JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Communication

Reimagining Literacy Futures:

Exploring Swedish Pre- and Primary Teachers' Visions through Future(s)-Oriented Methods

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Abstract

The future of literacy and reading is a highly debated topic in the Swedish educational context, shaped by conflicting perspectives on pedagogy, technology, and cognition. This study explores how Swedish teachers working in grades K–3 envision this future, offering insights into the assumptions, priorities, and professional experiences that inform their views. In a workshop setting, a team of 11 teachers from a single school engaged with future(s)-oriented methods to articulate their visions of literacy development. The workshop activities revealed a strong professional consensus and a recurring preference for print-based instruction. This preference was framed as a pedagogical response to previous digitalisation efforts perceived as misaligned with classroom realities. Rather than presenting radically new directions, the imagined futures reproduced familiar binaries and often overlooked the complex, multimodal nature of literacy in a postdigital society. This study positions future(s)-oriented methods as a way to uncover assumptions, support professional reflection and promote teacher agency. By analysing the interplay between consensus, discourse and institutional constraint, the thesis contributes to ongoing debates about how educators might co-construct more inclusive and sustainable literacy futures. In doing so, it highlights the value of speculative approaches for rethinking literacy, agency and educational relevance in times of change.

Key words: Futures Literacy, Future(s)-oriented methods, Abductive reasoning, Literacy pedagogy, Postdigital, Speculative fabulation, Back-casting

1. Introduction

The future of literacy and reading instruction is a highly debated topic within the Swedish educational context, influenced by multiple, and often conflicting, perspectives on education, technology, and cognition. According to Forsler and Guyard (2023), two dominant processes currently shape the discourse on literacy education. On one hand, there is a push for digital education to continue to expand, integrating technology into schools as a means of modernizing pedagogical practices. On the other hand, an increasing emphasis on cognitive and neuroscientific research has raised concerns about the potential negative effects of digital media on learning and brain development (Forsler & Guyard, 2023).

This tension is evident in popular science discourse, where concerns over digital media's impact on cognition have influenced recent shifts in Swedish educational policy. In response to these concerns, policy discussions are moving away from digitizing schools and instead re-emphasizing traditional, print-based reading approaches (Forsler & Guyard, 2023; Swedish Ministry of Education, 2024).

Similar tensions exist in the research field of educational technology (EdTech). While cognition-based approaches often advocate for technology-driven solutions that claim to enhance brain function, they frequently overlook the sociocultural and material contexts of learning. Conversely, sociotechnical educational research highlights the importance of design, context, and social interactions in shaping learning experiences (Buch et al., 2024). These competing perspectives raise critical questions regarding the future of literacy and who holds the power to determine or shape it.

Teachers play an important role in navigating the complex landscape of literacy and reading instruction. However, they are often caught between competing discourses, educational policies, and curricular demands, which can limit their ability to act with autonomy (Player-Koro et al., 2018; Forsler & Guyard, 2023). This highlights the importance of teacher agency. One way to cultivate this agency is through the use of future(s)-oriented methods, which can empower educators to actively shape the future of literacy education (Ross, 2023; Lindberg & Haglind, 2024). By engaging with these approaches, teachers can critically explore alternative educational futures—challenging dominant narratives and, in doing so, advocating for practices that prioritise educational sustainability, quality, and equity (Selwyn et al., 2020).

1.1 Aim

This study explores how Swedish K–3 teachers envision the future of literacy, a field of learning and instruction currently undergoing several transformations. It places particular emphasis on how teachers imagine students' evolving relationships with text worlds and reading. Teachers' perspectives on the future will be explored through a workshop designed to engage them in futures thinking and imagination. Involving teachers in imagining futures aims to disclose their visions of literacy, as well as contribute to knowledge about teacher's agency and how they shape instruction and learning.

The following questions will be used to guide the study:

RQ1: What aspects do teachers focus on when speculating on futures literacy, including students' relationships with text worlds and reading?

RQ2: How do the participating teachers engage with imagining alternative futures of teaching and learning reading?

2. Background

This chapter presents key concepts and background information necessary for understanding the context in which this thesis is situated. Firstly, literacy is examined through the lens of sustainability and postdigital theory. Thereafter, prevailing definitions of reading are critically analysed.

2.1 Sustainable Literacy Futures

This thesis is situated within the context of the Learning, Digitalization, and Sustainability (LeaDS) programme, and addresses the intersection of these three dimensions by exploring how teachers envision sustainable literacy futures. As digital technologies increasingly shape society, education and literacy practices, questions of equity, access, and participation become central to both pedagogical practice and democratic citizenship (Selwyn et al., 2020; Farrell et al., 2022). In particular, social sustainability in education calls attention not only to the distribution of digital resources and competencies, but also to the inclusion of diverse perspectives in literacy education and the cultivation of agency among educators (Biesta et al. 2015; Noteboom & Ross, 2024; Sporrong 2024).

To engage critically with these challenges, this study drew on speculative and future(s)-oriented methods, which invite participants to imagine alternative futures beyond dominant narratives (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Markham, 2021; Ross, 2023). By privileging certain voices, such narratives uphold existing power dynamics and position the authority to define the future in the hands of a few, leaving little space for transformative perspectives that challenge normative assumptions (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Miller, 2018; Markham, 2021). In contrast, speculative approaches promote agency, imagination, and plurality (Ross, 2023; Lamb, 2025), supporting the creation of more inclusive and socially just visions of education (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Selwyn et al. 2020). In the context of this thesis, this involved supporting teachers in cultivating futures literacy—the capacity to engage with the future in meaningful ways that involve reflecting on and navigating complexity (Miller, 2018)—and in reimagining literacy futures to promote sustainability, equity, and inclusion.

2.2 Postdigital Education and Literacy

We live in an era where digital media and technology are no longer separate from human and social life (Jandrić et al., 2018; Lamb, 2025). Rather than functioning as external tools, they are now deeply embedded in everyday practices, transforming not only how we live but also the skills required to participate as active citizens in society (Farrell et al., 2022). These technologies shape the ways we communicate, engage with knowledge, and construct our understanding of reality. This transformation has led to the rise of the concept of the postdigital, which is increasingly used across disciplines such as education and literary studies (Abblitt, 2019). The term postdigital does not suggest a world beyond the digital. Instead, it recognizes that digital and analogue practices are now fundamentally intertwined (Jandrić & Knox, 2022). As Jandrić and Knox point out, education has always been closely connected to developments in communication, and current technological advancements continue this historical trajectory. In this context, education must address critical questions about the nature of literacy, learning, and pedagogy in an era where digital technologies are central to how knowledge is produced, shared, and experienced (Alexandersson & Limberg, 2012; Jandrić et al., 2019).

Within postdigital education, the lines between traditional and digital literacies are increasingly blurred. Reading and writing no longer occur only on paper but also across digital platforms, requiring learners and educators to operate across multiple media (Alexandersson & Limberg, 2012; Leander & Burriss, 2020). This transformation has specific implications for literacy education, focusing particularly on Swedish primary schools. In the early years, literacy instruction tends to emphasize developing foundational reading and writing skills. As students move into secondary education, these practices develop into more complex, interpretive, and multimodal forms of literacy. However, with digital formats now present across all age groups, young learners must be equipped to navigate various platforms and text types, which challenges conventional understandings of what it means to be literate (Farrell et al., 2022). To support students in engaging with the diverse reading environments they encounter in both formal and informal settings, educational systems need to integrate digital and print literacies in meaningful ways (Leander & Burriss, 2020). This means recognizing the distinct affordances of each and designing pedagogical approaches that value both (Kjällander, 2022; Scholes, 2024).

A postdigital perspective calls for more than the mere adoption of new tools. It urges educators and policymakers to critically engage with the deeper cultural, social, and pedagogical transformations that digitalization brings (Abblitt, 2019). Literacy is increasingly viewed as a key element of critical thinking, inclusion, and democratic participation (Farrell et al., 2022; Kjällander, 2022). This raises important questions about which literacy practices are being legitimized or marginalized, and how teachers can and should respond to these changes. It also prompts reflection on how policy decisions shape what teachers are permitted, encouraged, or reluctant to do in their classrooms.

The participants in this study—teachers working with students in grades K–3—are positioned at the forefront of these shifts. They navigate these transformations while being caught between policy-driven expectations and the everyday realities of classroom practice. Conflicting views and uncertainties around what literacy should include highlights the need for research that is both grounded in the everyday experiences of teachers and oriented toward future possibilities.

2.3 Views on "Legitimate" Reading and Literature

Despite the integration of advancing technology into society, close reading—defined as deep, focused engagement with a single, linear text that encourages sustained attention, careful interpretation, and thoughtful analysis—remains a dominant and highly valued practice in educational contexts (Abblitt, 2019; Eutsler & Trotter, 2020; Leander & Burriss, 2020). However, many scholars critique the emphasis on traditional close reading pedagogies, arguing that they fail to equip students with the skills needed to engage with emerging reading behaviours and literacy experiences (Jockers, 2013; Abblitt, 2019; Leander & Burriss, 2020). This disconnect highlights a broader issue in that the literacy practices legitimised within school settings often fail to align with the diverse and dynamic ways students interact with texts beyond the classroom (Eutsler & Trotter, 2020; Leander & Burriss, 2020; Smith & Parker, 2021; Horst & Gladwin, 2024).

Commissioned by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), the Swedish Council for literature canon has created and produced so called "reading lists" aimed at guiding and supporting educators in selecting relevant and essential literature for their teaching practices (Skolverket, 2025). The lists are said to offer a wide range of literature, including both classic and modern fiction, featuring novels, short stories, ABC books, poetry collections, individual poems, graphic novels,

picture books with text, and wordless "silent books". Furthermore, the selections are intentionally chosen to explore various themes such as friendship, relationships, nature, animals, and adventure.

Although the creators acknowledge that the lists are not exhaustive but rather recommendations of relevant literature, they nonetheless indicate which types of texts are considered both relevant and legitimate. Print-based close reading dominates the materials selected for both primary and secondary educators, reinforcing academic concerns about its status as the standard for legitimate reading practices (Abblitt, 2019; Leander & Burriss, 2020). Furthermore, there is a particular focus on fiction reading. While the lists do somewhat encompass a diverse range of literature, this diversity is confined strictly to types of print-based reading. Limiting reading and literature to this narrow definition risks excluding many readers in a postdigital educational setting, missing an opportunity to recognise diverse literacy practices and broaden notions of textual engagement (Abblitt, 2019; Smith & Parker, 2021).

Therefore, the reading lists' reliance on print-based fiction literature raises important questions about inclusivity in reading practices. If reading instruction is meant to be guided by students' needs, as the creators of the lists suggest, then the absence of digital reading environments may overlook the diverse ways in which students engage with texts in a postdigital era. This exclusion is particularly significant given that Lgr22 emphasizes both reading engagement and inclusion, suggesting that literacy education should be responsive to varying student experiences and competencies (Skolverket, 2024). This highlights the need to reconsider what is recognised as reading within educational contexts by embracing a broader spectrum of literacy practices and promoting greater inclusivity in today’s reading instruction.

3. Literature Review

The following literature review offers an overview of research relevant to the study, focusing on the evolving nature of literacy and approaches to literary pedagogy. It also examines reading practices in a post-digital age and considers their pedagogical implications for both current and future literacy education.

3.1 The Generative Flux of Literacy

Literacy pedagogy is increasingly influenced by sociotechnical changes, including the rise of Generative AI, LLMs and chatbots. As Nichols et al. (2024) observe, literacy educators often assume that pedagogy must respond to technological changes, whether through integration, critique, or resistance. Nonetheless, the field of literacy education has always involved an element of speculation, evolving in response to cultural, technological, and pedagogical shifts (Abblitt, 2019; Nichols et al., 2024). As Nichols et al. (2024) state, literacy is not a fixed concept but one that continuously adapts to new forms of communication and interpretation.

These changes inevitably transform literacy practices, reading behaviours and which skills are deemed necessary (Kress, 2003; Burnett et al., 2006; Baron, 2015; Larson, 2015; Abblitt, 2019; Lim & Toh, 2020; Liu & Gu, 2020; Kim et al., 2022; Scholes, 2024). Abblitt (2019) argues that reading is shaped by intricate social, material, and technological networks, fundamentally altering how we interact with, consume, and understand texts. While digital and print reading share core similarities, such as the process of consuming words and constructing meaning, there are fundamental differences that challenge the assumption that they are identical practices.

3.2 Literary Pedagogies: Classroom Perspectives

Although it is evident that advanced technologies will continue to shape education, exactly how they will do so is still unknown (Baron, 2015; Burnett & Merchant, 2019; Velander et al., 2024). Bush et al. (2024) state that although automation may be necessary for scaling education and solving technical issues, its pedagogical and conceptual implications are still evolving. In the context of rapid technological developments, educators must consider how they respond to and engage with new

reading and information environments. Smith and Parker (2021) reveal in their study, that both students and teachers struggle to navigate the evolving informational landscape, with students in particular expressing a strong need for support.

3.2.1 Reading Comprehension

Navigating this information-rich landscape involves multitasking, clicking through hyperlinks, as well as processing and evaluating information across various media forms, all of which place high cognitive demands on readers (Scholes, 2024). These environments can therefore lead to cognitive overload, making it difficult to maintain focus and retain comprehension (Lim & Toh, 2020). Consequently, educators must provide support in helping students engage effectively with digital reading environments to improve attention, comprehension and efficiency. Neglecting this crucial pedagogical opportunity would mean failing to prepare students for the complexities of todays and future information environments (Leander & Burriss, 2020; Smith & Parker, 2021).

