, Bokelundskola and Växjö Islamic School. The number of children from Bokelundskola decreased compared to the large proportion of the children in the beginning.

Table 4 Children, distribution of schools

School	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Bokelund/Centrumskolan	21	23	8	4	9	5	7
Växjö Islamiska skola			3	2	2	3	5
Pilbäckskolan			12	11	11	8	10
Ulriksbergskolan			13	5	3	2	2

### The Mentors' Responses to the Questionnaires and Interviews

The questionnaire the mentors got each year mainly focuses on the percentages of satisfaction with the project and its goals. Moreover, two-thirds of the mentors are very satisfied and one third of them are satisfied with their relationship to the child. In terms of their general contribution as mentors to the aims of the project, most of the mentors are very satisfied and/or

happy. In terms of the degree to which they believe that their participation in the Näktergal has affected the children's self-confidence, until 2013 one-third responds *little* and two-thirds *very little*. When it comes to the children's social development/maturation, about half of the mentors in 2013 estimate the influence of their participation as high, and half of them think that it had only a little impact. It may seem paradoxical that two-thirds of the mentors are very pleased with their work, while half of them do not think that they have sufficient influence on the children's self-confidence and social development at all. The reason for this seems to be the time-factor ("...see each other more often"<sup>4</sup>). However, there are some contrasts in the interviews and the diaries about how the mentors think about how the children develop their social skills and self-confidence. However, they seem to have experienced a good success overall. In terms of school work the mentors during the whole project 2009-2016 believe that their participation had little or no impact at all on the formal learning of the kids. Some mentors diligently describe their relationship to *their* child and how it changed over time. They describe the challenges to plan activities, to deal with emotional problems and to reach the aims of the project as not difficult or even easy for them. In the questionnaire mentors also were asked about how they experienced the individual and group supervision the Näktergal has offered. There is an overall high or very high satisfaction. Generally seen, the answers do not significantly differ from one year to another.

When it comes to the interviews and year reports of the mentors, they surprisingly, first of all, reflect upon their own expectations and learning in the relationship to the child respectively on their own profits and efforts being a mentor for a child. They speak about the circumstances of the meetings, the various activities and about their estimation of the contribution of Näktergal to the increase of agency on both sides, the self-esteem of the child, the social development and also how the child's affinity to formal learning has been affected. Furthermore, they write about the difficulties they experienced in determining meetings, in the planning of activities, in the management of requests and requirements and in emotional issues. Some of the results of the interviews will be presented in the following. There are chosen examples of significant statements, i.e. statements that are representative of the mentor group as a whole:

At the starting of the project, many mentors appear as quite careful, even insecure when assessing their own role in the development of their relationship to *their* child. They often speak of a *zone of convenience*<sup>5</sup> they had to overcome. The children are pointed out in terms of their great contribution to a positive development. Besides, the mentors indicate sensible matching as an important factor for a good relationship.

*"The matching was very good, many had this impression. There was not a too far distance between us, but we had similar interests."*<sup>6</sup>

Some of the mentors mention their nervousness and anxiety before the mentoring started, mostly in terms of the question of how to behave towards children. Some mentors seem to be afraid of making mistakes.

*"I was very glad, but however also very nervous."*<sup>7</sup>

*"I had some sort of respect for the children, who have become so big without me. It felt like*

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<sup>4</sup> "...ses lite mer."

<sup>5</sup> Bekvämlighetszone

<sup>6</sup> "Matchningen var väldigt bra gjord, det var det många som sa. Det blev ingen jättedistans mellan oss, utan vi hade liknande intressen."

<sup>7</sup> "...var jag väldigt men samtidigt väldigt nervös."

*the right thing to start with one child ... My hope was that this would contribute to building up my own self-confidence when it comes to the relationship to a child [...] but it feels very good that I can drop this now, you have to be so very careful, not make mistakes, you mostly need to be there, they have ideas themselves.”<sup>8</sup>*

However, the innocence that some of the mentors associated with children after a while seemed to disassemble. One mentor stresses the important role of being patient in the relationship to the child:

*“I have learned to be patient. It’s probably something I needed. God, I tested many times, especially in group activities when all the children rush at you together. You should respond to them. Yesterday I was put to the test. I would take them somewhere. Saying ‘come on’, however, it takes five, ten minutes, they will come later and say, I’ll just had to get something. ‘But please, I’ll be there, too, about one quarter,’ this is something I have learned.”<sup>9</sup>*

The mentors seem to have followed up also personal aims. First of all, to be child again and to be challenged by the high energetic level of children plays a central role in their statements.

*“It was funny to play games and be challenged. (...I learnt a lot from the child) whenever I feel lack of energy, I think of what A. [child..] would have done, but I realize immediately that he would have been active before even thinking about it. And this is something I have to learn.”<sup>10</sup>*

There are some proofs for misunderstandings of the children’s world. The mentors form an own opinion about *their* child, and standards are established. Some cultural differences lead to polarization. At times, also conflicts and differences between mentor and child come up. The mentor compares his/her own opinions, perceptions, attitudes to that of the child, for example, to be on time or to follow certain social expectations. It may turn out that the routines of a child do not match the mentors’ own practices. The mentors show also what they themselves expect. They thus place demands on the mentor-child-relationship. One mentor e.g. interprets the child’s behavior as sign for poverty, which could be a misinterpretation also.

*“When we were at the movies, she had prepared a bag of popcorn. There is also such an indication that they do not have as much money, as she took popcorn there. She took drinking there, she does not buy anything there, she brings it.”<sup>11</sup>*

Sometimes the mentors learnt to deal with their experiences. However, there are few mentors that express the reflexivity that the mentor does in the statement below. One mentor describes how she manages to balance one of her experiences with a child through her own experiences in childhood and expresses that she learnt something from that. Her means is openness to the social experience.

*“They were very short of money and you know what this can mean. I had to grow up early and take a lot of responsibility. It was very, I do not know how to describe. It was hard not to*

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<sup>8</sup> ”Jag hade sådär, någon sorts respekt för barnen, som blivit så stor för att jag inte jobbat med dem. Det kändes som en lagom grej att börja med ett barn så här... min förhoppning var att det skulle bygga på mitt självförtroende när det gällde relationen till barn [ ] men det känns väldigt bra att jag kan släppa det här med att barn, man ska vara så himla försiktig, inte göra fel, man mest behöver vara där, de hittar på grejer själva.”

<sup>9</sup> ”Jag har lärt mig bli tålmodig. Det är nog något jag har behövt. Gud vad jag testats många gånger speciellt i gruppaktiviteter där man ska få alla barn att de ska komma samtidigt. Man ska hämta dem. Igår sattes jag prov. Jag skulle hämta. Man kan säga ”kom nu”, så dröjer det fem, tio minuter, så kommer de sen och säger jag ska bara hämta det också. ”Men snälla jag ska vara där borta också, om en kvart”, det är något jag fått lära mig.”

<sup>10</sup> ”...var minst lika roligt att få leka och blir utmanad själv. [...] än jag känner att jag har lågt med energi undrar jag vad A. ha de gjort, men det slår mig lika snabbt att han hade redan varit iväg innan han ens tänkt den tanken. Och det är precis någonting som jag behöver öva på.”

<sup>11</sup> ”När vi varit på bio så har hon förberett en påse med popcorn. Det är också en sådan sak som indikerar att de inte har så mycket pengar eftersom hon har med sig popcorn dit. Hon har med sig dricka dit, hon köper inte där, hon tar med sig.”

*see oneself as someone who is in a similar situation. And it is a challenge to not project the way one thinks about some other's feelings because one feels in a certain way. I myself feel that this was very useful. Okay, we have this in common, but we are different people.*"<sup>12</sup>

The mentors primarily described what they did for activities with the children.

