

International Perspectives on
Early Childhood Education and Development 23

Eva Johansson · Anette Emilson
Anna-Maija Puroila *Editors*

Values Education in Early Childhood Settings

Concepts, Approaches and Practices

 Springer

International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education and Development

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Foreword

This book is about values education in early years' settings. Communication of values in a broad and diverse sense is central in any pedagogy, especially for the youngest children in the educational system. Still, values education has been neglected as a research field, in education in general and particularly in the early years. Values education has been taken for granted, often regarded as difficult to understand and address, because of its embedded, embodied, and tacit character. Even so, values need to be identified, conceptualized, and prioritized in early childhood education and care (ECEC) practice and research. This is because education is a moral enterprise. Values can never be avoided even if they can easily be neglected.

The authors of this book address this lack of knowledge by scrutinizing various questions about values education in ECEC settings. This book aims to challenge professionals and researchers to reflect on and recognize values and value conflicts. The chapters offer researchers and educators new theoretical and methodological knowledge, including the challenges and difficulties one may encounter when studying and approaching this field. Many questions are posed in this book reflecting theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues. The studies presented are built on close collaboration between educators and researchers as they have approached various methodologies for research and educational practice in different ECEC settings. This means both identifying and discussing the plurality of values in education and educational research.

This book involves many participants, including children, educators, and researchers, who have their roots in diverse contexts. They hold a variety of research and educational positions and their experiences differ, but they are all passionate about exploring conditions for values and values education in the early years. The researchers, educators, and children reside in different parts of the world, including Australia, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, and Sweden. The many experiences presented are ingrained in their sociopolitical context, yet their bearing for theory, research, and practice at an international level is considerable. We have strived to carefully consider the contextualized character of the cases, and to avoid being imperative, yet we argue that the questions, theories, and methodologies emphasized in this book do inform the international debate in manifold ways. Values

are part of everyday life across the globe even though they are differently conceptualized, interpreted, and lived out.

There are many contributors to this book. Without the children and educators in the many participating ECEC settings, there would have been no research and, consequently, no book. Thank you all for generously letting us be part of your everyday practice, allowing us to explore, challenge, and discuss values with one another. The researchers and authors of this book have been part of a collaborative journey, supporting and challenging each other as critical friends, and sharing and developing knowledge on values education together. Thank you for your collective efforts in making this project a success. Additionally, we are grateful for the support from NordForsk, which has made this large research project possible. We also wish to express our sincere thanks to our respective universities for encouraging and supporting this project.

August 2017

Eva Johansson
Anette Emilson
Anna-Maija Puroila

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Chapter 1

Values in Nordic Preschools: Setting the Scene



Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila

1.1 Introduction

This book addresses the field of values education in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. In a globalizing world, and especially in an age of pluralism, the acknowledgment of values has become increasingly important. A genuine pluralistic community requires institutions and open spaces for a multiplicity of values to be pronounced and communicated. The communication of values, in a broad and diverse sense, is central in any pedagogy and in all ECEC settings throughout the world.

The research project – Values Education in Nordic Preschools. Basics of Education for Tomorrow (ValuEd¹) – underlying this book explored values education in five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden (Johansson, Puroila, & Emilson, 2016). Nordic societies are acknowledged as the most equal in the world, both from economic and gender perspectives (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). However, we know very little about how these values are articulated in ECEC educational policies or how values

¹The research project, Values Education in Nordic Preschools. Basics of Education for Tomorrow, is supported by NordForsk (ref. number 5358).

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education is achieved in encounters between young children and practitioners in Nordic preschools. In this book, preschool refers to day-care centers offering full-day pedagogical programs to all children between 1 and 6 years old. Preschool is part of the formal educational system of Nordic societies and is available for all children. Governments in the respective Nordic countries have an accredited curriculum for early childhood education and care, which all preschool activities are to follow. The programs differ slightly between the different countries and have some significant commonalities: a child-centered pedagogy; play forms the basis for learning; and outdoor life is important (Ringsmose & Kragh Müller, 2017).