The rise of multimedia, hyperlinked content, and nonlinear texts presents new challenges for traditional reading comprehension strategies, which are often designed for linear, print-based literacy practices (Liu & Gu, 2020; Kim et al., 2022). Digital reading environments, by contrast, frequently involve fragmented reading experiences, including information fragmentation, (i.e., reading disconnected segments of text) or process fragmentation, (i.e., where external distractions disrupt focus, such as notifications) (Liu & Gu, 2020). This constant fragmentation and task-switching can negatively impact readers' ability to sustain attention and fully comprehend texts. However, Liu and Gu (2020) argue that fragmented information alone does not necessarily hinder comprehension. Instead, they emphasise the importance of designing digital reading environments that reduce distractions and support sustained engagement. Building on this, Kim et al. (2022) highlight that multiple-text comprehension is an essential skill in the postdigital age. This requires expanding traditional models of reading comprehension to account for the complexities of digital reading, including navigating contradictory perspectives and assessing the credibility of information sources.

3.2.2 Reading Pedagogies and Strategies

With the backdrop of evolving reading environments, new forms of reading pedagogies and strategies become necessary (Jockers, 2013; Abblitt, 2019; Scholes, 2024). Traditionally, close reading has been a central practice in reading instruction, emphasizing deep, focused engagement with a single, linear

text. However, as mentioned digital reading environments, place other demands on the reader and a different set of skills, such as keyword searching, skimming, and navigating non-linear texts. These evolving formats and the increasing presence of digital media in children's lives, require a shift in reading pedagogy (Kress, 2003; Jockers, 2013; Abblitt, 2019; Scholes, 2024).

Relying solely on close reading in today's postdigital society can be limiting at all levels of education, including for primary school students who are growing up immersed in digital texts (Farrell et al., 2022). While close reading remains valuable, it must be complemented by strategies that prepare children to read flexibly and critically across multiple formats (Liu, 2005; Jockers, 2013; Abblitt, 2019; Van de Ven, 2019). Van de Ven (2019) highlights the importance of a creative reading approach, where students are taught to move between close and distant reading. Distant reading, which is common in digital contexts, involves the ability to process multiple reading paths and skim for key information.

Abblitt (2019) advocates for a flexible approach to reading that shifts between "hyper reading", a process that includes skimming, filtering and engaging with fragmented texts, and "machine reading," which relies on digital tools to process and interpret large volumes of information. In the context of the postdigital age, machine reading offers a practical response to the sheer amount of textual content now available, calling for analytical methods that extend beyond traditional literary approaches. Crucially, Abblitt stresses that machine reading should not be seen as a substitute for human interpretation; instead, it enhances our capacity to derive meaning and explore texts in new ways (see also Jockers, 2013).

Building on Abblitt's theory of post-digital literacy, McLean Davies et al. (2020) present a framework for implementing post-digital literary literacy in educational contexts. It includes three core practices: productive reading, distant reading, and code switching. Productive reading involves generating knowledge through engagement with post-digital literary texts. Distant reading uses digital tools to analyse large text collections and uncover patterns that are not easily visible through close reading (similar to machine reading). Code switching refers to shifting between distant reading and close analysis, allowing for both broad and detailed interpretation. This integrated approach combines human and machine analysis, expanding traditional literary methods to meet the demands of digital reading environments (McLean Davies et al., 2020).

While often linked to higher levels of education, the reading strategies above can and should be introduced in age-appropriate ways during the early years of schooling (Farrell et al. 2022). Introducing such strategies when key reading habits begin to form enables the young readers to build the flexible reading competencies necessary to navigate both traditional print texts and the increasingly complex digital environments they encounter in everyday life.

3.3 The Evolving Role of the Teacher

3.3.1 Motivation and Engagement

Over a century ago, John Dewey (1913) emphasized the importance of making education meaningful and engaging by connecting learning to students lived experiences, power and needs. Today, this perspective is more relevant than ever as digital environments often become embedded in children's lives from early childhood (Farrell et al., 2022). As students grow up engaging with texts across multiple formats, the traditional role of the teacher must evolve to meet the changing nature of literacy, motivation, and engagement in the postdigital age (Abblitt, 2019; Scholes, 2024). To meaningfully engage students in developing literacy skills, educators must not only spark interest but also clarify the purpose of learning and adapt their practices to the learners' reality. Motivation, in this sense, is not just about capturing attention, it is about connecting the content to the child's world (Dewey, 1913).

As Farrell et al. (2022) highlight, positive early experiences with communication and literacy are fundamental to developing a strong sense of identity, wellbeing, and lifelong motivation. In light of this, primary school teachers play a vital role in creating learning environments where students feel recognized, supported, and engaged, regardless of whether that learning occurs through print or digital media. For teachers, engaging with broader societal transformations such as digitalisation can serve not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity for professional growth. By critically reflecting on the changing nature of literacy and actively shaping meaningful literacy practices, teachers can strengthen their professional agency (Nichols et al., 2024).

3.3.2 Teacher Agency

Teachers are situated at the intersection of multiple and often conflicting discourses, navigating tensions between pedagogical values, policy demands, and technological expectations (Player-Koro et al., 2018; Forsler & Guyard, 2023). These tensions become especially pronounced in times of educational transformation, where both teachers and students' risk being positioned as “mere objects of digitalization, rather than seeing them as active subjects participating in the shaping of digital futures” (Suoranta et al., 2022, p.225). As technological developments increasingly influence educational practices and redefine what it means to be literate (Abblitt, 2019), it becomes more urgent to critically reflect on the purpose and value of education, as well as to reaffirm the importance of collective and teacher agency (Means, 2018).

Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth, influence their working conditions, and shape educational practices and outcomes. It is about teachers having the power, autonomy, and responsibility to make decisions that affect their teaching and students' learning. Agency is a context-dependent process shaped by teachers past experiences, present judgments, and future aspirations (Biesta et al., 2015). From the perspective of Biesta et al., agency is not something a teacher simply has, but something they do, often in negotiation with structural, cultural, and material conditions. Within the shifting landscape of literacy education, such agency involves actively taking part in discussions regarding changing policy environments, evolving technologies, and the diverse needs of learners (Dignum, 2019).

However, the implementation of digital technology in educational practices has been met with somewhat apprehension as teachers have been fearful of technology replacing teacher-student interactions (Dignum, 2019; Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020). Dignum highlights that such apprehension is historically typical, as technological development often evokes uncertainty and ambiguity. Rather than viewing ambiguity as an obstacle, teachers can reframe it as an opportunity for speculative thinking and creative action (Noteboom & Ross, 2023). Ross (2023) proposes speculative pedagogies that empower educators to imagine alternatives and challenge dominant narratives. In this view, teacher agency becomes a matter of engaging with uncertainty, as well as envisioning and designing alternative futures, rather than simply reacting to imposed trajectories (Cerratto-Pargman et al., 2023). This notion resonates with Jasanoff (2015), who emphasizes the importance of attending to diverse forms of agency, encouraging an openness to the unexpected and a rethinking of what is often taken

for granted. Such a stance supports the idea that speculative practices in education are not just imaginative exercises but crucial means of professional growth.

3.4 Conclusion

This literature review has explored how literacy evolves in response to cultural, technological, and pedagogical developments. A central theme is the idea of literacy as a flexible and adaptive practice shaped by changing communication forms and reading environments. While traditional approaches like close reading remain valuable, they may need to be complemented with strategies suited to digital and multimodal contexts. Skills such as navigating non-linear texts, evaluating sources, and switching between reading modes are becoming increasingly relevant. At the same time, connecting reading practices to students' everyday realities can foster deeper engagement and motivation. This highlights the importance of developing instructional strategies that are not only academically effective but also responsive to diverse learner needs and the broader social role of literacy. As literacy continues to change, teaching practices will also need to adapt. Supporting educators through professional development and recognising their agency can help ensure that literacy education remains inclusive and meaningful. Although the future of literacy cannot be fully predicted, openness to its ongoing transformation allows both teachers and students to better navigate new demands.

4. Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework guiding the study, with a focus on concepts such as futures literacy, future(s)-oriented methods, anticipation, discursive closure and inevitability. Collectively, these perspectives serve as analytical tools for examining how imagined futures shape present thinking and how particular narratives can either constrain or create opportunities for educational change.

4.1 Future(s)-oriented methods

This thesis is grounded in the field of futures studies, which serves as both the theoretical framework and methodology for this study. Future(s)-oriented methods provide a valuable framework for engaging with uncertainties and exploring potential futures. These methods can be understood epistemically through the lens of Law (2004), who critiques the overreliance of structured and predictable frameworks to fully understand and capture the complexity of the world. He advocates for a broader, more adaptive understanding of knowledge production that embraces uncertainty and accommodates the "messiness" of reality. Furthermore, the nature of future(s)-oriented methods resonates with Law's (2004) vision of methods as processes that shape, rather than merely reflect, reality.

One major quality of speculative methods is the focus on temporality, the way in which past, present, and future are entangled in an ongoing process of exchange (Ross, 2023). Rather than positioning time as linear or the future as a distant endpoint, speculative methods work with the idea that the present is always shaped by memory and anticipation (Noteboom & Ross, 2024). As Ross (2023) argues, this temporal complexity allows speculative methods to disrupt fixed understandings of what is and what has been, by foregrounding the uncertainties and possibilities of what is not-yet. In this way, speculation becomes a tool for navigating the unpredictability of time, not by resolving it, but by staying with its openness and uncertainty. Importantly, this temporal and speculative orientation also positions research within broader social and political contexts, where future imaginaries are understood as being shaped by the cultural, historical, and technological conditions of the present (Jasanoff, 2015).

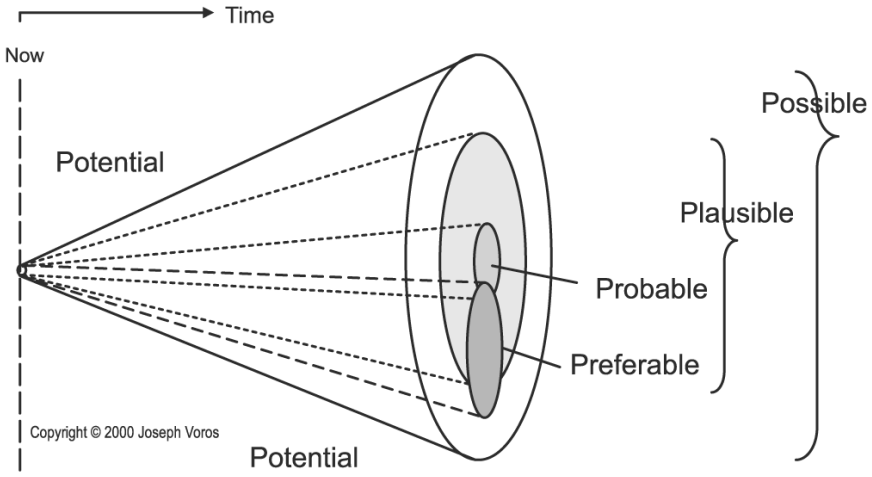
Closely tied to this temporal framing is the epistemological complexity of speculative methods (Noteboom and Ross, 2024). Rather than seeking to resolve predefined research questions, these approaches engage with the messiness of inquiry itself, treating problems not as given, but as objects of inquiry to be continually shaped, reconfigured, and explored. This makes speculative work and future(s)-oriented methods fundamentally open-ended, fostering a kind of knowledge-making that differs from traditional approaches focused on prediction, control, and definitive outcomes (Law, 2004).

Building on this foundation, anticipation theory provides additional theoretical support for understanding how individuals and societies engage with the future. As described by Reil Miller (2018), anticipation theory emphasizes the role of anticipation in shaping how individuals and societies perceive and act in the present. Unlike traditional forecasting, which seeks to predict the most likely future based on data and trends, anticipation theory argues that the future is not predetermined. Instead, it exists as multiple potential outcomes shaped by our beliefs, emotions, and decisions in the present. Voros (2003) and Miller (2018) share the belief that by understanding the interconnectedness between our anticipatory assumptions (AA), present decisions and future outcomes we have the ability to take agency and “use-the-future" to impact present actions and strategies. Engaging with futures-oriented methods requires questioning our AA, enabling a deeper reflection regarding the ways in which current beliefs and biases shape expectations about the future. Through anticipation theory, Miller advocates for the development of futures literacy—defined as the capability to identify and apply different forms of anticipation according to their purpose, context, and objectives—as well as more nuanced ways of understanding change, navigating complexity, and fostering innovative thinking.

4.1.1 The Futures Cone

Embracing the plurality of the future, futurists distinguish between different kinds of futures: possible, plausible, probable, and preferable (or desired) futures (Voros, 2003). The “futures cone” model (Figure 1) illustrates how there are many possible futures, some more plausible or probable than others, and some that represent preferable visions. Voros (2003) expands on the futures cone concept introduced by Hancock and Bezold (1994), incorporating the idea of wildcards, which are events with low probability but potentially high impact if they occur. In this study, participants will begin by exploring future scenarios in relation to their AA, allowing them to express their ideas freely without

being guided toward a specific type of future. Following this, planned activities will support them in identifying and developing preferred futures.