Many mentors dwell on success and failure when it comes to the motivating of the children. The first two years there are not as many mentors who report that they have been at the home of the child's family as in 2011-2012. Significantly more mentors than before in their reports express that they had been at the homes of the children and had activities together. They also speak about the insight they got into the children's living conditions and everyday-life and the emotions evoked by these observations. When they got acquainted with the child's social environment, there were often observations that something that first appeared as strange became familiar to them. In one case, the mentor expresses that she was not used to be confirmed by foreign people in the street as the child's social environment greeted her. However, she testifies that a kind of affinity with the child and the social environment of the child was built up after a puzzling situation. The mentor began to discover that the child's social environment contributed in social ties.

*"Above all, I think it has been exciting to be out with n.n. in Araby and to see the atmosphere among the children in the area. It is very open and all the children play together, and when I have been out with n.n. he greets everyone so happy for me and many ask who you are and what you do."*<sup>13</sup>

It is important to realize that the own behavior and person serves as a role model. If the mentor unilaterally attributes him-/herself to be the one who knows better, there is the risk that the relationship does not develop, and that a hermetic identity gets fixed. Then, the child certainly will not identify with the mentor and with studying at university or college.

*"It is easy to take just what you get, what you are defined as. And then you really need role models and that is what is so very good with the project. It is among the most important things, just to make contact with another world, otherwise it will take a little longer, or you not at all get the possibility."*<sup>14</sup>

As most of the mentors had ideas about pedagogy, they also spoke about pedagogical theories that have been either difficult to translate into practice or these theories created even some uncertainty in terms of approaching child.

In the following, the mentors' statements are systematized and qualitatively interpreted in relation to the objectives of the project by Henrik Nilsson (2013). In the left column the performance goals for the project are reported. In the right column, the fulfillment or failure of these goals are discussed.

Aims	Proof	Interpretation
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<sup>12</sup> *"De hade dåligt med pengar och du visste vad det kan innebära. Jag fick växa upp tidigt och ta mycket ansvar. Det var väldigt, jag vet inte hur jag ska beskriva. Det är svårt att inte se sig själv i någon som har det på ett liknande sätt. Och det är en utmaning att inte projicera så som man tror att någon annan känner för att man känner på ett visst sätt. I mig själv kan jag känna att det var väldigt nyttigt. Okej vi har det här gemensamt men vi är olika personer."*

<sup>13</sup> *Framförallt tycker jag det har varit spännande att vara ute hos n.n. på Araby och sett hur klimatet bland barnen i området är. Den är väldigt öppen och alla barn leker med varandra och när jag har varit ute och gått med n.n. hälsar alla så glatt på mig och många frågar vem man är och vad man gör."*

<sup>14</sup> *Det är lätt att ta det man får, det man blir definierad som, och då behöver man verkligen förebilder och det är det som är så himla bra med projektet. Det är bland de viktigaste sakerna, just det att man får kontakt med en annan värld, annars tar det lite längre tid, eller så får man det inte alls."*

<p>The mentor had and took the opportunity to serve as a role model for the child</p>	<p><i>"N.n. would have wanted me to become a Muslim so that we can be together in paradise. Sometimes he felt sad and when I asked what it was, he was thoughtful about death and what will happen to me when I die."</i><sup>15</sup></p> <p><i>"I have experienced... we talked about things that I myself remember that I wished I could ask an adult about when I was that age, but something one usually does not want to discuss with the own parents. Issues related to the body and love and friendships"</i><sup>16</sup></p>	<p>The mentors express that they got an even higher significance for the children than just serving as a role-model. Beside the religious dimension also other existential topics came up, like love and friendship. Another mentor speaks about problems of the child, when leaving.</p>
	<p><i>"I have learned that it is important to always be on time and to keep a good contact with parents, if something unexpected happens. This is especially important when it comes to children, one needs to keep one's promises."</i><sup>17</sup></p> <p><i>"To devote three hours a week to a child felt at first like an easy thing to plan, but I have learned that much more is required. To meet the kid, and leave, plan activities, to suit the time-schedule, to let it be on the child's conditions."</i><sup>18</sup></p> <p><i>"I got to see how she lives and she saw how I live, it's different to grow up in a city than in the country as I have done, there are completely different possibilities."</i><sup>19</sup></p> <p><i>"Sometimes I thought that it was difficult to approach n.n., but my opinion now is that that was more about the fact that I put n.n. into an unfamiliar situation."</i><sup>20</sup></p> <p><i>"To communicate with people with Swedish as a second language set higher demands on me."</i><sup>21</sup></p>	<p>Several mentors say that the responsibility for the child make them to organize and structure the time they spend with him/her. There are also examples of more abstract knowledge. The mentors say, for example, that they developed skills of more understanding-oriented character. There are quite a few examples of mentors who reflect on their own way of being and how this affects the child's development.</p>
<p>The mentor got an idea</p>	<p><i>"We have visited the campus and universities. I showed the school, the university, library and the</i></p>	<p>The mentors perceived a significant difference</p>

<sup>15</sup> "NN har velat att jag ska bli muslim så att vi kan vara i paradiset tillsammans. Han har ibland varit ledsen och när jag har frågat vad det är, så funderar han på döden och vad som kommer att hända med mig när jag dör."

<sup>16</sup> "jag har... upplevt att vi kunnat samtala om saker som jag själv minns att man önskade att man kunde fråga en vuxen om när man var i den åldern, men som man inte ville diskutera med sina föräldrar. Frågor som rör kroppen och kärlek och kompisrelationer."

<sup>17</sup> "Jag har lärt mig att det är viktigt att alltid vara i tid och att hålla en god kontakt med föräldrarna om något oväntat händer. Det är extra viktigt när man har med barn att göra, man måste hålla vad man lovat."

<sup>18</sup> "att ägna tre timmar i veckan till att umgås med mentorsbarnet kändes till en början som en lätt sak att planera in, men jag har lärt mig att det är så mycket mer som krävs. Att hämta, och lämna, planera in vad vi skulle göra, att få det planerade att passa till bådars schema, att låta det vara på barnets villkor."

<sup>19</sup> "jag har fått ser hur hon bor och hon har sett hur jag bor, det är annorlunda att växa upp i en stad jämfört med på landet so m jag gjort, det finns helt andra möjligheter."

<sup>20</sup> "ibland har jag tyckt att det varit svårt att nå fram till n.n., men min uppfattning är att detta mer handlar om att jag satt n.n. i en ovan situation."

<sup>21</sup> "att kommunicera med människor som har svenska som andraspråk har ställt högre krav på mig."



<p>about the child's (family) life and thus an increased knowledge, understanding and empathy for different life conditions.</p> <p>The mentor got a complement to his/her university education; "knowledge that cannot be read to."</p>	<p><i>castle, which he thought was great fun and he had great interest in studying at the University.</i>"<sup>22</sup></p> <p><i>"She and her family are not often in town and she had never taken the bus to the university... to be one of her few Swedish contacts has been important to me and to be able to answer questions about things she wondered about such as for ex. how to get a driving license or access to universities. She has learnt a lot by having taken the bus herself."</i><sup>23</sup></p> <p><i>"Her Swedish developed, she learnt to go by bus all alone., she has learnt about the significance of coming in time and try out new things."</i><sup>24</sup></p>	<p>between the children with educated parents and children from parents without higher education in terms of their affinity to university and higher education.</p>
<p>The child had chances to build up good self-esteem</p>	<p><i>"I have received n.n. to understand that you are not pushing others ... interrupting others."</i><sup>25</sup></p> <p><i>"N.n. has begun to take more responsibility and he has become more confident and open to making contact with new people."</i><sup>26</sup></p> <p><i>"N.n. as taken the step to begin with floorball. It feels like he sees more opportunities now than before and I managed to get him to realize that it is not too difficult to implement."</i></p>	<p>The major objective includes many qualities and these can be difficult to track the material. The mentors are more likely to reflect on their own learning than the child. A mentor says that it has been difficult to follow the recommendations not to be educators. Maybe you need the purpose of the mentor-role tinted slightly, because some mentors interpret friendship and pedagogy as forming out opposite roles.</p>

<sup>22</sup> "vi har besökt campus och universitet. Jag har visat skolan, universitetsbiblioteket och slottet, vilket han tyckte var jättekul och han har visat stort intresse för att plugga på universitet."

<sup>23</sup> "hon och hennes familj är inte så ofta i stan och hon hade heller aldrig åkt buss till universitetet... att få vara en av hennes få svenska kontakter har varit viktigt för mig och att också kunna svara på frågor om saker som hon undrar över t.ex. hur man tar körkort eller om universitet. hon har utvecklats jättemycket genom att hon har åkt buss själv."

<sup>24</sup> "Hennes svenska har utvecklats, hon har lärt sig att åka buss själv, hon har lärt sig vikten att passa tider och fått prova nya saker."

<sup>25</sup> "jag har fått n.n. att förstå att man inte knuffar andra... avbryter andra."

<sup>26</sup> "N.n. har börjat ta mer ansvar och han har blivit mer säker och öppen till att ta kontakt med nya människor."



## **The Mentors' Experiences with Näktergal**

All the mentors regarded their experiences in mentoring as significant. This is true especially for mentors who were students in the fields of health care, in social services and education. Mentors from other study programs state that they attained general knowledge. Many mentors also say that it feels good to have been able to help, to get an idea about sociocultural differences and to understand estrangements that occur in transcultural relationships better. In terms of these, they seem to have got some practical knowledge mostly about other religions, festivities and family models. Some mentors express that they learned about what it means to grow up in multicultural neighborhoods and how the material living conditions are connected to social and cultural integration. There is also some evidence that students with a non-Swedish background deliberately use their broad experiences with transcultural relationships. One mentor with a foreign background had a mentor child from a merely Swedish middle-class family. Although this combination was not expected so, the mentor describes his mentorship as giving in terms of the project's aims.

Knowledge of transcultural nature can deepen an interpersonal relationship. However, there are also examples of warm and strong relationships in which the cultural origins of the children and the mentors have been more disparate and have not been bridged by transcultural knowledge. For some of the mentors it was surprising and irritating that, since 2011, children with socio-economically mixed living conditions were involved. At the same time they regard this as a positive development. Obviously, the sociocultural sensitive framing and development of habits and emotions of the participants in terms of increasing understanding, respect and tolerance between individuals and social groups has been realized. However, there is a lack of more profound data on how this was the case.

## **The Children's Experiences with Näktergal**

In the first two years the interviews were conducted in the group of children from Bokelundskola. In 2011-2012, all participating children were interviewed together with their parents. The children also received a questionnaire that consisted of five general subject areas with a number of contention with three possible answers related to each of these areas (see annex 2). Quotations from the interviews in 2015 with groups of children are marked out with: (2015). A change of the spokesperson is marked out with a dash (-).

In the first year, the questionnaires were sent home to the children. The response rate was low as only a quarter of the children responded. In the second year, the survey took place at the schools of the children, some questions were also asked directly to the children. Nearly all children replied to the questionnaire. In the third year the children were interviewed together with their parents with also the questionnaire that addressed both of them; five parents were interviewed. With over a third the response rate was slightly higher in the survey in the second year than in the first year. As the number of surveys is few and not representative of every year, there is no possibility to make comparisons between the years. All the children recount a large amount of activities. While the younger children mostly report what they have done, the older children were also able to express some of their feelings connected to the

mentor project as a whole.

Thinking back to the mentor year, two-thirds of the kids express that they are very satisfied and one-third of them are satisfied. In terms of their experiences with the different activities the responses are more diverse. The most common activities are, in descending order, swimming, bowling, cinema, Leo's Playland, to be together with other mentors and participating children, to visit the theater and to go on picnics. Also, the answers to the question about what they have learnt from their mentors differ. However, there are some periodic patterns. A large group claims that they did some of the activities related to the hobbies and interests of their mentor, as for example, to take care of dogs or to go to university, learn to swim under water, dive and jump off the trampoline, to be out and not sit at home all the time. Another group of children say that they learned something they previously did not do, for example: to meet students, visit the Teleborg Castle, visit the university and see the mentor's apartment. A third of the children relate to other children, one said for example that it is good to get to know others and dare to undertake things with them. Most of the children are very satisfied, or satisfied with how it worked to find dates for meetings and activities. Whereas in the beginning it seems to have been the mentor who suggested the meetings and activities, just over half say that after a while, they planned together and both came up with proposals. The children's wishes seem to have been recognized and most of their suggestions were followed up. A few children do not assert that, others say that only the mentor promised an activity. Overall, the children see their experiences as valuable, especially when showcasing their world to the mentors, and when inviting them. Some children express that some of the activities were new to them. When asked what they think that the mentors learned from them and their families many children answer that the mentor learnt a few words in their native language, s/he learnt to cook dishes from their homeland, s/he experienced aspects of their religion, and the mentor got to know where their family came from, why they left their homeland and how they came to Sweden.

*"We drank coffee, watched movies, we sang. I was more at home with her, went to the castle."*<sup>27</sup>

*"I think I've been very happy with my mentor. We did different things and funny things."*<sup>28</sup>

*"I have been with my mentor and baked, watched movies, been at Evedal, Teleborg Castle, Kronoberg Castle and at the university."*<sup>29</sup>

*"The last meeting was most fun. You know, we have two blogs, we did video posts, so we kind of played instead, we played teenieboppers, filming everything with her camera and had coffee indoors, we had a blanket and put it out at her, I had the Sprite, wine grapes and olives."*<sup>30</sup>

Mostly playing activities facilitate communication and the good communication seems to have been orchestrated by mentors' ability to approach the children in a playful way. Many of the mentors tell me that they became children again. To the question of the interviewer about who decided on the activities a child says:

*"It was the children, no, it was together. If both of them thought that it was boring at the*

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<sup>27</sup> "Vi fikade, tittade på filmer; vi sjöng. Jag var mer hemma hos henne, gick till slottet."

<sup>28</sup> "Jag tycker att jag har varit mycket nöjd med min mentor. Vi gjorde olika saker och roliga saker."

<sup>29</sup> "Jag har varit med min mentor och bakat, kollat på film, varit på Evedal, Teleborgs slott, Kronoberg-slottet och universitetet."

<sup>30</sup> "Sista gången var roligast. För du vet att vi två bloggar, vi gjorde videoinlägg, så vi typ lekte istället, vi lekte fjortisar, filmade in allt med hennes kamera och fikade inomhus, vi hade filt och la ut den hemma hos henne, jag hade med sprite, vin-druvor och oliver."

*bowling hall we found something else together.*”<sup>31</sup>

Friedrich Schiller (1795) writes: “Man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays.” There are some hints in the interviews with the mentors that playing was not only unconscious, but in some parts even a conscious approach to the children. The mentors obviously involved the children into the planning, and they got them to try out new things and activities. There are clear hints that building up an authentic relationship was possible for them through this. As Näktergal does not submit certain activities, it just provides for organizational structures that are supposed to hold. This seems to have had good effects on the development of experiencing transcultural togetherness as meaningful. The children practiced their social skills and they took initiative and expressed their own opinions. If there is a clear content and distinct objectives to discuss, a conversation may be guided by hidden hierarchy. As the mentors and the children are experts in their own living conditions, they obviously experienced equality and agency to learn from each other. Many children utter that it was good to have someone to talk to and several children point out that it was fun to be with an adult, also that their parents do not always have the opportunity or time for common undertakings.