Source: Adapted from Hancock and Bezold (1994)

Figure 1Illustration of the "futures cone"

Retrieved from Joseph Voros (2003)

4.2 Approaches and Stances to Futures Literacy

There are various ways to approach future(s)-oriented methods, as well as numerous reasons for engaging with them. Lindberg and Haglind (2024) identify three primary stances that drive researchers to adopt future(s) approaches—critical, exploratory, and activist. Researchers exploring the future with a critical stance try to unfold the effects of present and near future decisions (Selwyn, 2019). Furthermore, an exploratory stance involves using futures thinking to learn how to think otherwise, emphasizing creativity and speculation (Ross, 2023; Selwyn et al., 2025). Lastly, the researcher leveraging futures thinking from an activist stance explores predetermined desirable futures, such as exploring various sustainable futures (Inayatullah, 2002).

Intertwined with these theoretical stances are different forms of imaginaries that emerge when engaging with futures literacy. These include anticipatory imaginaries, promissory imaginaries and sociotechnical imaginaries (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024). Anticipatory imaginaries, as previously mentioned, hold a specific purpose for action and are valuable for grappling with uncertainty and unpredictability. They shape how individuals and institutions prepare for and respond to possible

futures. Promissory imaginaries, on the other hand, are embedded within a solutionist discourse, often carrying unrealistic expectations about technological and educational innovation (Selwyn, 2022). Lastly, sociotechnical imaginaries provide a critical lens for examining how collective visions of the future are shaped by present socio-political, cultural, and technological conditions (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Lamb, 2025). This type of imaginary reveals how power dynamics, institutional agendas, and dominant narratives influence educational futures.

This categorization of imaginaries provides a structured way to analyse how the participating teachers engage in imagining futures, revealing the assumptions, expectations, and discourses that shape their envisioned educational futures. It highlights not only what is imagined but also the power dynamics that influence which futures are legitimized and which are dismissed (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015).

4.3 Discursive Closure and Inevitability

While speculative imagination can expand our capacity to envision alternative futures, this process is often constrained by discursive closure (Markham, 2021). Discursive closure refers to the ways in which certain narratives, assumptions, or imaginaries gain dominance over others, narrowing the scope of what we consider possible. This concept captures how our minds, along with the cultural and institutional systems we operate within, can limit the ability to imagine differently. For the purposes of this thesis, discursive closure is analytically extended to encompass two dimensions: internal and external. Although not explicitly defined by Markham, this distinction is introduced to more precisely illustrate how discursive closure functions across multiple levels. Internally, individuals may silence their own creative thoughts for they fear they are unrealistic or too radical, deviating from commonly accepted views of reality (Dunne & Raby, 2013). Externally, discursive closure can manifest through dominant power structures and group dynamics, where dominant narratives marginalize or suppress alternative ways of thinking (Markham, 2021).

These closures often reinforce dominant frames of inevitability, which can be understood as the belief that certain futures are unavoidable or already determined (Markham, 2021; Rahm & Kaun, 2022). In educational contexts, solutionist and efficiency-driven discourses often overshadow more critical, imaginative, or inclusive approaches to teaching and learning (Means, 2018; Selwyn, 2022). The result is a perceived narrowing of the future, where dominant imaginaries are accepted as inevitable

rather than seen as open to challenge (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015; Ross, 2017; Selwyn et al., 2020; Macgilchrist et al., 2023; Pink, 2023; Ross, 2023). This intersection between discursive closure and inevitability creates powerful constraints on futures thinking, limiting who feels authorized to imagine change and what kinds of change are considered feasible (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024).

Challenging this perceived inevitability requires not only critical awareness but also practical tools that can disrupt dominant assumptions. As Selwyn et al. (2020) emphasize, it is crucial to theorize the intersections between technology, inequality, and education in ways that foreground agency and openness. In this light, speculative and futures-oriented methods serve as important interventions. They invite educators and researchers to experiment, reflect, and envision otherwise (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024; Noteboom & Ross, 2024; Sporrong, 2024). As Dunne and Raby (2013, p.3) suggest, speculative imagination can "loosen, even just a little bit, reality's grip on our imagination". This loosening plays a key role in disrupting both discursive closure and the belief in inevitability. It creates space for more creative, inclusive, and responsive educational practices (Selwyn et al., 2020).

In this study, speculative methods are used to engage creatively with the uncertainty of the future (Noteboom & Ross, 2024). These methods can provide educators with space to experiment, reflect, and imagine beyond established deterministic views in a way that embraces the future's inherent plurality and teacher agency (Ross, 2023; Lindberg & Haglind, 2024; Sporrong, 2024).

5. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study and provides an overview of the research design and practical implementation of future(s)-oriented methods. It includes a description of the sampling strategy, details of the data collection process, as well as the analysis method.

5.1 Methodology and Stance

As outlined in the theoretical framework of this study, researchers engage with futures literacy through various stances, including critical, exploratory, and activist stances. While these perspectives are interconnected, they shape the choice of methods and models depending on the researchers' desired outcomes (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024). This study adopts an exploratory stance, employing speculative methods through the design and implementation of a workshop. The workshop serves as an intervention, embedded within participants' everyday practices, creating a space for creative and critical engagement with the uncertainties surrounding the future of literacy (Ross, 2023). By inviting them to explore alternative possibilities, the workshop foregrounds teachers' professional knowledge and lived experiences, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of their agency in reimagining instructional practices and the evolving relationships between students and text worlds.

5.1.1 Methods for Designing the Workshop

The design of the workshop is inspired by Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLL) and Miller's (2018) description of Three Phases of the Learning Cycle (Figure 2) model. FLL is a framework for developing futures literacy. Moreover, the Three Phases of the Learning Cycle-model offers a structured yet flexible framework that emphasizes the importance of following the participants learning curve, making anticipatory assumptions (AA) explicit and fostering creative exploration and reflection. Central to this model is the integration of Collective Intelligence Knowledge Creation (CIKC) processes, which encourage participants to collaboratively question and expand their thinking about the future.

The model is represented as an S-curve, highlighting three phases that reflect the progression of learning. In addition to the three phases, Miller includes a preliminary start-up phase which focuses on building a foundation for the learning process. Inspired by John Dewey's work, Miller's (2018)

intention is that this initial phase focuses on lighting a "spark from within", that is, a moment when participants develop curiosity or recognize the need to think differently about the future. Furthermore, a key objective during this initial phase is to establish the workshop's focus, define the terms for collaboration, and create the overall process. Additionally, introducing participants to the fundamentals of futures literacy at this stage is crucial, as it provides a foundation for meaningful engagement in the following phases. The following section describes these three phases in detail.

Phase 1 – Reveal: In this phase, participants move from tacit knowledge to explicit understanding. This is considered the "easy" phase as it relies on sharing what participants already know. Activities in this phase often involve distinguishing between expectations (probable futures) and hopes (desirable futures), helping participants become aware of their current AA's.

Phase 2 – Reframe: This is the most challenging phase, requiring participants to question and think otherwise from their typical assumptions about the future. Reframing demands participants to imagine futures beyond their familiar frames, often requiring them to detach from deterministic thinking and adopt unfamiliar AA.

Phase 3 – Rethink: This phase encourages participants to reflect on the differences in their assumptions and understand the purpose of 'using-the-future'. Participants often experience a shift in understanding, recognizing how deterministic thinking limits imagination and discovering alternative approaches to engage with the future.

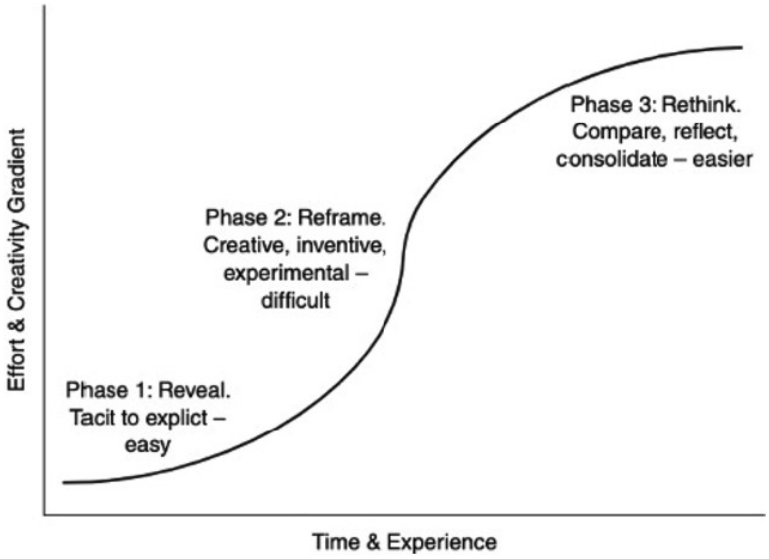


Figure 2. Illustration of the "Three Phases of the Learning Cycle"

Additionally, two key speculative methods that have been used in the workshop are speculative fabulation and back-casting. *Speculative fabulation* is a narrative-driven method that combines imagination with plausible social and technological developments. This method invites participants to create stories or characters that illustrate alternative future scenarios. By creating these narratives, participants can critically explore assumptions about what is possible, desirable, or challenging in future educational settings (Ross, 2023). In this study, speculative fabulation is used to encourage educators to imagine and describe the behaviours, values, and practices of future teachers and students, highlighting pedagogical possibilities and challenges. *Back-casting* is a strategic foresight method that begins by envisioning a future scenario and then works backward to identify the steps necessary to achieve that vision (Bendor et al., 2021). When engaging with back-casting techniques, practitioners gain a sense of heightened agency given the problem-solving and strategic nature in these activities (Bendor et al., 2021). This understanding of back-casting underpins the approach used in this study, where participants were encouraged to work backwards from their imagined futures to explore practical steps and pedagogical shifts.

Together, these methods allow for the exploration of alternative educational futures, fostering imaginative, critical, and responsive approaches to digital education. By expanding the boundaries of what is considered possible, these methods provide a space for educators to collaboratively develop inclusive practices and amplify alternative futures (Miller, 2018; Bendor et al., 2021; Ross, 2023). In essence, this approach is particularly valuable in fostering dialogue about the sociotechnical transformations shaping education, challenging assumptions about inevitability, and imagining innovative approaches to address the future of literacy education.

5.2 Research Design

A two-hour workshop was developed to explore the implementation of Futures Literacy Laboratories (FLL) with ten teachers working in grades K–3 and a teacher student. To ensure a familiar and comfortable setting, the participating teachers selected their school library as the workshop location. As previously mentioned, the workshop design drew on Miller's (2018) Three Phases of the Learning Cycle and incorporated elements of speculative fabulation and back-casting. The following section

outlines the structure of the workshop, anticipated challenges, and proposed strategies for addressing them.

5.2.1 Workshop Design

Start-up Phase

Prior to the workshop, participants received a welcome letter outlining the workshop's theme and inviting them to reflect on one to three challenges they perceived in current literacy education. This preparatory task served two key purposes. First, it aimed to prompt early reflection and encourage participants to begin identifying their underlying assumptions about literacy. In doing so, they were more likely to arrive at the workshop with ideas that could be further explored during the session. Secondly, the task established a foundation for engaging with anticipatory assumptions. By reflecting on current challenges, participants were indirectly encouraged to consider what they regard as fixed or inevitable about the future of literacy education. This approach aligned with Miller's (2018) emphasis on igniting a "spark from within" by enabling participants to shape the direction of the workshop from the outset.

Phase 1

The first phase of the workshop was dedicated to introductions and setting the scene. Participants were introduced to the overall goal of exploring how reading practices might evolve and what implications this could have for teaching and student engagement. A brief overview of future(s)-oriented research was provided, emphasising that the future is not predetermined but shaped by present assumptions and decisions. Following this, participants were invited to share and discuss the challenges they had identified in the preparatory task. This discussion served as an entry point for introducing the concept of anticipatory assumptions (AAs), encouraging participants to articulate and reflect on the assumptions that influenced their perspectives on the future of literacy education.

Phase 2

In the second phase of the workshop, participants worked in small groups to create a speculative future scenario, imagining what reading might look like between the years 2035 and 2055. Each group began by selecting a year and a central character—such as a student or teacher—for their scenario and collaboratively explored three key themes: environment and surroundings, attitudes and habits,

and relationships and collaborations. These themes were adapted from Cerratto Pargman et al. (2023), who identified them as central dimensions for imagining and analysing future learning environments.

To support the creative and comprehensive development of scenarios, participants were guided by a set of written reflective prompts aligned with each theme, as suggested by Ross (2023). For example, one prompt asked participants to consider, "What abilities and skills are considered important for readers of this time?" In addition, facilitator-led questions encouraged reflection on socially sustainable educational futures, including considerations of student diversity, inclusion, and equity within their imagined scenarios. The aim of this exercise was to engage participants in speculative fabulation, fostering comprehensive and imaginative exploration of possible futures for reading. Collaborative work toward a shared scenario further promoted dialogue, cooperation, and critical reflection.

Phase 3

Building on earlier phases, the final stage of the workshop introduced the "postcards" activity. Inspired by Cerratto Pargman et al. (2023), this exercise used back-casting to explore how imagined futures could inform and influence present actions. Participants were asked to write a postcard from the perspective of someone living in the future scenarios they had developed in their groups. The postcard took the form of a thank-you letter, expressing gratitude to someone in the present for making that future possible—highlighting key actions or initiatives that helped transform literacy education.