*“They did things with us. Take us to the town that other adults do not do. I cannot go there now, they say. They (the mentors) did everything.”*<sup>32</sup>

*“When we talked, it was fun.”*<sup>33</sup>

*“I liked that we were talking to each other.”*<sup>34</sup>

*“The mentor asked me what to do.”*<sup>35</sup>

The older children expressed that they in the project got the experience of a relationship with an adult that has been qualitatively different from their relationships to other adults.

*“One can learn from each other. You get to know a little more what it’s like to have your own apartment. The adult buddy you can talk with about world problems is not the usual, an adult friend is a little mischievous that and little in between.”*<sup>36</sup>

*“We talked about what I do in my leisure time, how it is at school and how I feel. It felt like a cousin. I could say everything. It was better than a friend. I cannot tell everything to a friend. You can trust adults.”*<sup>37</sup>

*“S/he is like a brother or sister. - Ja.”*<sup>38</sup> (2015)

To the question of the interviewer whether children learnt about adults’ lives and adults about children’s lives a child answers:

*“We talked about it too, that she had some difficulty in school and that it is quite difficult.”*<sup>39</sup>

There was some knowledge transfer regarding studying at the university also

*“My mentor studies for exams, very many. It is English books she reads. Do you know what she studies - Yes, psychologist. - Do you think it looks interesting. - Yes. - Have you thought*

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<sup>31</sup> “Det var barnen, nej det var tillsammans. Tyckte båda två att det var tråkigt på bowlinghallen hittade vi båda två något annat.”

<sup>32</sup> “Dom har gjort saker med oss. Ta oss med på stan som inte andra vuxna gör. Jag orkar inte gå dit nu” säger dom. Dom (mentorerna) gjorde allting gjorde olika saker och roliga saker.”

<sup>33</sup> “När vi pratade var det kul.”

<sup>34</sup> “Jag tycker om att vi pratade med varandra.”

<sup>35</sup> “Mentorn frågade mig om vad vi skulle göra.”

<sup>36</sup> “Man kan lära sig av varandra. Man får veta lite mer hur det är, att man har egen lägenhet. Den vuxna kompis kan man snacka med om världsproblem inte med vanliga, en vuxenkompis är lite busig det och lite mitt emellan.”

<sup>37</sup> “Vi pratade om vad jag gör på fritiden, hur det är skolan och hur jag mår. Det kändes som en kusin. Jag kunde säga allt. Det var bättre än en kompis. Kompisar kan man inte säga allting till. Vuxna kan man lita på.”

<sup>38</sup> “Hen känns som en syster eller bror. - Ja.”

<sup>39</sup> “Vi pratade om det också, att hon hade lite svårt i skolan och att det är rätt så svårt.”

*about becoming a psychologist - I do not know. It seems fun. - Do you know others what your mentors study? Teacher.”<sup>40</sup> (2015)*

*“Had you been to university before you met your mentor - Yes - No - It is much bigger than our school. I saw it - We were at the library. When we had a games evening, I got to see a little more. We looked at many houses. We explored. When we went to the library, it was huge and very many books - The stuffed animals are really scary. It was in vitrines. I was angry that they killed the birds - Would you go to college? - No, I'll go to basketball in Gothenburg - I will take a course in programming - It is difficult, I have not decided, architecture or nursing.”<sup>41</sup> (2015)*

The emotional base, expressed in friendship, admiration and respect, can create a sustainable closeness to education in general and to transcultural, also to general education topics in special. The children's self-image seems to have been strengthened by Näktergal, as they have been confirmed, listened to well known that the mentors shared their worries. The expectations differed at times and sometimes there seem to have been a lack of cultural knowledge on the side of the mentor.

## **The Parents' Experiences with Näktergal**

The interviews conducted before 2013 show that, with a few exceptions, parents and children had good experiences of the project. In the interviews, there are several utterings of the parents that their children became happier, more confident and responsible, that they improved their knowledge of the Swedish language and that they themselves started to reflect the future education of their child even more than before. It has also emerged that the parents had appreciated to talk with the mentors.

Many participating families come from another country; some have lived in Sweden for a long time and others have been relative newcomers. Their social and ethnic background varies. So also does the parents' knowledge about education. Some parents seem to have a greater need for information about education and to discuss the roles as a parent with other adults. Many of them seem not to spend enough time with their children. It is difficult to say, whether this refers to a lack of opportunity or to a lack of ability. Within the project most of the time was spent in just talking, baking, cooking, etc., so to say in everyday activities that have to be done anyway and actually do not cost any spare time. However, the mentors planned these activities and speak of complications. It is difficult to say whether there would be the same complications for the parents. However, the parents seem to be somewhat stuck. Some parents and children had demanded that they get at home by the mentor's car, a reduction of their independence which is certainly dependent on the child's age and the distance to be taken as well as the daytime.

This impression did not hold in the interviews with the parents of children who participated

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<sup>40</sup> *“Min mentor pluggar till tentor, jättemånga. Engelska böcker som hon läser. Vet du vad hon pluggar till. - Ja, psykolog. - Tycker du det verkar intressant. - Ja. - Har du funderat på att bli psykolog - Jag vet inte. Det verkar roligt. - Vet ni andra vad era mentorer pluggar till? Lärare.”*

<sup>41</sup> *“Hade ni varit på universitet innan ni träffade er mentor. - Ja. - Nej. - Det är mycket större än vår skola. Jag har tittat - Vi var på biblioteket. När vi hade spelkväll fick jag se lite mer. Vi tittade på många hus. Vi utforskade. När vi gick till biblioteket var det jättestort och jättemånga böcker. - De uppstoppade djuren är jätteläsiga. Det var typ glas. Jag blev arg för att dom dödat fåglarna. - Vill ni gå på universitet? - Nej, jag ska gå på basket i Göteborg. - Jag ska gå en kurs i programmering. - Det är svårt, jag har inte bestämt, det är arkitektur eller sjuksköterska.”*

in the mentoring year 2011-2012 - probably ought to the fact of a larger number of educated parents with a Swedish native background. However, in these cases other problems arose. The mentors complain that some parents tried to in a way control the (inter-) plays within the project. Then the goals of the project to let the children take over responsibility in planning and conducting activities together with an adult with another cultural background than the children themselves are not given room. The explicit goal of the project, that primarily the mentor and the child should plan activities together can serve as a certain hindrance to the interference from the side of the parents that has been overrun. The emphasis of the Näktergal project definitely lies in the development of an authentic relationship between the child and his/her mentor, and not on the carrying out of certain activities. However, it is also obvious that, generally, children as well as their parents have been satisfied with the activities, with the information and with the matching.

### **Summary of Conclusions and Discussion**

After describing the changes the project has been subject to, the social benefits of Näktergal will be discussed from an ethical perspective and its implications for transcultural mentoring of children in general.

### **Organizational Conditions and Procedural Success Factors**

The organization of Näktergal in Växjö has been developed during the first three years of the project based on the structure of Näktergal in Malmö. Näktergal in Malmö thus serves as the backbone of the project. It proposes clear working procedures for recruitment, matching, training, individual supervision and supervision in groups, and it provides for some common activities for the children and their mentors, as well as for continuous monitoring of the project in progress.

In general and in practical and operative regards, an important condition for a mentoring project to work is a well-functioning organization. The overall judgment in all reports is that Näktergal's organization fits well to its business. Näktergal is now based on over 20 years of experience in mentoring projects. Regarding Näktergal in Växjö some local adaptations and changes were made during the first three years. The organization is done by a steering committee with representatives from universities and community and business groups consisting of school staff and project management; activity coordinators provide guidance and training in order to support the mentor. In latter reports, the project manager and coordinator have been described as the hub of the organization's various parts; obviously the coordinators not only administer but also solve problems that arise. It was described that due to its good organization, the project was easily taken over by Linnaeus University from the Växjö University, especially when it came to the financing of Näktergal by the academic faculties, as the financial responsibility was allocated. The confidence shown by the faculties to finance the mentoring project for the university's behalf signifies a good management structure, as well as good a communication and information. The project management was the key player in

keeping the faculties informed. Apart from this, also the evaluation is important, as it can strengthen Näktergal not only in terms of organization and resources, but also in terms of the development of scientific research on mentoring. Besides, the coordinators obviously also have been good marketers of the project. Mentors, children and coordinators on several occasions appeared in the media. Näktergal in Växjö in public symbolizes welfare. In radio interviews, newspapers reports and in the local television a positive image has been conveyed. The positive stories have certainly contributed to a development of the project that gained a high status and became popular. It is said in the reports that especially the participating schools profited from the good image of Näktergal. This image could have been damaged, if a seeking child does not get a place. Were it to be too difficult to get a place, the number of applications could lead to Näktergal's reputation being deteriorated. This can be the case when more schools would be involved. Another factor that controls the number of places for the children's is the number of mentors. There was a continuous need to get students to apply for mentorship in order to ensure that all children who seek to participate get a mentor. Besides, the mentor must also match their needs, interests and must be able to develop their capabilities. The recruitment of students was hampered slightly in the period 2011-2012, then, the recruitment started later than planned due to the uncertainty about the project's extension. The recruitment of children has obviously not been a problem, as there was a mouth-to-mouth-recommendation by the parents. The newly added schools have also contributed to this development. There are also some reports about the project in the local media.

In order to strengthen the recruitment base, more sound knowledge about mentoring should be imparted and qualifications should be given. The mentors argue quite subjectively and there seems to be not a very sound common ground for the understanding of socio-symbolic integration as well as transcultural learning and knowledge in all its complexity. The rather poor data base can be interpreted as developmental needs in terms to make it more clear what it means to be a mentor. The strongest recruitment form is probably when students tell each other. Mentoring aiming at socio-symbolic integration and transcultural learning and knowledge and Näktergal could also be a topic of academic courses at the university. As learning, especially transcultural learning, does not always automatically happen, there should be a scientifically based quality development of the project.

However, seen out of the perspectives of the participants, good coordination seems to compensate the theoretical desiderata. The surveys show that the mentors are very well satisfied with the support they received from the coordinators; some mentors also in their diaries express how important supervision is. The tutorial has obviously helped them to manage practical difficulties in their being together with the children and their parents. Although the mentors seem not to have had acute problems, they appreciated the guidance, especially in the meeting with other mentors where they could share their experiences with them. They write that they therefore not feel alone with their concerns, getting also good advice from other mentors. Also the children and their parents describe the coordinator's work as both important and appreciated, especially in the recruitment and matching of mentors and children. The generally high throughput thus depends on a number of factors, and not just on a good matching. The organizational success factors can be considered as links in a chain. The foundation is the recruitment of mentors. The careful selection of mentors and children (proceeded by interviews, in which the motivation of the students was in the focus). In

principle, all children who have sought to be part of the project got a place. In some cases, there was not sufficient place. Then, an assessment had to be made, in which the welfare and needs for education of the pupils in terms of additional adult support counted most. Some of the children come from families with many children and may need extra support for that reason. Also for newly arrived families and children, the mentorship was regarded as the possibility of a good social contact to the majority society. In most cases, parents have searched for a second period. Each case was diligently discussed in the steering committee. A second year was not granted. The number of children seeking was always more than that of the interested mentors. New children got priority. The criterion of welfare in terms of being a newcomer with a foreign background and/or a need of special support was not any more central for participation in the years 2011-2013. Then, the project had evolved as a general mentoring project for children with different backgrounds and from different schools. This development is linked to the increased number of schools as well as to a larger number of mentors. The broadening of children's social and ethnic background is important. The project then had broader support among the children and parents; it was even accepted as one of the schools' regular activities. The evidence suggests that N  ktergal is regarded as an activity among other activities. When the children were asked why they sought to N  ktergal, they often answered 'others also do it.' Only in one case during these three years it has emerged that a child has been teased by other children because of their participation in the project. This was an exception, but it gives the hint to assume that it was a good idea to involve children without stigmatizing them as 'in need, and/or culturally deviant.' Otherwise, usually the reverse was the rule: Being a member of N  ktergal moreover strengthened the social status of the participating children. The children often were very open about participating in the N  ktergal. They proudly told the other children about the project when they gathered around her/his mentor when s/he came to visit their school. So N  ktergal certainly developed best by not reducing its recruitment of children to a special group of children, but broadening the integration perspective. On the one hand, integration also has to do with children of different sociocultural backgrounds who are given the possibility to meet and get to know each other. With this development children from different sociocultural backgrounds meet within the project. On the other hand, also the mentors profit from the project. Some of the students are themselves from underprivileged families and/or have a foreign background. For them, it may be important to reflect on their own biography. The mutual benefit of integration initiated by N  ktergal has to be seen in a much wider sense, too.

When it comes to the throughput, it can be seen as overall successful. In the first year there was a good throughput, and only two mentoring pairs did not participate to the end. In the second and in the third year there have been five and seven dropouts in the years. This number seems to be too high compared to the total number of pairs of about thirty. There are different reasons for a dropout. In over half the cases, it mentors who changed their plans. In the remaining cases, it is because the child prioritized other activities. In only a few cases, the relationship between the mentor and the child did not work. In the cases a mentor dropped out, replacements were available. Only one child dropped out.

## **Ethical Perspective on N ktergal**

The results show that N ktergal in V xj  successively moved towards a universally oriented social project instead of focusing on a group of children that is interpreted in terms of lack or being at risk, that is to say, in terms of deficiencies. The emphasis is instead on reciprocity and on the development of more universal skills. Grander and Sild L nroth (2011, p.42) argue that a mentor can have the role of a parent, a therapist, a friend and a teacher. Previous evaluations indicate that the mentor indeed seems to more or less have stepped into one of these roles. The overall objective of N ktergal aims at cooperation and the freedom to shape the content of the relationship reflecting not last the roles of the mentor in it out of the own perspective. Within the framework of democracy, freedom and demands for cooperation are unfolded here as essential for a society to function. Instead of despising people's experiences, knowledge and feelings, the project aims to understand and tolerate them as long as they do not violate democratic values. To develop understanding and respect between different social groups involves on the long run also the question of interesting the child for higher education. To evaluate N ktergal in terms of its main social aim leads to the question how to measure the quality of a society. This is a very difficult task (Rothstein 2009 p.15). If not rejecting this question, one could just line up variables that are referring to any kind of a general well-being index. Rothstein (2009) suggests that political institutions in the first hand aim at creating trust by strengthening social meaning-making and forming out the patterns how we ought to treat each other. However, the balances of political power and their institutions are changing; we all participate in these changes (Douglas, 1986). The institutions in themselves cannot create trust without people's representations and conversations making meaning of the very balances of political power. The sociologist Robert D. Putnam stresses social ties and networks, when talking about tolerance and trust (Putnam, 2006). There is no evidence about how social ties and networks arise in detail. Putnam (2006) takes the so called social capital as central to the cohesion of a society: Interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric. A sense of belonging and the concrete experience of social networks (and the relationships of trust and tolerance that can be involved) can bring great benefits to people. In social relations, social capital arises bridging the differences between social groups by connecting the individuals. These social ties are important for the individuals in terms of seeing the value of following the rules and conventions in a society that is to say, for the cultivation of good will, sympathy and social intercourse among those that make up a social unit. There is thus a disciplinary dimension in integrative social work. However, to act in conformity with the institution is not the only thing that contributes to social meaning-making and builds on the patterns of how we ought to treat each other. Important is moreover that we act and judge with the institution "in the back" in a socially reflexive way (Lichterman, 2005). There is therefore no use in scrupulously following an institution's manual only. The content moreover needs to be adapted, to be tuned in a way in order to respond to the specifics of a situation. Also the meeting with the child has to be *tuned*, that is to say, the mentor needs to profile common values and the institution "in the back" in a socially reflexive way. N ktergal is part of this reflexivity. There is therefore a need to continuously reflect and articulate the values that structure the approach to the child. Values and social ties are culturally bound to social ideas in time and space. There is thus a larger



context that defines tolerance, respect and understanding. The social and cultural environment of the children is important to follow up and the Näktergal and its values, again and again, are to be embedded into this context that should, in my opinion, be made more explicit and visible by making use of scientific means.