5.2.2 Pilot Workshops

To evaluate the workshop design and identify necessary adjustments, two pilot workshops were conducted. The first pilot workshop involved a self-run session, allowing me to reflect on the structure, flow, and potential challenges participants might face. The second pilot workshop was conducted with individuals from my close environment. This session provided valuable insights into participant engagement, comprehension, and the overall effectiveness of the workshop design. Both pilot workshops aimed to explore strategies for addressing discursive closure, ensuring that participants could openly engage with the content. The participants in the second workshop experienced a learning curve that closely mirrored the *Three Phases of the Learning Cycle*

framework, highlighting the strength of the workshop design. Additionally, these sessions guided decisions about the information needed for the participants to fully comprehend and engage with the presented concepts and methods.

5.3 Sampling Method

This study drew on the perspectives of primary teachers responsible for reading and literacy instruction in grades K–3 within the Swedish school system. The target population consisted of educators actively engaged in literacy teaching, as their experiences offer valuable insights into how the future of reading education is understood and imagined. While no strict upper limit was set for participation, a minimum of eight teachers was identified to ensure sufficient depth and diversity in the data for meaningful analysis.

To recruit participants, initial contact was made through local school principals, who were then asked to share information about the study with teachers and identify those who expressed interest in participating. This indirect recruitment strategy allowed for voluntary participation. As a result of this approach, one school responded positively, expressing willingness to participate in the study. A total of 14 teachers showed interest in participating in the workshop. To organise communication and coordination, one teacher was appointed as the primary contact person between the researcher and the school. This process ensured an efficient recruitment strategy while allowing the participating teachers to engage in the study voluntarily and collaboratively.

Shortly before the workshop, the designated school contact teacher requested the inclusion of three teacher students who were completing a work placement at the participating school. Given their active involvement in literacy instruction and the relevance of including perspectives from emerging educators, their participation was welcomed. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Of the three teacher students invited, one attended the workshop. Additionally, three of the fourteen originally interested teachers withdrew due to illness or changes in personal circumstances. In total, eleven participants took part in the workshop: ten qualified teachers and one teacher student (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participant Chart

Participant 1	Preschool
Participant 2	Preschool + Swedish as a second language
Participant 3	Preschool
Participant 4	Grade 1
Participant 5	Teacher student on last term, Grades preschool–3
Participant 6	Grade 1
Participant 7	Grade 2
Participant 8	Grade 1
Participant 9	Grade 2
Participant 10	Grade 2
Participant 11	Grade 3

5.4 Data Collection

In the following section, the methods for data collection employed in this study are presented. This study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection, aiming to gather insights from teachers regarding their professional practices and future visions of literacy education. As speculative methods are performative in nature, multiple methods were employed to capture and cultivate this process (Ross, 2023). The data collection process was designed to enable analysis on how the speculative interventions provoked new ways of thinking and disrupted established assumptions. The primary data sources included audio recordings of workshop discussions, observational and reflective notes, and participant-generated documentation, such as notes and postcards. Each method played an important role in capturing the speculative and performative dimensions of the study.

5.4.1 Audio recordings

Audio recorders were used to capture the workshop discussions. Participants were informed about the recordings both prior to and at the start of the workshop, with clear explanations provided regarding their purpose and how the data would be stored and managed. Care was taken to ensure participants felt at ease, helping to minimise any concerns about the recordings affecting their engagement. The dataset consisted of approximately six hours of audio. Further details about the ethical handling of this data are outlined in Section 6.3 (Ethical Considerations: Data Collection).

5.4.2 Participant-Generated Documentation

Participants were encouraged to document their thoughts, reflections, and ideas directly during the workshop discussions. This documentation included written notes and sketches. These materials provided further insight into how participants made sense of the prompts given as well as made visible how they chose to articulate or illustrate their visions of future literacy education.

5.4.3 Observational and Reflective Notes

Observational and reflective notes were taken throughout the workshop to document interactions, group dynamics, and moments of speculative engagement that might not have been fully captured in participants' verbal or written responses. These notes included my interpretations of participants' actions, such as how they collaborated or responded to speculative prompts. Additional reflective notes were written immediately after the workshop to record further insights, initial impressions, and unexpected observations that could inform later stages of analysis.

5.5 Data Analysis

An abductive thematic analysis was selected for this study, as it aligns well with the open-ended and exploratory nature of the speculative research approach. Abduction allows for movement between theory and data to generate plausible interpretations, rather than fixed conclusions (Thompson, 2022). This complements speculative methods, which emphasize imagining possibilities, embracing ambiguity, and resisting closure. Furthermore, this study draws on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021), who frame thematic analysis as an active, interpretative process in which meaning is co-constructed through the researcher's engagement with the data. Thompson's (2022) abductive thematic analysis model is employed to structure the analytical process. This eight-step framework extends Braun and Clarke's original model while embedding abductive reasoning and emphasising the recursive relationship between data and theory.

In line with Thompson's (2022) abductive thematic analysis model, the analytical process began with thorough familiarisation with the dataset, including transcription and repeated close readings. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, capturing not only the participants' words but also non-verbal utterances (e.g., sighs, laughter, pauses) where relevant. This approach ensured consistency to

the original data and enabled a nuanced interpretation during the coding process. Engaging deeply with the material at this early stage was contributory in establishing a strong foundation for generating preliminary codes.

Coding was conducted as an iterative and reflexive process, supported by visual tools such as mind maps. Initially, one mind map was created per participant group, each organised around four analytical constructs derived from the theoretical framework: discursive closure, consensus, narratives, and engagement with futures literacy. These constructs guided interpretation and helped surface emerging patterns within each group's discussion. To synthesise insights across groups, an additional set of four mind maps was developed—one for each construct—integrating findings from all participants. This comparative stage enabled analysis of how participants positioned themselves in relation to both the speculative method and the educational futures they imagined. Additional mind maps were created to explore perceived benefits of the method for both the researcher and participants, as well as key themes from the workshop's first phase, including challenges and the four core constructs. Postcard data was also coded visually, using colour-coding to differentiate participant groups. In total, 16 mind maps were generated throughout the analysis process. This visual approach supported a structured and nuanced interpretation of the dataset. The coded data was then examined to identify patterns of alignment and tension. Building on this, the process moved toward actively constructing themes that reflected shared codes and the focus of group discussions. Three final themes were developed, following a clear structure and logical flow.

In the final stages, the analysis was written up with a commitment to preserving the complexity and multiplicity of participants' perspectives. This involved embracing the inherent messiness of qualitative data, as well as the entangled, situated nature of human meaning-making (Law, 2004). Rather than attempting to stabilise or resolve contradictions, the write-up foregrounds tensions and ambiguities as meaningful features of the speculative and abductive process.

6. Research Ethics

Building on the previous chapter, this chapter outlines the guiding standards used to ensure research quality. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical considerations associated with the workshop design and data collection methods.

6.1 Research Quality

In social science, reliability and validity are standard measures of research quality. However, these concepts are less applicable to qualitative research due to its interpretive and context-sensitive nature (Sleeboom-Faulkner & McMurray, 2018; Bryman et al., 2021). As Sleeboom-Faulkner and McMurray (2018) note, disciplines like anthropology require ethical flexibility to address cultural sensitivities and participant vulnerability, placing the responsibility for quality on the researcher. While qualitative research may not seek universal truths, it offers rich, situated insights into lived experience, cultural practices, and social meaning. This makes it well-suited for exploring diverse perspectives and complex, ethically sensitive topics. Speculative methods build on these strengths by allowing participants and researchers to surface assumptions, values and reasoning in the context of societal transformation and systemic challenges (Cerratto-Pargman et al., 2023; Ross, 2023).

This study adopted Tracy's (2010) "big-tent" criteria, complemented by an emphasis on accountability (Cerratto-Pargman et al., 2023). Together, these principles contributed to establishing an ethically grounded and contextually responsive foundation for conducting qualitative research within speculative and participatory frameworks (Ross, 2023).

Tracy (2010) highlights the importance of a *worthy topic* and *rich rigour* in qualitative research. This study addresses a worthy topic by engaging with urgent societal challenges through the use of future(s)-oriented methods. These methods are particularly relevant as they open up possibilities for rethinking educational practices in response to current and emerging global issues (Selwyn et al. 2020). *Rich rigour* was partly demonstrated through the use of diverse data sources and theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, *sincerity* acknowledges that researchers are not neutral observers but active participants whose identities, experiences, and perspectives shape their interpretations. Tracy's concept of sincerity aligns with Ross (2023) emphasis on considering the researchers positionality in speculative interventions, given that the speculative process is inherently guided by the researcher's

values and assumptions. For example, in studying the LeaDS programme, I was aware of how the programme may influence my own thinking about the interconnections between learning, digital transformation, and sustainable futures. To mitigate potential bias, I engaged in ongoing reflexivity and actively acted to minimise my influence on the participants' perspectives, as further discussed in Section 5.7 (Research Ethics). Furthermore, key decisions made during the research process were documented to ensure transparency and demonstrate credibility. Finally, *meaningful coherence* was achieved by aligning the study's purpose with its methodological design, as well as integrating literature, theory and empirical data cohesively.

Alongside Tracy's (2010) "big-tent" criteria for qualitative research, accountability was central to evaluating the quality of future(s)-oriented research. Speculative and anticipatory methods require ongoing critical reflection on the researcher's role and responsibilities. These approaches can challenge dominant educational narratives and introduce uncertainties that must be carefully navigated (Ross, 2023). Envisioning alternative futures may elicit strong emotional responses—empowering participants through voice and agency, while also provoking discomfort by questioning established assumptions (Jasanoff, 2015). Researcher accountability, therefore, entailed sensitivity to the evolving research context and a commitment to remaining responsive to participants' perspectives (Ross, 2023). During the workshop, I adopted a flexible approach, adjusting prompts to align with participants' language and emerging topics (Cerratto Pargman et al., 2023). This attentiveness continued into the analysis and writing phases, where I aimed to represent participants and the empirical material with care and respect.

6.2 Ethical Considerations: Workshop

Designing for engagement with future-oriented methods requires a thoughtful and ethically guided design process (Galloway & Caudwell, 2018). Without such consideration, there was a risk of limiting participants' capacity to imagine alternative futures and reinforcing discursive closure (Markham, 2021). As Markham (2018) argues, traditional concept- or error-driven models of ethics often fall short in dynamic, participatory contexts. Instead, she advocates for an impact-oriented approach that foregrounds the situated and often unpredictable nature of ethical decision-making in qualitative research. This approach focuses on reflexive practices, where researchers consider the potential

consequences of their methodological choices and take accountability for fostering ethical and meaningful participation.

In response to an impact-oriented approach, the workshop was designed with an emphasis on humility toward participants, particularly regarding their engagement with imaginative practices. Recognizing that participants might have found it challenging to "think otherwise" was crucial (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024). The workshop sought to support the participants engagement by uncovering and cultivating their internal "spark," rather than steering their thinking in predefined ways. This emphasis on self-directed curiosity aimed to create space for genuine reflection and speculative thinking (Miller, 2018).

To reduce the risk of influencing participants' thinking, as noted by Ross (2023), the workshop was deliberately designed to minimise researcher steering. This was achieved through both visual and verbal framing. Visual materials were intentionally minimal—for example, PowerPoint slides were kept neutral in design to avoid suggesting specific ideas. Verbal framing also aimed to support autonomy. Prompts were carefully worded to inspire imagination rather than direct responses, and the information provided about the method was intentionally open-ended to avoid guiding participants toward predetermined outcomes. The overall structure of the activities was designed to encourage imaginative engagement and allow participants to explore future scenarios independently.

My position as a master's student also shaped this approach. I consciously avoided imposing my own assumptions, seeking to preserve the integrity of participants' ideas. However, this non-intrusive stance occasionally made me hesitant to challenge participants or extend their anticipatory thinking, revealing a tension between neutrality and critical engagement.

6.3 Ethical Considerations: Data Collection

Ethical data collection in this study was grounded in principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, and the protection of participant privacy. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and how their data would be used, both at the time of invitation and during the workshop (Swedish Research Council, 2024). Prior to any audio recordings, participants were explicitly made aware of their rights, including the right to anonymity

and the data protection measures in place. Their informed and explicit consent was obtained before proceeding. Participation was entirely voluntary, and in line with ethical standards in qualitative research, participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time without consequence (Tracy, 2010).

To protect participants' identities and personal information, all data collected during the study was treated with respect and confidentiality. Any identifying details that could potentially reveal a participant's identity—such as names, locations, or specific contextual references—were removed or altered during the transcription and analysis process. Participants were informed of these measures, as well as of the study's data handling and security protocols, in both the invitation letter and during the workshop, with the aim of creating a safe environment in which they could share their thoughts freely.

Throughout the research process, all collected data was stored and managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Swedish Research Council, 2024). The data management approach was informed by the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable), adapted to the qualitative nature of the study (GO FAIR, n.d.). This included the use of secure storage and documentation to support transparency and responsible research practices. Digital data, including audio recordings and transcriptions, was securely stored using ShareFile, a secure file-sharing and storage service provided by Jönköping University. Access to the stored data was strictly limited to the master's student and the thesis supervisor.

7. Findings

This chapter presents the key findings from the dataset, organised thematically in line with the guiding theoretical framework. It opens with an overview of the scenario-building focus areas selected by each group and the narratives that emerged during the workshop. The findings are then explored through three interrelated themes. The first theme presents the teachers imagined literacy-futures through the lens of relationships. The second focuses on pedagogical aspects of reading, including instructional practices and the roles of print and digital media. The third reflects on how participants engaged with futures, highlighting the factors that shaped or limited their capacity to imagine alternative educational futures.