### **The Relational Approach to Mentorship**

It is unique that Näktergal does not impose any content requirements to the mentors and the children but to meet and to get to know each other. Mentor pairs have the freedom to design their content in a free way. In the mentoring period from October to May, the couples meet once a week. What content they choose is not linked to a specific program with certain objectives to be achieved. The freedom means that their relationship can develop on its own terms. Between mentor and child a mutual gradual adjustment can be made. Thus, different contents are chosen. Some couples have been at the poetry slam, others baked and cooked together, had picnics in the mentor's apartment, played board games or went bowling, swam or went to town together. The content has been the energy for building up a close relationship. Although the relationship between adults and children inherently is unequal, in all the cases, which were brought to an end, a relationship of equality and mutual respect developed. The children in the Näktergal are merely entrusted to mentors who are foreign to them in the beginning. Many mentors describe feelings of uneasiness in the first meetings, but they retrospectively regard them as positive. If the mentors would not have been able to create relational trust, they would never have been able to meet the children regularly. They obviously discussed the various activities with the children and agreed on shared interests, common values and on valid rules for their meetings and for their interaction. The activities as well as the planning were an opportunity for both, mentors and children, to learn from each other. Both sides developed responsivity which forms the core of pedagogy: Education is convincing educationally intended actions (see above). The deep emotional attachments that arose during the project would never have come into existence, if there would not have been great and genuine commitment in the mentors. Being a mentor is a great responsibility. Some mentor students express that they were not really prepared for this; they e.g. mean that they had little experience with children in the past. These students were nervous and uncertain. For them being a mentor meant that they won over their own fears. However, this process did not always proceed smoothly. They had to be persistent and not give up. Mentors reported that they also had to educate themselves, as they e.g. had to learn patience, when children did not come in time, or when they had it difficult to leave. Then, they had to insist on the agreements and they report to have been successful in that. The successes obviously strengthened the mentors' self-confidence, and the reliability of the project for the children. While building up trust in a child is an emotional competence that is most striking to social ties in society, the mentor also had to teach him/her to take responsibility, make independent choices, to develop new skills and to participate in decision-making. The children had to be appreciated and to be enabled to share their life with others. Reported was that they also learned skills, such as physical skills: to swim and to dive. The development in the mentor pairs had obviously, for different reasons, come to different levels. Some of the children seemingly were slower than

others in building up social bonds and self-confidence. Also the mentors' ability to approach a child in the right way and to build up a relationship to him/her obviously has varied. However, the children overall seemingly have become more social, and especially those who were described as shy or busy with themselves in the beginning visibly began to communicate with their mentors and other children. They began to put their image about themselves on stake and developed the ability to speak with the mentors and with the other children about their ideas etc. It is reported that the children did things that they could not handle before so they could improve their self-confidence. Many couples maintained the contact also after the mentoring period. One can therefore presume that rather strong emotional bonds between the mentors and the children have been formed.

A very small number of mentoring pairs broke with the contract. They give practical reasons for that, in the first hand referring to the problem that they have not realized right from the beginning that there is a quite demanding time factor in the mentoring project. Some mentor students dropped out and sometimes also a child had too many other activities on his/her schedule and quitted the project. The reasons for the dropouts are not yet investigated in detail, but to do research on that seems to be important for N aktergal.

The allover visible success of the N aktergal refers to different positive emotional evaluations of the project by the participants, first of all the feeling of a good humanitarian action. People have been made happy. In structurally allowing the children to make their voices heard, to choose activities and express themselves (perhaps actions they are not often asked to do at home), a realization of joy and gratitude emerges in the participants, as well as a strengthening of self-confidence in all involved. Many mentors express that they felt they could benefit from this experience in their future professional roles as teachers, social workers, educators and in the other responsible jobs they will as academics do in society.

In the chart below, the responses of parents and children in the interview that were conducted before 2013 are structured.

Aims of the project	Results
The child gets the possibility to develop his/her good self-esteem.	The children report that there were many activities together with their mentor.
There is an adult role model for the child.	In most cases the children felt appreciated by their mentor. If the mentor did not come in time, or not join the meeting, they felt disappointed. No child expresses that the relationship did not work.
The child gets new experiences and knowledge in a relationship with a university student.	Children mainly speak about the activities, not explicitly about what they learned. When they claim to have learned anything, it is mainly practical (and not academic) skills like diving, taking the bus, etc.
The friendship between a child and his/her mentor leads to a greater understanding, respect and tolerance for each other's socio-cultural backgrounds.	The children and their mentors judged things differently. Some children express that they had nearly brother and sister relationship to the mentor. The children express that the mentors learned from them to cook food from their home countries, some words in their home language, and what it means to be Muslim. They appear to be proud of speaking about their culture when someone appreciates listening.
The child's experiences help	All the children express that they visited the university on one

him/her to seek to college or university. The mentor talks about education and the child's future and takes the child to the university.	or more occasions. However, there is no hint that the mentors talked explicitly about education and about the future of the child. The children don't seem to be convinced about advantages of academic life either, at least not in an explicit way.
The child develops social skills and the ability to take responsibility, to plan and to carry out activities allowing him/her to perform better in school and in life outside school.	The majority of the children report that they have been helped to plan and to take responsibility for activities. The extent of this involvement seems to vary. Some children, for example, got the responsibility to get to the meetings alone with the bus.

The performance targets of Näktergal have certainly been met in general. There are to note some qualitative differences between mentoring pairs each year, also between the first two years and the third year of the project, when the number of schools grew.

Mentorship in general is certainly a quite laborious and time-intensive method in the field of socially and culturally sensitive education, but it definitely seems to be a sustainable way to create a social relationship that is characterized by mutuality and respect. Mentors by means of their maturity, life experiences and education seem to be able to create conditions for children to be able to trust them. There seems to be a continuous reflection on the relationship and a balancing out of experiences and sociocultural differences on both sides. The mentors obviously have collectively become more aware of the differences in the living conditions and in the traditions of upbringing children today in comparison with their own childhood. Apparently, this was possible mainly through the open structure and organization of Näktergal that allowed for authentic life experiences. Whether a mentor feels that the project enriches his/her experience and knowledge seems to depend on what s/he brings into the project. In relation to the children, the mentors obviously had to learn humility, to address children's thoughts and ideas, but also to set limits and to communicate with people they would not have met in this rather private way otherwise. The mentors had to apply and to develop skills further, such as planning, and discipline in organizing and structuring a day. These skills are certainly not only beneficial in relation to children, but also in their general life. A more detailed and systematic evaluation these aspects is needed for improving mentoring.

### **Reflections on the Evaluation Methods**

As it was already pointed out, this evaluation focused on only one of the project goals. This reduced view has an impact on the assessment of the Näktergal project as a whole, which strictly seen cannot be met in this report. To repeat the general aims of the Näktergal project according to its public homepage, it is about to: establish a European forum in order to facilitate cooperation between the participants and the work with mentoring; to exchange experience; to improve the general quality of mentoring; to provide a context which will elucidate the cooperation between universities and local schools throughout Europe; to offer the members a consistent set of quality standards by certification; to create a collection of relevant data for future research; to quality-ensure the concept. In order to be met, these

diverse aspects need elaborated theoretical models as well as empirical studies, like longitudinal as well as cross-sectional analyses.

The evaluations of the Näktergal project in Växjö moreover refer to the mentors' diaries, their monthly reports and their year reports, as well as to the questionnaires and interviews with the kids who participated, and with their parents. The data is just analyzed in terms of the hypothesis that the children and their mentors, especially the children with support from their mentors in the frame of the Näktergal project, are in a pleasing and appealing way encouraged to developing social and empathetic competences and a positive self-image. In their ideas about social advantages of the project, the mentors are, however, more or less focused on themselves and on their own personal development. This matches the problem of how to measure the quality of a society. As society is formed out by social ties, its quality depends on social bondages and on the institutions that guarantee for the ethical framings of the social relationships and for sustainability in terms of their integrative capacities. To actively develop social bondages on the one side is voluntary, and on the other side it needs maturity. Children are in a very special way open for and dependent on social relationships and ties. One can say that they flow within and sometimes they even break the social barriers. Such has obviously happened, as all the participants recount that they had several transcultural experiences and profited from the social situation. Until now, there has not been any possibility to follow up the further steps of the youngsters towards society and (self-) education as the oldest children participating in the first year of the project have been only 18 years old at the project's end. Since the higher education for the children in the interviews is situated far in their future, their attitudes to school after the project period may in itself not predict how it will go for them. There are however, some impressions of the project. Whether focus group interviews and questionnaires are the most adequate method to gather data on the project, is a question one may put, as interviews are not considered as the most adequate method within Children Studies to grasp the children's perspectives, at least when it comes to minors. Some children are described to have been impatient. Maybe filming an interaction of a mentor with a child would have been a way to complete the evaluation by collecting more detailed data about their transcultural exchange and learning. Another possibility would have been a vignette-study: In a vignette-study, research participants present a factual or hypothetical situation by writing a text in which they in a systematic way reveal their perceptions, values, social norms or impressions of events.

### **Suggested Areas for Development in Terms of Practical Challenges**

- As there is a theoretical indeterminacy and vagueness in terms of what kind of learning Näktergal should aim at. There seems to be a slight contra-productive tendency to its own goals that the said gap in practice is filled by tying non-affinity to higher education to belonging to an underprivileged social group and especially to a minority culture. My proposal, which is already part of the exposé, is to fill the gap by focusing transcultural learning as a learning 'across' or 'beyond' cultures, where 'culture' is not automatically limited to ethnicity or nationality. Forms of education and the idea of well-educated persons should be differentiated.

- The recruitment of the mentors seems to be an important cornerstone of the business. Various mentors bring in different perspectives on the project and the development of transcultural competences and those indispensable for socio-symbolic integration. These differences should be investigated in more details. In this regard also a marketing of the project could be developed with the help of students who worked as mentors.
- The project should also examine why mentors or children dropped out. The same is true for the mentor's not appearing at meetings and for the cancellations of meetings by the children and their families. There is also a need to reflect on solutions for the different cases in which the project did not work.
- One of the benefits of the mentoring project is certainly that the children get better agency in the field of social and cultural challenges. People tend to judge themselves in relation to what others say, so do children. They compare how different adults behave and how they represent the world and values. Through this education they get affected. There must be an open space for all the participants, also for the parents, to discuss opinions, values, interpretations and social attitudes.
- One can even more make use of the educational potentials of meeting children and even families with other sociocultural backgrounds than the own one in the framework of Näktergal. Beside game evenings, common cooking or meetings for conversation, there could be more common events that support the pursued learning, like common filming or ordering festivities, crafting, etc.

### **Suggested Areas for Development in Terms of Challenges for Further Research**

- The evaluation of the general aims of the Näktergal project should be added to the evaluations of its pedagogical aim confined to the reflections of the participants.
- There is a need to develop evaluation methodologically linked to the goals of Näktergal, as well as a more theoretical foundation, indicated by, beside socio-symbolic integration, also naming the concept of transcultural learning. The concept of transcultural knowledge and learning implies great potentials for humanization of politics (see p.8 of this report).
- The socially and culturally heterogeneous group of the children also benefits the mentors. A sociological perspective could help to shed light also on the effects of the project on their life-concepts as (world-) citizens.
- The proposals and wishes of the municipality representatives, as well as of the representatives at the cooperating schools, should also be taken more into account.
- The university could profit more from the project than it does today by developing courses and research related to Näktergal.

## Acknowledgements

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## Annex 1

### Study Programmes of the Participating Students

Study programme (dropouts in brackets)	In 2009- 2010: Total number 19 (dropouts in brackets)	2010- 2011: Total number 18 (dropouts in brackets)	2011- 2012: Total number 29 (dropouts in brackets )	2012- 2013: Total number (dropouts in brackets )	2013- 2014: Total number (dropouts in brackets )	2014- 2015: Total number (dropouts in bracket)
Läroprogrammet	8 (1)	10 (3)	8 (3)	3	9	
Socionomprogrammet	4	3	7	4	2	
Internationell administration med språk	3	1		1		
Behandlingspedagog	1	3	2		2	
Beteendevetare	1					
Datavetenskap	1			1	1	
Engelska	(1)					
Marknadsföringsprogramm e	1					
Modernt ledarskap och industriell styrning		1		1		
Energi & miljöingenjör		1	1	1		
Informatör (Fred & utveckling)		1	3 (1)			
Maskinteknik		1 (1)				
Socialt arbete		1				
Modernt ledarskap och industriell styrning		(1)				
Programmet för inredning och butikskommunikation		1				
Sociologi			4			
Civilekonom			3 (1)	1		
Design			2		1	
Friluftsliv			1			
Internationella sällskapsvetarprogrammet			1 (1)	4	3	
Kulturledarprogrammet			1 (1)			
Litteraturvetenskap			1 (1)			
Sjuksköterska			1		1	
Socialpsykologi			1			

Systemvetenskap			1			
Polis				3		
Bygg				1	1	
Arbetslivspedagog				1		
Matematik				1		
Psykologi					2	
Europa					1	
Bibliotekarie					1	

## Annex 2

### Questionnaire Children Näktergal – Växjö 2010-2011

När du tänker tillbaka på året tillsammans med mentorn hur känner du dig då? Sätt ett kryss framför det alternativt som bäst stämmer överens med hur du känner dig.

\_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Kommentera. Ge gärna exempel vad du tyckt varit bra eller dåligt.

Hur känner du dig när tänker på vad ni gjort tillsammans.

Att prata med mentorn: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Att vara hemma hos dig: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Att vara hemma hos mentorn: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Att göra saker tillsammans på stan: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Att få hjälp med läxor: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Att vara tillsammans med de andra mentorererna och barnen. \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Berätta vad du tyckte om det ni gjorde tillsammans med mentorn

Vad har du lärt dig av att träffa mentorn?

Hur tycker du det har fungerat att

bestämma träfftider: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

planera aktiviteter: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Berätta hur det gått till när du eller mentorn eller ni tillsammans bestämt vad ni har gjort på träffarna.

Tycker du att andra barn som ännu inte varit med i Näktergalen borde få vara med.

Ja: \_\_\_ Nej: \_\_\_

Berätta varför du tycker att de borde få vara med eller inte:

Vad tror du att mentorn lärt sig av dig och din familj?