7.1 Introduction to Findings

7.1.1 Focus Areas in Group Activity

The following overviews present the scenario-building discussions from each group. To structure these summaries, three criteria were used: the timeframe of the future imagined, the main character or perspective (e.g., student or teacher), and the central context or theme of the group's vision. These criteria help highlight how each group approached the task and what educational aspects they chose to focus on.

Group 1 (Participants 2, 6, and 9) envisioned the year 2040 from the perspective of a teacher. Their discussion centred on the importance of maintaining and strengthening the role of printed texts in schools. They identified several barriers to this goal, including political agendas, the societal impact of digitalisation, and limited school resources. The group expressed a strong belief in the pedagogical value of print-based reading and expressed a concern about its declining presence in today's classrooms.

Group 2 (Participants 1, 5, and 8) envisioned the year 2040 from the perspective of a student. Their discussion focused on designing future classrooms that promote inclusivity, engagement, and a sense of security. The imagined environment was highly analogue and print-based, inspired by their own early experiences in small, single-storey schools in smaller communities. They described calm settings with small class sizes, centred around the motto "There is time for me, there is space for me," reflecting their vision of a classroom that recognises each student's individual needs.

Group 3 (Participants 4, 7, and 11) envisioned the year 2035 from the perspective of a student. Their discussion focused on the broader societal and political influences on education, particularly how policy decisions and digitalisation affect literacy instruction and reading engagement. They explored the challenges posed by digital developments both locally and globally, highlighting the tension between political expectations and the everyday realities of classroom practice.

Group 4 (Participants 3 and 10) envisioned the year 2055, focusing on the role of guardians in literacy development. They discussed current challenges in family engagement and imagined stronger home-school collaboration. Reading homework was seen as a key link, with a future vision of it becoming digital to enhance communication. The group hoped for more informed, supportive, and involved guardians in students' literacy journeys.

7.1.2 Dominant Narratives

During the workshop, several shared narratives emerged that illustrated how participants made sense of the broader forces shaping literacy and education. These discussions revealed underlying beliefs about responsibility, influence, and the capacity to shape educational futures. Central to these narratives were reflections on how different actors, including teachers, policymakers, guardians, and students, are shaped by societal change and how they engage with and contribute to students' literacy development in uneven and sometimes conflicting ways.

A strong societal narrative emerged around digitalisation and its perceived impact on reading behaviours and educational values. Participants described current society as fast-paced, distracted, and immersed with screen-based entertainment. In this context, traditional reading was often seen as replaced by, or in competition with gaming, audio content, and fragmented digital experiences. Participants spoke of a generational shift in habits and attention spans, suggesting that students today are growing up in a culture that rarely reinforces focused reading. This cultural context was seen as influencing not only students, but also the attitudes of guardians and even broader political agendas.

These societal shifts were often positioned in opposition to the participants' own educational values. Teachers were described as working against societal trends as professionals who care deeply about their students and strive to maintain meaningful literacy practices. The participants expressed a strong belief in the value of print-based reading, both as a pedagogical tool and as a counterforce to digital saturation. Despite the narrative of themselves being pedagogically grounded and contextually aware,

many expressed frustrations at lacking the authority to influence broader decisions. Teachers were described as undervalued, burdened, and largely unheard by external actors.

The role of government and policymakers was framed in critical terms. Participants viewed political actors as distant and disconnected from the day-to-day realities of classroom life. They spoke of reforms and digital initiatives being imposed without input from educators, driven more by economic or political agendas than pedagogical insight. Decisions around digitalisation, in particular, were seen as top-down efforts that failed to account for the actual needs of students or the professional judgment of teachers. There was a strong sense that these policies often complicate rather than support effective literacy instruction.

Students were seen as caught in the middle of these dynamics. They were often described as lacking motivation to read, easily distracted, and unaccustomed to sustained engagement with text. Yet participants recognised that these behaviours are not isolated but deeply shaped by the cultural and technological context in which students live. Participant 8 even suggested that their group focus on teachers rather than students in their scenario-building, arguing that students' behaviours are largely a reflection of societal conditions.

7.2 Theme 1: Future Literacies as a Relational Practice

This theme presents how the participating teachers envisioned the future of literacy instruction and practices, as discussed during the workshop. Their visions were deeply rooted in the significance of various relationships, particularly those shaping students' literacy development. These include students' relationships with texts, their reading environments, and the broader educational structures surrounding them. The findings that this theme presents are organised in subthemes that relate to these relationships, as well as how teachers envision their roles within schools and in relation to other influential actors.

7.2.1 Students' Future Relationships with Text Worlds

> Thank you, to my teacher, for making me love reading today. (Participant 9)

In the futures imagined by the participating teachers, students' relationships with texts are grounded in print-based literacy. Schools are portrayed as environments where printed reading remains central to instruction, while digital reading is clearly separated from core educational practices. This strong orientation toward print is not simply about preserving tradition but is seen as a future-focused strategy to equip students with essential literacy skills in a digital society.

Students in these scenarios are described as motivated, focused, and emotionally connected to reading. They no longer struggle with restlessness or distraction but are deeply immersed in books, as reading makes you "want to sit down, not run around chasing" (Participant 6). Reading is seen as both a cosy and meaningful activity. Learners enjoy reading aloud, reading in pairs, and participating in shared reading environments. They express appreciation for their teachers' efforts in fostering this love of reading. In one imagined postcard from the future, a student thanks their teacher for giving them a craving to read (Participant 5), and another describes how much they enjoy their engaging and inspiring reading homework (Participant 3).

Through print reading, students are imagined developing a broad range of critical skills essential for navigating digital contexts, such as vocabulary development, interpretation, source evaluation, and analytical thinking. As Participant 7 put it:

> We have to prepare the children as much as possible to be able to handle the digital world, and for that, it's good if they are strong readers—and they become that best by not using digital tools in reading instruction, we believe. And it's not just us.

By emphasizing "not just us" and "we," Participant 7 reinforces the idea that this belief in print-based instruction is widely shared within their professional setting, legitimizing a minimalistic approach to digitizing education. In this future vision, learners are seen as active, thoughtful readers, capable of resisting digital distractions and critically engaging with the increasing flow of information around them.

In addition, the futures envisioned by participants place strong emphasis on a renewed recognition of the value of school-based reading—a term used to distinguish structured, educational reading from the more casual, entertainment-driven practices often associated with digital media. As Participant 6 reflected:

> We're at a point now where people have understood that books are important again, because things go in cycles like this.

This quote reflects a perception of historical and cultural cycles in educational values, where traditional practices—such as print-based reading—periodically fall out of favour and later re-emerge. Rather than interpreting this return as a form of regression, it is understood as part of a broader oscillation in pedagogical trends, in which past methods regain significance as their long-term benefits become newly relevant.

7.2.2 Students Future Relations to Reading Environments

In the envisioned futures created by the participants, schools have "received a lot of money" (Participant 1) to intentionally designed classrooms and reading environments that support students in their literacy development and “spark an interest in reading” (Participant 9). These future reading spaces are envisioned as inspiring, inclusive, and child-friendly environments. They aim to foster diverse print-based reading habits while also promoting engagement, comfort, and a sense of security.

Teachers agreed that emotional and physical comfort are foundational for developing positive relationships with reading. Consequently, classroom reading areas in the future will resemble homely living room spaces, furnished with cushions, sofas and plants, offering students a relaxed setting that nurtures immersion in text worlds and emotional connection to texts. The importance of such environments was powerfully illustrated during the workshop’s postcard activity, where participants imagined students, that grow up in their future scenarios, expressing gratitude to their teachers for creating spaces that made reading joyful and accessible.

> In our classroom, we had a reading corner with soft cushions to sit on. The bookshelves were full of books that suited all of us. In our group rooms, there were plenty of nonfiction books to read. We could choose between listening or reading books, which was very inspiring. Because we read so much at school, I love reading today. (Participant 9)

In this future, the students will have easy access to physical books:

> Of course, there’s also a staffed library that is open all the time. And you can sit on a nice rug. There are books in the classroom, there’s a library you can go to, and whenever you need a book, there’s always one available to borrow. (Participant 7)

There will be bookshelves in the classroom full of age-appropriate and interest specific books that suit the children. Additionally, due to the close relationship teachers will have with librarians in the future, the students will be able to be helped by experts that can help them choose engaging books.

Teachers also identified the transformation of physical infrastructure as a key condition for future literacy development. In their futures, classrooms will be designed with children's physical needs in mind, ensuring accessibility and independence. The current disconnects between school architecture and the realities of young learners, such as unreachable hooks, heavy doors, and locked facilities, will be replaced with environments that prioritize children's size, autonomy, and sense of agency. As participant 1 explains, future classrooms will no longer be spaces students must adapt to; rather, they will be spaces adapted to students. These futures illustrate how the physical design of classrooms and schools can either support or hinder students' sense of agency, safety, and relationship to literacy practices.

7.2.3 Teachers Relations to Schools and Other Influential Actors

> Thank you! By believing/listening to what all the teachers in Sweden have been shouting and fighting for over the past 30 years, you finally started to listen! (Participant 8)

In the future envisioned by the participating teachers, schools will be central institutions in cultivating a strong and equitable literacy culture. They will act as driving forces behind the development of students' reading habits, critical engagement with texts, and lifelong learning. Within this system, teachers will not only facilitate literacy but will be recognised as authoritative professionals with a vital role in shaping educational policy and practice. Their experience and situational expertise, as "teachers who meet students every day", will be central to informed decision-making processes (Participant 8). This renewed recognition is rooted in a broader societal shift, one that values teachers for their instructional role as well as for their contribution to society at large. As one participant expressed:

> Thank you for recognizing our competence and what we, together, can do for OUR children and OUR society. (Participant 1)

A key element of this vision is the centralisation of schools: "there are no private schools left in 2040" (Participant 1). This shift is seen to support increased teacher status, reduced class sizes, improved teacher-student ratios, more equitable funding, and a renewed societal commitment to education and literacy. Furthermore, teachers will be empowered to lead this transformation, with their roles legitimized by institutional trust and public recognition. A step towards this legitimisation will be through initiatives that make their professional identity more visible and respected. As one participant envisioned: "you [teachers] walk around with an ID so that it shows, just like doctors." (Participant 11)

As a result of this increased professional authority, collaboration emerges as a defining feature of the envisioned future. Teachers are seen as working in close, purposeful partnership with external actors such as guardians and libraries to create a supportive literacy ecosystem. Within schools, collegial collaboration is also strengthened, with greater emphasis placed on shared dialogue and collective responsibility. Participant 3 reflected on the value of this collegial culture and its role in shaping a strong team:

> [Our reflective discussions] have carried us to what our school is today, where we can set high expectations on guardians, a living reading homework, inspiring learning environments, fast communication between us and the home, as well as good collaboration within the team.

This collaborative model will strengthen shared responsibility for literacy development. Guardians will be more engaged in students' reading journeys, having come to understand their crucial role in the process. As Participant 6 described:

> In the best of worlds, guardians have somewhere understood that it [student's literacy development] is important. Because it requires a type of cooperation.

Additionally, schools will embrace a clearly defined compensatory role. Teachers highlighted how disparities in students' home environments currently create unequal starting points in literacy. In the future, schools will address this directly by ensuring equitable access to books, inclusive learning environments, and differentiated support tailored to diverse needs. These schools will not only provide the analogue materials necessary for developing literacy skills, but also ensure that every student, regardless of background, have meaningful opportunities to thrive.

7.3 Theme 2: Pedagogical Priorities and the Future of Reading Instruction

The second theme addresses the pedagogical dimensions of reading, specifically, how participants understand the process of learning to read, how reading is defined, which actors and factors are influencing literacy development, and the broader pedagogical implications. Across all groups, there was consensus that reading remains a fundamental skill, essential in past, present, and future societies. However, participants expressed concern that the value of reading is diminishing in today's culture as a result of increased digital habits and shifting educational priorities.

7.3.1 Legitimate Reading Practices and Formats in the Future

> To preserve things that are good—that's not being regressive, and it's not old-fashioned to keep doing things that have worked for thousands of years, or at least hundreds. These are well-proven methods, so why not continue with them? Why create something new if the new things aren't always better? Going back to something that was done before isn't a failure—it might actually be the future. (Participant 7)

In the future envisioned by the participants, school-based reading will be clearly distinguished from the more casual and entertainment-oriented reading practices common in students' everyday digital lives. Across all groups, there was a strong sense that print-based reading would continue to be seen as the most legitimate and educationally valuable form of reading in schools. Print is positioned as the foundation of literacy instruction in the future, particularly in early education, where it is seen as essential for developing deep reading skills and fostering meaningful engagement with texts. Across the groups, there was strong agreement on this point. As Participant 11 put it:

> We can't keep getting less and less smart on our planet... And the research that is coming out shows that digitalization is not good for learning in any way... At some point, things just have to turn around.

To support this, participants suggested different ways to reinforce the role of print and legitimize its place in school. Group 1, for instance, came up with the idea of introducing a dedicated reading timetable:

> P2: What happens if we have our own timetable for reading—then we can also tell guardians, "This is how it is."
> P9: This is how much we're supposed to read.
> P2: This is how much reading we do in school. It's really important. Then all of a sudden, we have a stronger... point to emphasize. It's like—yes, we have this at school, we have our own reading timetable. This is how much space reading is supposed to take. And that can include all kinds of reading: reading aloud, independent reading, partner reading, group reading. And here we can include so much.