### Interview Questions Children Näktergal – Växjö 2010-2011

- Vad är det bästa med att ha en mentor?
- Vad har ni gjort tillsammans, något roligt?
- Har du gjort något du aldrig gjort förut eller varit på något ställe du inte ens visste fanns i Växjö?
- Berättar du för dina kompisar om vad du och din mentor hittar på när ni träffas? Är de nyfikna, vill de själva ha en mentor?
- Har du fått några nya intressen när du har umgått med din mentor?
- Vad har du och din mentor för gemensamma intressen?

- De gånger ni har varit på universitetet/campus, har det varit spännande då och blir du sugen att själv börja gå på ett universitet när du blir stor? (Vad vill du bli när du blir stor?)
- Till sist, skulle du vilja ha en mentor ännu en gång om du skulle få den chansen?

### Questionnaire Parents Näktergal – Växjö 2010-2011

I vilken grad känner ni er nöjda med relationen mellan ert barn och mentorn. Sätt ett kryss framför det svarsalternativ som stämmer bäst överens med din upplevelse.

\_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Kommentera. Ge gärna exempel vad ni upplevt bra/mindre bra.

I vilken grad tycker ni att mentorn engagerat dig i följande tillsammans med ert barn.

Personliga samtal: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Aktiviteter hemma hos er: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Aktiviteter hos mentorn: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Aktiviteter utanför ert hem: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Läxor och skolarbete: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Finns det aktiviteter som du önskar att mentorn skulle ha engagerat ditt barn mer i? Motivera gärna.

I vilken grad tror ni att Näktergalen har påverkat ert barns:

Självförtroende: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Sociala utveckling/mognad: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Skolarbete: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Berätta vilka förändringar som ni har sett hos ert barn och vad dessa kan bero på.

Hur upplever ni mentorns förmåga att

Bestämma träfftider: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Planera aktiviteter: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Hantera känslomässiga problem: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Hantera önskemål och krav från er: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd. Lyssna på barnets önskemål: \_\_\_ Mycket nöjd. \_\_\_ Nöjd \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd.

Kommentarer

Skulle ni rekommendera andra föräldrar att anmäla sitt barn till mentorsprojektet:

Ja: \_\_\_ Nej: \_\_\_

Varför:

Vad tror du att mentorn lärt sig av ditt barn och er familj?

## Questionnaire Teachers of the Children Näktergal – Växjö 2010-2011

Berättar din/a elev/er om vad hon/han/de har hittat på med sin Näktergalsmentor och i vilket sammanhang gör hon/han detta?

Om ja på ovanstående fråga, hur verkar eleven/erna när hon/han/de berättar om Näktergalen?

\_\_\_ Mycket nöjd                      \_\_\_ Nöjd                      \_\_\_ Mindre nöjd

Kommentera. Ge gärna exempel.

I vilken grad tror ni att Näktergalen har påverkat elevens/ernas:

Självförtroende:                      \_\_\_ Mycket.                      \_\_\_ Lite                      \_\_\_ Inte alls

Sociala utveckling/mognad: \_\_\_ Mycket.                      \_\_\_ Lite                      \_\_\_ Inte alls

Skolarbete:                      \_\_\_ Mycket.                      \_\_\_ Lite                      \_\_\_ Inte alls

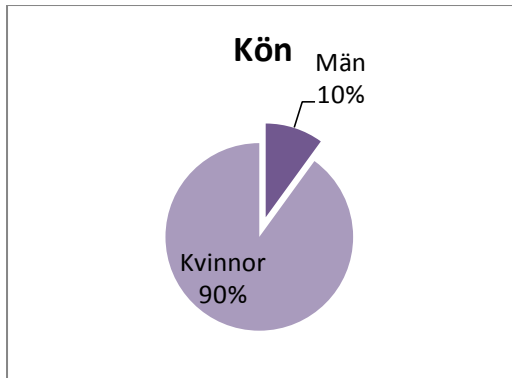
Berätta vilka förändringar som ni har sett och vad dessa kan bero på.

Har du som lärare märkt någon skillnad på eleven/erna som har varit med i Näktergalsprojektet under året?

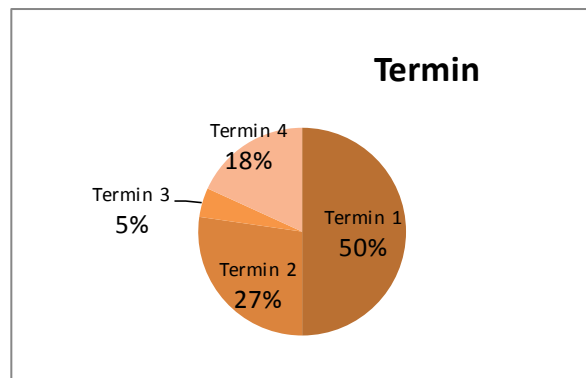
**Annex 3**

**Mentors 2014-2015**

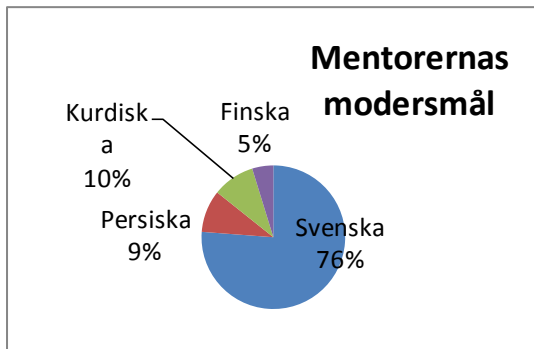
**Sexes**



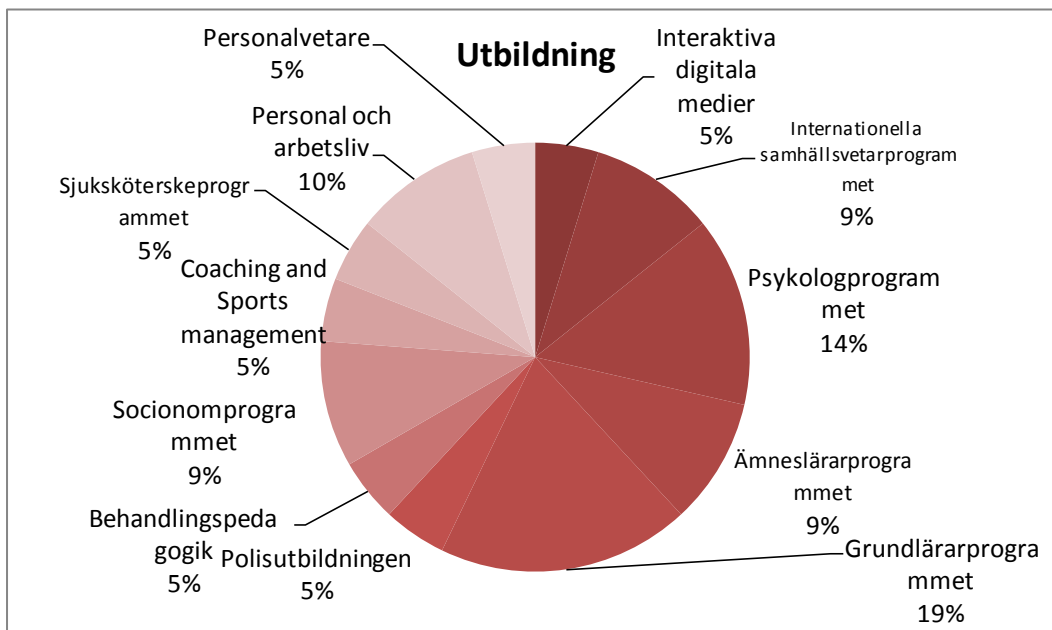
**Term**



**Mother tongue**



**Study Programme**



### Children, Sexes 2014-2015