Reading in this future is characterised by structured, intentional, and linear engagement with printed texts through practices such as silent reading, reading aloud, and reading in pairs. These activities will be integrated into the school day and recognised as essential for developing core literacy skills including vocabulary acquisition, analytical thinking, and deep comprehension.

Furthermore, the participants envision a future where the increasing influence of digital reading in society is viewed with caution. The perceived distractibility of digital media was a key concern, as explained by participant 3:

> When you use an iPad, there are so many other things that attract... it's a very long learning process for them [children] because it's so easy for them to slip into the other things that are so much more fun, like games that are there and distract.

Furthermore, with support from the rest of the participants, Participant 11 states digitalization is "the worst thing that has happened to our brain... we absolutely don't need any digital [resources]". The teachers base this scepticism toward screen-based reading on the negative impact this format has on their student's brain development, as well as previous failed attempts to implement educational technology at their school. Furthermore, the teachers strongly agree that digital formats undermine the sustained attention and depth of understanding required for focused reading practices and long-term literacy development. Therefore, in this future, digital reading formats are not considered legitimate within the educational context.

7.3.2 Current and Future Challenges in Reading Instruction

Several key challenges were identified by teachers regarding the current and future conditions of literacy and reading instruction. These challenges reflect both the immediate challenges encountered in classrooms and broader shifts, all expected to shape literacy education moving forward.

A prominent theme raised by participants concerned the changing nature of reading in what one teacher described as our "fast-paced," "stressed," "TikTok" society (Participant 6). Teachers questioned what now qualifies as reading, particularly given the widespread use of phones and tablets in students' daily lives. The increasingly blurred line between purposeful reading and passive digital consumption was identified as a major challenge in contemporary reading instruction. Participants linked these challenges directly to students' approach to literacy development, describing it as lacking the structure and focus required for meaningful reading. As Participant 3 observed, "they just don't have that kind of structure." The shift toward fragmented, screen-based media was seen to undermine students' ability to engage in sustained, linear reading, further complicating efforts to cultivate foundational reading skills in the classroom.

Furthermore, participants emphasised that shifting material conditions and the growing influence of digitalisation are significantly shaping students' mindsets, behaviours, and motivation to read. Teachers consistently described students as demonstrating low perseverance and a limited willingness to engage in the cognitively demanding process of learning to read. Constant exposure to digital media was seen to have changed students' relationship with reading, making sustained engagement

with text less intuitive. As Participant 4 explained, “it’s no longer natural to sit with a book compared to picking up an iPad and playing a game.” The increasing availability of tools that read texts aloud further complicates efforts to foster independent reading practices. While participants acknowledged that entertainment-oriented, digital reading practices will likely become even more established in the future, their concerns centred on the potential consequences of this trend, particularly its impact on students’ ability to engage deeply with text, maintain focus, and build essential literacy skills within educational settings.

In response, teachers emphasised the need to foster resilience, with Participant 1 stating that students must “practice things that are boring and train endurance,” and Participant 6 adding, “You can't have fun all the time.” Reading was often described as being perceived by students as slow and demanding, which contrasts their preference for fast, easily accessible content. Teachers noted that this mindset contributes to frustration, disengagement, and difficulty sustaining attention, all of which hinder the development of reading skills.

Furthermore, a significant challenge for teachers lies in the varying pace at which student’s progress and acquire reading skills. Addressing this diversity within a single classroom is difficult, often resulting in substantial disparities in students’ literacy development. However, the teachers acknowledged the practical limitations they face in addressing this challenge. Time constraints, limited resources, and large class sizes make it challenging to provide individualized support to every student.

In addition, participants expressed concern about the role of guardians, who were not viewed as effective reading role models. Their frequent device use created ambiguity around their reading habits, as it is difficult for children to distinguish between engaged reading and casual scrolling through social media. This lack of visible reading role models was seen as contributing to a broader cultural shift away from traditional, print-based reading practices.

The current challenges identified in literacy instruction were imagined to either persist or gradually be resolved, depending on the plausibility of their futures. In groups where participants imagined utopian futures, schools were positioned as institutions actively countering digital saturation. They envisioned a cultural shift in which guardians would come to recognize the limitations of digital media and align more closely with the school’s role in fostering reduced digital exposure and renewed

focus on print-based literacy. In these futures, home environments would support the educational emphasis on print-based reading. This vision was grounded in hope, but also acknowledged as a transformation that would require time and societal reflection:

> Master student (MS) Do you think society outside will listen, agree with this [future]?
> P2,6 & 9: Nah.
> P2: Or yes, probably agree.
> MS: But take the guardians—how do you think they'll respond to you as teachers in 2040 saying, "No, we are standing against digital use"?
> P6: [laughs]
> P2: Yes, but we have the dream.
> MS: Aren't they part of the dream?
> P9: I think they would have flipped along with us and realized that this [using digital] didn't turn out so well.

In contrast, one group chose to envision more plausible future, a future that was considered to align more closely to current contexts. This group predicted that these home–school gaps would continue to pose challenges in the future. Rather than expecting a fundamental shift in guardians' roles, these teachers focused on what could be done within the school setting. They imagined future classrooms as spaces contrasting with the outside world, where students would be drawn into reading through engaging environments and accessible materials, with the aim of fostering intrinsic motivation:

> P7: And challenges—yes, it's about competing with the clicks.
> P11: The home, yeah
> P7: Yes, but it's about getting the students over that edge, so that they get far enough in their reading for it to feel easy and enjoyable—so it's not just hard work, but it becomes fun to read, and they choose to read on their own.
> P11: And it does become fun—more fun—if you have access to books, so you don't have to choose the boring one that's left.

While some participants envisioned broad cultural shifts that would bring societal values into closer alignment with those of the school, others focused on practical, classroom-based solutions. Nonetheless, despite differing approaches, all scenarios reflected a shared commitment to addressing these challenges and fostering meaningful reading engagement.

7.4 Theme 3: Imagining Alternative Futures of Teaching and Learning Reading

This final theme explores how participants engaged with the futures activities introduced during the workshop. The participants had not previously engaged with futures and the speculative and open-ended nature of the activities felt unfamiliar. Despite this, the teachers expressed an appreciation for

the process and the opportunity to reflect on broader questions related to literacy, pedagogy, and change. Their engagement revealed both the possibilities and challenges of imagining alternative futures in education, highlighting how deeply rooted assumptions and norms shape what is seen as possible.

7.4.1 Challenges in Navigating the Future

For many, thinking about the future was unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable. Futures thinking was described as intimidating or even overwhelming. As participant 4 reacted, *"*It just felt so big with the future... It is a very broad perspective" indicating unease with projecting too far ahead. This hesitation points to a lack of previous engagement with long-term thinking in their professional practice.

To navigate the abstractness of the future in ways that felt manageable and concrete, they employed anchoring strategies, such as imagining their students' ages in the future (Group 4), or their own retirement timelines (Group 1). Group 2 based their selection of the year for their scenario on their sense of how long certain societal changes might take:

> P1: I don't know what will be simplest really—in ten years, or?
> P8: Well, I'm afraid that we—I think it will take a bit longer before things turn around.
> P1: Ah, but should we [set it] for when it has turned?
> P5: Should we go with [20]40?
> P1: Yeah.

In this scenario, the "turn around" referred to a speculative societal shift from digital back to print-based practices, a vision rooted in hope and nostalgia. This illustrates both the imaginative potential and the limitations of the participants' future thinking. While they attempted to project into the future, their visions often remained bounded by familiar concepts and desires to re-establish control or return to perceived stability. This temporal layering is a recurring pattern in the data, where the future is imagined through the lens of familiar past and present structures to solve future challenges. Many participants drew from their own schooling experiences or nostalgic imaginaries of earlier teaching practices to guide their vision of the future. Another example of this tendency is taken from group 2's discussion of desirable educational futures:

> P8: But then they send homework home… no, but should we go with lecture-style teaching, do we want to go back to that?
> P1: I don't know, I want to go back to control.

These reflections suggest a desire to restore a sense of order and authority in classrooms, which the participants felt had been lost in current educational practices. Although the activities encouraged forward-looking thinking, many teachers responded by repurposing past-oriented strategies rather than developing new and creative approaches. This difficulty in moving beyond established ideas points to a deeper issue of how certain ways of thinking limits what can be imagined in the first place.

7.4.2 Discursive Closure

The challenges participants faced in thinking about and navigating in the future did not simply reflect individual discomfort with abstract ideas, they also revealed deeper structural constraints on their professional imagination. This tendency to repurpose the familiar, rather than invent the new, points to what can be described as forms of discursive closure—where certain ideas dominate so strongly that they limit the capacity to imagine alternatives. These closures emerged both internally, through the participants' own comfort zones and professional habits, and externally, through dominant discourses circulating in policy, research, and public debate.

Several participants expressed visible discomfort with open-ended or speculative tasks, with some openly articulating frustration or anxiety about the unfamiliar nature of the activities. Comments such as "I usually know straight away..." (Participant 1) reflected unease with interpretative and non-linear forms of engagement. In a number of cases, participants gravitated towards the simplest possible solution, appearing more focused on completing the task than engaging with its deeper intent. For instance, statements like "Well, that's not a problem for Charlie [their fictive character]" (Participant 3) suggest that the speculative activities were at times approached as assignments to be finished rather than as opportunities for critical dialogue and exploration of pressing issues in literacy education.

Moreover, the requirement to visualise ideas or draw as part of the activity elicited further hesitation. Several participants expressed a lack of confidence in their creative abilities, with remarks such as "Performance anxiety" (Participant 10) and "Is there an artist in my group because I can't draw" (Participant 3). These reactions point to a broader discomfort with modes of expression that fall outside conventional academic or professional norms, highlighting the challenges teachers may encounter when encouraged to move beyond familiar discursive and pedagogical frameworks. Furthermore, this discomfort was particularly evident during the postcard activity. Despite instructions to complete the task alone, many expressed a desire to collaborate with a colleague. This

resulted in a lively and somewhat stressful atmosphere, with participants asking frequent questions, joking, and seeking reassurance from colleagues.

During the workshop, participants also encountered constraints that made it difficult to think beyond existing educational paradigms. As Participant 3 noted, “It is hard not to see what you already know... to see beyond it.” This difficulty was closely tied to the weight of dominant educational narratives, such as those related to PISA-results, school performance metrics, and the ongoing push for digitalisation. These narratives, particularly when coupled with top-down reforms, limited participants’ capacity to think freely and imagine alternative futures.

This also played out in the group dynamics. While each group started from a different point in time and narrative perspective, whether envisioning students, teachers, or guardians in the future, there was a notable drive toward consensus. The environment was remarkably affirmative, where participants were quick to accept suggestions with minimal discussion or critical engagement. Participants often affirmed each other with repeated “yes, yes, yes” or “of course” without debating or challenging ideas. In some cases, consensus appeared to be assumed before discussion had even begun. As one participant stated, “We probably think quite similarly...” (Participant 8). Notably, the group included a teacher-student (i.e., Participant 5), and based on their subsequent collaboration, it seems unlikely that Participant 8 knew Participant 5 well enough to confidently assume shared views on education and literacy. While this assumption contributed to a positive group atmosphere, it also limited critical engagement and suppressed the emergence of divergent perspectives.

Beneath this consensus lay a deeper sense of limited influence over the direction of education. In one exchange, participants speculated that it was “the government” or “Trump” that had driven the direction of education, not teachers themselves.

> P2: Is it the government that's really the one driving our future? [laughs]
> P9: [funny voice] Well it's not us teachers.
> P2: Thanks to the new government, which doesn't exist yet.
> P10: Thanks, Trump, that you—
> P2: [laughs]
> P6: [laughs] —that you burned books.
> P9: But are you thanking the government?
> P2: I don't know who to thank in this… someone must have pushed all this forward… and it's not us, right?
> P9: No [laughs], then it must be the government...

While said in a playful and humorous tone, the subtext reveals an underlying frustration about their position within the broader educational system. They seem to adopt a perception that changes in education are happening around them, not with them. The teachers expressed a clear sense of being caught between conflicting discourses and competing interests, including political agendas, research-driven reforms and the expectations of guardians. Within this complexity, they perceived their professional voices as being consistently overshadowed by more dominant and influential stakeholders. This sense of inevitability, particularly around digitalisation and broader societal shifts, positioned the teachers as passive recipients of reform rather than active agents of change.

As Participant 7 reflected, the rise of AI and digital saturation may exacerbate inequalities in literacy: "It will probably become a class issue... those who are strong readers will be able to navigate... while others are just prey to it." This worry encapsulates the core tension of the futures imagined by participants. Despite the future-oriented framing of the workshop, their visions often returned to reaffirming the legitimacy of print, the necessity of structure, and the protective role of the school against a rapidly changing world.

While participants were encouraged to imagine alternatives, their visions remained closely bound to familiar narratives and constrained by professional, social, and institutional discourses. Recognising these discursive boundaries is essential, not as a critique of the participants themselves, but as a reflection of the broader system in which they operate. Without time, support, and space to think otherwise, imagining alternative educational futures remains a significant challenge.

7.4.3 Making Use of Futures Thinking

Participants expressed genuine interest in exploring how speculative, futures-oriented methods could be relevant and meaningful in their professional roles. Several found the activities useful in shifting perspectives, particularly by imagining the viewpoints of different stakeholders. Both participant 3 and 8, steer their groups to shift perspectives:

> I thought it might be quite interesting to do—to get a little picture of how guardians see—or how we want guardians to see—the classrooms. (Participant 3)

> Student! I want to see the conditions to have them here. I want to enter as a student into our dream world. (Participant 8)

This perspective-taking allowed participants to step outside of their everyday responsibilities and put themselves in the shoes of others.

In addition to the value of shifting perspectives, participants approach futures thinking in different way and adopted a range of imaginative stances: critical, utopian, and solution-oriented, each reflecting different ways of making sense of the future. As Participant 6 remarked:

> It's also important, of course, to think about how we see, what the concerns are today, and we start thinking and see where it might be heading...

This quote highlights a growing awareness of the value of anticipatory thinking in shaping educational practice. While some participants critiqued current trends and expressed scepticism about the direction of education, others envisioned more hopeful futures or focused on practical strategies to address immediate challenges. This variation underscores how teachers engaged with futures thinking from multiple entry points, shaped by their experiences and values.

The emotional and professional resonance of these methods became particularly evident in Group 2's creation of the motto "There is time for me, there is space for me". This phrase is an example of their collective aspiration for a more inclusive and reflective educational environment. For Participant 8, the motto held enough meaning to imagine it shared at a pedagogical conference, an expression of how futures thinking, when grounded in personal and professional reflection, can foster a renewed sense of agency.

> P8: This is something we should almost put up on our—like it would spread—no, but seriously, I'd like to say this at a pedagogical conference: do we feel this? There is time for me, there is space for me.
> P1: [sighs] Okay! Let's move on before I start crying aah.

Finally, a key point of divergence across groups was the level of imagination they applied to their scenarios. Groups 1, 2, and 4 leaned into more aspirational, "dream-like" futures, using the task to creatively reimagine literacy education. In contrast, Group 3 deliberately "chose to keep it realistic." (Participant 11), believing this made their engagement with the activity more effective and applicable to their current context. These differing approaches reflect how participants navigated the space between imagining ideal possibilities and staying grounded in the perceived constraints of the present.

8. Analysis and Discussion

In the following chapter, findings are analysed and discussed from three central themes. These themes are: Disconnected Literacies: Institutional vs. Informal Reading Worlds, Navigating Literacy Change: Consensus and narratives, and lastly, Teachers' Agency and Professional Growth.

8.1 Disconnected Literacies: Institutional vs. Informal Reading Worlds

In all the future scenarios imagined by the participants, society remains highly digital, with students expected to be deeply immersed in screen-based reading outside of school. In response to this saturation, participants envisioned a renewed emphasis on print-based literacy instruction within the classroom. This shift was not framed as a rejection of technology based on fear, as some earlier studies suggest (Dignum, 2019; Kucirkova & Flewitt, 2020), but rather as a necessary rebalancing of educational priorities. Their position appears to stem from their experiences with previous large-scale digitalisation efforts in Swedish schools. These initiatives were often perceived to have been implemented top-down and without sufficient input from teachers and led many participants to dismiss digitalisation altogether.

This return to print-based instruction can be seen as a form of digital sobriety, which is a stance of techno-scepticism that advocates for reducing reliance on technology as a pathway toward more sustainable futures (Péréa et al., 2023). While the participants did not explicitly frame their print-focused visions in terms of sustainability, they consistently positioned print as a pedagogically valuable foundation for supporting students' literacy development and fostering inclusive reading practices. In this sense, their emphasis on print can be interpreted as a contribution to sustainable educational development, anchored in long-term pedagogical goals and equity in literacy learning.

At the same time, however, these future visions also reproduce a familiar tension: the disconnect between institutional literacy practices and students' entertainment-based informal reading environments. This gap is evident both in the participants' current professional experiences and in their imagined futures. It is particularly relevant when viewed from a postdigital perspective, which recognises that digital technologies are now deeply embedded in how knowledge is created, accessed, and communicated (Alexandersson & Limberg, 2012; Abblitt, 2019; Jandrić et al., 2019; Jandrić & Knox, 2022). As Farrell et al. (2022) argue, young learners must be equipped to navigate a variety of

platforms and text types, challenging traditional definitions of literacy. While the participants' perspectives and attitudes are important to acknowledge, since they shape what is considered meaningful in education, they also prompt broader questions about how certain forms of knowledge gain legitimacy. These perspectives become embedded not only in the formal curriculum but also in the hidden curriculum: the unspoken norms, values, and assumptions that influence what is taught, how it is taught, and what is valued in schools (Null, 2011).

From a futures perspective, the widening gap between formal close reading pedagogies and informal fragmented reading environments becomes increasingly problematic (Nichols et al., 2024). Literacy is constantly evolving, as are the comprehension strategies required to navigate emerging text formats and digital media (Abblitt, 2019; Nichols et al., 2024). As communication continues to evolve, we can be certain that future readers will require adaptable and context-specific reading skills. Holding on to a single, fixed definition of reading is not only limiting but also unrealistic (Abblitt, 2019; Van de Ven, 2019; Farrell et al., 2022). The danger lies in acting as if literacy and the purpose it serves is unchanging. An educational environment that does not reflect the generative flux of literacy risks preparing students for a society that no longer exists (Liu & Gu, 2020; Smith & Parker, 2021; Nichols et al., 2024).

Consequently, disconnecting curricular goals and students lived reading practices has significant implications for student motivation and engagement, and may continue to have in their envisioned futures. While the participants recognised the importance of helping students understand the purpose of reading, their strategies largely focused on capturing attention in close reading contexts. These approaches did not necessarily make reading personally relevant or include the diverse forms of reading and text formats that students encounter in their everyday lives (Abblitt, 2019; Van de Ven, 2019; Liu & Gu, 2020; McLean Davies et al., 2020; Smith & Parker, 2021; Farrell et al., 2022). As discussed earlier in this thesis, motivation is not solely about stimulation; it is about meaning-making (Dewey, 1913). Students need to see themselves in the texts they read and see the social and personal value of literacy. Without this connection, reading risks becoming an empty task rather than a meaningful practice (Abblitt, 2019; Van de Ven, 2019; McLean Davies et al., 2020).

Many of the future visions shared by participants reflected a promissory imaginary in which print-based reading was positioned as a hopeful solution to current educational challenges. Rooted in traditional practices, these visions suggested that a return to analogue reading could help restore

students' vocabulary, focus, and reading comprehension. Participants also frequently emphasised the importance of inclusive literacy instruction; however, their conceptions of inclusion were largely framed by the analogue practices they viewed as pedagogically effective. While these imaginaries provide valuable counter-narratives to dominant discourses of digital inevitability and challenge commercialised ed-tech agendas (Player-Koro et al., 2018; Selwyn, 2022), they often fell short of critically questioning which literacy practices are legitimised and which are marginalised.

From a social sustainability perspective, the failure to critically examine who is marginalised when schools uphold narrow definitions of reading risks reinforcing the very exclusions that inclusive intentions aim to address. Inclusivity must be reimagined to encompass the diverse literacy practices young readers engage with in their everyday lives, including digital, multimodal, and interactive formats (Van de Ven, 2019; Farrell et al., 2022). Bridging this divide requires a fundamental shift in how literacy is conceptualised within education (Abblitt, 2019). Rather than relying on static, tradition-bound definitions, literacy must be understood as dynamic and responsive to the realities of a rapidly changing postdigital society (Nicholes et al., 2024).

8.2 Navigating Literacy Change: Consensus and Narratives

In the group setting, it quickly became apparent how consensus was negotiated and which narratives were repeated and reinforced throughout the discussions. Since participants largely expressed similar views, the findings reflect shared perspectives rather than individual ones. Personal viewpoints often merged into the group dynamic, making it difficult to distinguish individual contributions. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the group level and should be understood as capturing how the teachers, collectively, envisioned the future of literacy education.

During the planning stages of the workshop, it was anticipated that reaching a shared vision of the future and arriving at consensus would be challenging. Given the speculative nature of the tasks, the topic discussed and the diversity of perspectives among the participants, disagreement and negotiation was expected (Miller, 2018). However, the groups reached consensus surprisingly quickly, co-creating shared scenarios with minimal visible tension. Although consensus is often regarded as productive or desirable, such rapid convergence may also reflect a form of discursive closure. This can arise through dominant power structures and subtle group dynamics, shaping how conversations

unfold and determining which ideas are permitted to gain traction (Markham, 2021). In this context, the participants were teachers working at the same school, within what appeared to be a collegial and supportive environment. These interpersonal dynamics likely contributed to a collaborative tone that favoured agreement over critical divergence.

Nonetheless, this strong desire to reach consensus may have reduced the opportunities for innovation to be meaningfully explored. When agreement becomes the goal itself, rather than the exploration of complexity, it can overshadow diversity, critical thinking, and creativity (Miller, 2018). As Miller (2018) and Ross (2023) emphasize, meaningful collaboration is not about avoiding disagreement, but about making space for uncertainty, reflection, and creativity, which are conditions that allow new ideas to take shape.

This reluctance to embrace complexity was also reflected in how participants imagined the future. Although they were prompted to freely speculate about the future of literacy education, many of the scenarios remained confined within the four walls of a classroom. The visual outputs from several groups depicted classrooms as self-contained spaces, rather than envisioning alternative learning environments or broader societal contexts. This spatial framing may reflect the boundaries of where teachers perceive their agency and influence lies—within the immediate physical space of their classroom—rather than extending into the larger structures of education or society. It may also highlight how classrooms are still imagined as somewhat isolated units, disconnected from the social systems they operate within. This suggests that even in future-looking activities, traditional assumptions about learning spaces continue to shape participants' imaginaries.

This pattern extended into their temporal thinking. Their visions of the future often reproduced present conditions or idealised versions of the past, revealing how deeply embedded certain assumptions remain, such as the superiority of print over digital. In line with Ross (2023), this demonstrates how temporal framings are central to speculative thinking. Rather than using the future as a space for creative or transformative thinking, participants often treated it as a saturated version of the present. In this way, they use an anticipatory form of imagination and anticipate future outcomes in order to manage feelings of uncertainty and unpredictability (Lindberg & Haglind, 2024). However, these assumptions constrained their ability to imagine alternatives. As Voros (2003) and Miller (2018) argue, futures thinking requires becoming aware of these anticipatory assumptions and developing the ability to pause, reflect, and imagine otherwise. Without this temporal awareness, the

future risks becoming not a space of possibility, but a mirror of the present. Nonetheless, this limitation is also revealing, as it exposed how strongly current discourses shape teachers' thinking.

This interplay between spatial- and temporal framing, dominant discourses and group dynamics also raises questions about the nature of the consensus that emerged. It is unclear whether the alignment of views genuinely reflected shared visions or whether it was shaped by broader professional norms and institutional expectations. In contexts where teachers' professional authority is under pressure and they are positioned at the intersection of competing demands, agendas, and interests (Suoranta et al., 2022; Forsler & Guyard, 2023), there may be a tacit obligation to "speak as one voice." As Forsler and Guyard note, such conditions significantly constrain teachers' ability to act with professional independence. In line with Sporrong (2024), many participants also described feeling marginalised, treated as passive recipients of top-down reforms, particularly in the context of previous policy-driven, market-led digitalisation efforts. These reforms often appeared disconnected from the pedagogical complexities of teacher's daily realities. In such a context, presenting a coherent front may function as a strategic response to maintain legitimacy and credibility, especially when external stakeholders dominate educational decision-making (Sporrong, 2024). What appears as agreement, then, may in part reflect systemic pressures to align rather than a genuine expression of shared belief.

Notably, when the teachers attempted to formulate their stances, their position aligned closely with current political discourses in Swedish education. An example of this, is the repeated emphasis on print-based literacy instruction, reflecting dominant assumptions rooted in policy and tradition (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2024; Skolverket, 2025). This tendency to align with dominant political discourses raises important concerns about the conditions under which teachers' voices are formed, expressed, and legitimised (Forsler & Guyard, 2023). When teacher perspectives closely mirror prevailing policy narratives, the space for critical reflection and alternative thinking becomes constrained (Markham, 2021). In such contexts, the appearance of professional consensus may come at the expense of more diverse or critical viewpoints. The futures imagined by the participants, while well-intentioned, often reproduced existing assumptions rather than challenging them, leaving certain blind spots unexamined and possibilities unexplored.

In addition to their alignment with political stances, the participants revealed a strong desire to ground their teaching practices in scientific evidence. They frequently used phrases such as "research says..." to justify pedagogical decisions and professional stances. These references were often broad and

lacked engagement with specific studies or their methodological contexts. Merely citing research without critical reflection risks falling into a solutionist or promissory mode of reasoning, assuming that research offers quick fixes or universally applicable truths (Grönlund et al., 2021). While this aspiration is positive and aligns with broader educational policy – "Education shall be based on scientific evidence and proven experience"– (Swedish Education Act, SFS 2010:800, Ch.1, 5§), their approach to enacting research-based teaching reveals a need for developing critical and reflective thinking, as well as a more nuanced understanding of what research-based teaching actually entails. This includes going beyond striving for consensus, following mainstream narratives and relying blindly on attention-seeking headlines about new research (Grönlund et al. 2021).

These findings highlight the evolving role of teachers in shaping both literacy instruction and broader educational futures. Yet when professional voices are constrained by various forms of closure, whether through consensus, power structures, or dominant narratives, their capacity to act with autonomy is significantly limited. As a result, teachers are not used to seeing themselves as active agents of change (Sporrong, 2024). They are often positioned—by others and by themselves—to react to societal shifts and educational challenges, rather than to reflect critically or engage in inquiry-driven practice (Noteboom & Ross, 2023; Nicholes et al., 2024). In this light, the conversation must move beyond the question of whether teachers are being heard and instead focus on how professional agency is cultivated, enacted, and sustained within current educational conditions (Biesta et al., 2015; Miller, 2018; Sporrong, 2024).

8.3 Teachers' Agency and Professional Growth

Participants in this study expressed a clear desire for increased professional agency and a more active role in shaping the future of literacy. However, as Biesta et al. (2015) argue, agency is not something that can simply be handed over. It is not a fixed trait that educators possess, but something enacted in practice, shaped by conditions and context. Simply increasing teachers' responsibilities without also providing adequate time, support, or tools for meaningful engagement does not lead to greater agency. On the contrary, it can reinforce existing power dynamics and further constrain professional autonomy (Sporrong, 2024), as outlined in the previous section on the limitations placed on professional voices.

To move beyond a symbolic notion of agency, teachers must be supported in developing as reflective practitioners and active agents of transformation (Grönlund et al., 2021; Noteboom & Ross, 2024; Sporrong, 2024). This involves creating space for collective reflection, critically examining dominant discourses and fostering the capacity to imagine alternatives and question assumptions that are often framed as inevitable (Miller, 2018; Ross, 2023). Within this context, reflective practices and futures-oriented methods can play a vital role in nurturing professional growth and promoting more equitable and imaginative educational futures.

To navigate the complex realities of teaching, teachers must develop a reflective stance that positions them as critical interpreters and co-constructors of knowledge (Schön, 1983; Grönlund et al., 2021). Becoming a reflective practitioner involves questioning how research applies to specific teaching contexts, collaboratively interpreting findings, and making deliberate, informed pedagogical decisions. This orientation shifts the focus from applying promissory solutions to co-producing knowledge, encouraging teachers to approach problems as invitations for inquiry rather than simply seeking to resolve them (Noteboom & Ross, 2024).

One example of reflective practice can be seen in how teachers engage with research on EdTech and print-based teaching. These modes of instruction are often framed as binary opposites (Forsler & Guyard, 2023), with debates typically focused on which format is "better" (see Kozminsky & Asher-Sadon, 2013; Lee, 2017; Reich et al., 2019). However, such comparisons risk oversimplifying the complex and multifaceted nature of literacy. A more productive question is: What is the goal of this learning activity, and which medium best supports that goal? This reframing promotes pedagogical intentionality over technological determinism (Grönlund et al., 2021; Selwyn, 2022) and encourages a holistic view of literacy as context-dependent and dynamic (Kjällander, 2022; Scholes, 2024).

In this light, becoming a reflective practitioner involves more than staying informed about current research; it requires sustained reflective thinking and a willingness to act as a "critical reader" (Schön, 1983). In practice, this means generating rather than merely responding to problems within educational discourse (Nicholes et al. 2024; Noteboom & Ross, 2024), questioning how research applies to one's own teaching context, collaborating with colleagues to interpret findings, and making intentional, research-informed pedagogical choices (Grönlund et al., 2021). This approach aligns with the Swedish Education Act's emphasis on grounding professional practice in scientific evidence and proven experience (Swedish Education Act, SFS 2010:800, Ch.1, 5§). It also supports a deeper

understanding of the complexities of classroom practice and moves beyond the uncritical application of generalized research claims (Grönlund et al. 2021).

Futures-oriented methods can be seen as a powerful extension of this reflective stance. By encouraging educators to interrogate assumptions, explore alternative possibilities, and engage with uncertainty, these methods offer a concrete course of action toward becoming reflective practitioners who are capable of critically shaping educational futures. Furthermore, futures-oriented methods offer a valuable means of strengthening teacher agency and supporting teachers in becoming better equipped to imagine and enact transformative possibilities (Selwyn et al., 2020; Bendor et al. 2021; Ross, 2023; Lindberg & Haglind, 2024; Sporrong, 2024).

However, as Miller (2018) notes, futures literacy skills do not develop overnight. It requires time, repeated engagement, and a willingness to sit with uncertainty (Noteboom & Ross, 2023; Ross, 2023). For the participants in this study, the workshop marked their first encounter with futures-oriented approaches. While it served as a valuable introduction to alternative ways of thinking about education, it also highlighted the challenges of disrupting deeply embedded perspectives and assumptions (Miller, 2018; Markham, 2021). The level of critical reflection and speculative engagement envisioned by Miller's (2018) learning curve was not fully reached within the limitations of a single session. Participants would likely need more time, guidance and familiarity with the methods to progress through the later phases of Miller's Three Phases of the Learning Cycle (Figure 2). Interestingly, participants at the pilot workshop appeared to progress more quickly through the learning curve. One explanation may be that they are not currently active in the educational field, and therefore less constrained by institutional routines or habitual thinking, which could otherwise limit imaginative engagement. Nonetheless, as Dunne and Raby (2013) suggest, even slightly loosening the grip of reality on the imagination is a meaningful first step.

When sustained over time, futures methods can become a powerful tool for professional growth, developing teacher's agency, fostering deeper reflection and supporting long-term transformation (Selwyn et al., 2020; Ross, 2023). Importantly, educational leaders have a crucial role to play in this process. They are responsible for cultivating a professional culture that values creativity, critical thinking, and the generation of new ideas. In creating such an environment, it is essential to foster reflective practices and empower teachers to embrace uncertainty rather than avoid it.

9. Limitations

This study acknowledges two main limitations that may have affected the quality of the findings and the ability to fully address the research questions. First, the small sample size limited the diversity of perspectives and the potential for broader insights. Second, the study was based on a single workshop, and as speculative methods function as interventions, participants may need more time to process, reflect, and shift existing norms. Future(s)-oriented methods often generate rich and extensive data. However, due to the time constraints of completing a master's thesis and the need to be flexible with participants' schedules, it was not feasible to include a larger sample or conduct multiple workshop sessions. Despite these limitations, the workshop still offered a valuable starting point for participants to explore anticipatory assumptions, develop reflective stances, and experiment with future possibilities. Looking ahead, future research could address these limitations by incorporating a larger sample, and by facilitating multiple workshop sessions over time. This would allow for deeper participant engagement, more sustained reflection, and potentially greater impact in terms of shifting thinking, practices, and cultural norms in educational contexts.

10. Conclusions

This thesis has explored how a group of Swedish K-3 teachers imagined the future of literacy education. Through a speculative workshop and collaborative scenario-building, their collective vision was revealed, bringing to light key tensions, assumptions, and professional stances. These visions were shaped by past experiences, current classroom conditions, and deeply held beliefs about what constitutes “real” reading. Rather than embracing new ideas and directions for literary futures, participants demonstrated a strong degree of consensus. Their scenarios often reproduced familiar binaries, most notably the perceived superiority of print over digital, grounded in idealised notions of traditional literacy instruction. Although this level of agreement was unexpected, it provided valuable insight into how professional discourses and dominant narratives are shaped, negotiated, and reinforced in group settings.

The recurring emphasis on print-based instruction across all scenarios reflects a form of digital sobriety, in which teachers aim to restore balance and reassert pedagogical purpose in response to an education system shaped by broader societal digitalisation. This emphasis represents a pedagogical reaction to previous policy-driven digitalisation efforts, which many participants perceived as misaligned with the realities of the classroom. While these concerns were rooted in legitimate classroom experiences, the participants' print-oriented visions often reflected a narrow definition of literacy.

Notably, the imagined futures largely overlooked the evolving nature of literacy and its implications for the role of schooling in a postdigital society. From a postdigital perspective, the boundary between print and digital is increasingly fluid, with literacy practices spanning multiple formats, modalities, and everyday social contexts. Yet these complexities were frequently absent from participants’ narratives, which often defaulted to fixed, linear conceptions of reading and comprehension. This raises critical questions about who is being marginalised in current literacy instruction and how schools can remain relevant and effectively engage students if they fail to align curricular goals with the diverse literacy practices that shape young people’s everyday lives.

Throughout the workshop, participants expressed a clear desire for increased professional agency and greater autonomy in shaping literacy instruction. However, as the analysis showed, agency is not solely a matter of intent, it is shaped and enacted within specific institutional and discursive

conditions. The quick convergence around shared visions of the future suggests that consensus, while often seen as a strength in professional collaboration, can also serve to limit the range of perspectives and foreclose alternative possibilities. This finding highlights the importance of creating spaces where reflection, uncertainty, and complexity are encouraged.

Future(s)-oriented methods can support this aim. They offer a structured way for educators to surface hidden assumptions, engage with uncertainty, and explore more inclusive and imaginative educational futures. While participants in this study only began to engage with these methods, the process revealed the potential of speculative thinking as a tool for both professional growth and reflection. Over time, sustained engagement with futures thinking could help cultivate more reflective practitioners who are better equipped to navigate change, challenge dominant narratives, and co-construct the future of literacy education in meaningful ways

This study contributes to a growing body of research that repositions teachers not as passive implementers of reform, but as active participants in shaping sustainable educational futures. The findings of this thesis hold important implications for educational policy, teacher education, and school leadership. As education systems grapple with rapid technological, political, and cultural change, questions arise about who has the authority to shape the future of education and how systemic conditions enable or constrain teachers' professional agency. In an era of rapid technological, political, and cultural transformation, cultivating teacher agency, embracing a broader understanding of literacy, and supporting ongoing professional reflection are not optional, they are essential.

11. Future Research

This study opens several pathways for future research into how educators imagine and engage with the future of literacy. One possibility is to expand the design into a long-term format, following a group of teachers over an extended period, perhaps as annual workshops, to capture shifts in attitudes and narratives over time. This approach is inspired by initiatives such as Futures Day, where notable changes in future storytelling have been observed between short time spans (Futures Day, 2024).

Another promising avenue for future research is a larger-scale study examining how different school environments, staff cultures, and local contexts shape futures thinking. Building on the insights from this thesis, there is value in further exploring the cultural and contextual factors that influence professional dialogue and collective meaning-making. Such a study could focus more closely on how discursive closure and consensus emerge and operate in different settings. For instance, comparing multiple schools and teaching teams could offer insight into questions such as: How do dominant narratives gain traction and circulate differently across schools? What role does local culture play in shaping how the future is imagined and discussed in educational contexts?

Lastly, future research could further explore how futures-oriented methods can be embedded in professional development and teacher education, not only as a tool for reflection but as a way to foster agency and collaborative capacity among educators navigating a rapidly changing educational landscape.

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13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Hej,
Jag heter Emily Aiderfors och är masterstudent vid programmet LeaDS – Learning, Digitalisation and Sustainability på Jönköping University. Här följer en inbjudan till en studie som kommer att genomföras inom ramen för min masteruppsats. Studien riktar sig till lärare för årskurserna F-6.

Om studien:
Syftet med denna studie är att utforska lärares visioner om elevers relation till textvärldar och läsning i en föränderlig värld. Som en del av studien kommer lärare att bjudas in till en kompetensutvecklande workshop som använder sig av spekulativa metoder. Workshopen syftar till att ge deltagarna en möjlighet att reflektera över både aktuella och framtida utmaningar och möjligheter inom läsundervisningen. Under workshopen kommer lärarna att få tillfälle att analysera och diskutera elevers nuvarande och framtida läsvanor samt hur dessa kan påverka läsförståelse, engagemang och lärande. Lärarna ges också möjlighet att reflektera över lärarrollens utveckling och professionens framtid i relation till dessa förändringar.

Workshopen är utformad med syftet att skapa en plattform där deltagarna, med stöd av sin professionella erfarenhet, kan utmana sina tankar och bidra till att formulera visioner för framtidens läsundervisning. Genom att skapa och diskutera alternativa framtider ges lärarna möjlighet att kritiskt granska hur läsningens framtid kan komma att utvecklas och vad detta innebär för skolans verksamhet samt för dem själva som yrkesverksamma. Genom deltagandet är förhoppningen att lärarna stärker sin förmåga att hantera osäkerhet, navigera i förändring och anpassa sin undervisning till nya förutsättningar.

Vad deltagande innebär:
Lärarna inbjuds att delta i en workshop som jag leder under perioden 1 mars till 1 april 2025. Workshopen är planerad att pågå i ett par timmar men det finns utrymme för mig att vara flexibel utifrån er tillgänglighet. För att samla in empiriskt material planerar jag att spela in deltagarnas diskussioner, föra egna anteckningar samt låta lärarna sammanfatta sina tankar och reflektioner skriftligt. Deltagandet är helt frivilligt, och lärarna har möjlighet att när som helst avbryta sitt deltagande utan att behöva ange någon anledning.

Konfidentialitet:
Forskningspersonernas samtycke till deltagande medger att personuppgifter och insamlat material lagras och hanteras i enlighet med dataskyddsförordningen (GDPR). Dataskyddsombudet (DPO - Data Protection Officer) vid JU har i uppgift att kontrollera att personuppgifter behandlas korrekt i vetenskapliga studier.

Kontaktinformation:
Om du har några frågor om studien eller deltagandet, är du välkommen att kontakta mig via e-post på emily.aiderfors@gmail.com eller min handledare Ylva Lindberg på ylva.lindberg@ju.se.

Vänliga hälsningar,
Emily Aiderfors
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