Moreover, characteristic of the Nordic curricula is also that values for democracy, equality, and care are central (Ringsmose & Kragh Müller, 2017). Values are the core of education, even for the youngest children in the educational system. As children and educators represent diverse cultural and social backgrounds and value preferences, a variety of values are communicated in educational practices on a daily basis. Educators, however, often describe values education as an abstract and difficult area. Values are often taken for granted and regarded as difficult to conceptualize because of their embedded, embodied, and tacit character (Emilson & Johansson, 2009; Puroila et al., 2016; Thornberg, 2009). There is a need for educators and researchers in ECEC to reflect on and recognize values and value conflicts. Building on the ValuEd project, this book illuminates recent and novel participatory research on values education in Nordic ECEC contexts as well as new research methodologies in this field. In addition, there are two chapters that contribute to the volume by broadening the discussion beyond the Nordic countries. The chapters from Australia and Slovenia both address the importance of exploring values and values education in early childhood settings and provide significant theoretical perspectives that complement the chapters that are based on the Nordic project on values education.

1.2 The ValuEd Project

The overarching purpose of the ValuEd project was to explore the fostering of values in Nordic preschools (Johansson et al., 2016). The aim of this participatory action research project was to respond to the dearth of knowledge on values in the early years (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). We wanted to explore the fostering of values at different levels ranging from the Nordic level to national levels in policy documentation, preschool communities, and individual practitioners. At the level of preschool communities, the aim was also to support and challenge educators' work with values in practice.

In sum, the objectives were to (a) deepen theoretical understanding of values and values education by further developing Habermas' ideas about lifeworld, system, and communicative action (Habermas, 1987), (b) develop innovative research methodologies in which a participative action research method is linked to a cross-cultural

orientation, and (c) advance empirical knowledge of values and values education in Nordic preschools. The research questions were as follows:

- How do national educational policies frame values education in preschools?
- What is values education like in preschools? What kinds of values are communicated? What kinds of gender patterns emerge in values education?
- What are the commonalities and variations in values and values education among Nordic countries?

Based on the participatory action research approach (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), the researchers and educators worked together on the project for a period between 2013 and 2016. The educators working in Nordic preschools have different educational backgrounds. A few educators lack adequate education, while others possess postsecondary education (childminders), higher vocational education, and preschool teacher education at the university level (bachelor's degree). In this book, we use the words educators or practitioners to refer to adults working in preschool contexts. This is because the aim is to use an inclusive term to describe the staff rather than highlighting different kinds of educational backgrounds.

Over the duration of the project, 24 Nordic preschools, approximately 491 educators, and 1940 children were involved at different levels. In total, 25 Nordic researchers shared and developed knowledge in close collaboration with educators in the field. Research material was gathered through various methods: policy documents, individual interviews, group interviews, (video) observations, narratives, and written diaries from the participants and researchers. Artistic methods such as poems, drawings, narratives, and drama as well as video recordings were employed as methods for reflection on values. A variety of qualitative analysis methods were developed to explore values education at various levels. In this book, the central findings from the Nordic project and the sub-studies are presented and discussed from the Nordic, national, and international levels of research.

1.3 The Chapters: Values Education from Theoretical, Methodological, and Empirical Standpoints

This book proposes a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in the early years. We regard values as socially constructed and embedded and contextualized in everyday life, which speaks to the complexity of their character. Still, values need to be identified, conceptualized, and prioritized in early childhood education and research because education is a moral enterprise, and values are always communicated in human interaction in one way or another (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). The book consists of 18 chapters, each employing various questions and perspectives of values and values education in ECEC settings. While the Nordic experiences portrayed herein are situated in their social and political contexts, the questions are relevant for the theoretical, methodological, and educational practice

dimensions at the international level. Two chapters are invited to provide a picture of values education in other contexts, i.e., Australia and Slovenia. The book is divided into three sections: “Part 1: Theory and Concepts,” “Part 2: Methodological Perspectives,” and “Part 3: Empirical Perspectives.” The chapters are introduced below.

Chapter 1, Values in Nordic Preschools – Setting the Scene authored by Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila introduces the book, the ValuEd project, and the various chapters, presenting readers with a background of the subsequent chapters and the book as a totality.

1.3.1 Part 1: Theory and Concepts

This part of the book addresses theoretical issues and questions related to values education. The authors review the research field on values education, illuminate some patterns based on the findings of the ValuEd project, discuss the theory behind the project, and elaborate the importance of reflexivity and the meta-analyses of contemporary research on values in ECEC. Five chapters are presented.

Chapter 2, Mapping the Field: What Are Values and Values Education About, is authored by Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila. This chapter presents the research field on values education to provide a background for the studies presented in this volume. Values education emerges as a multifaceted concept with different understandings. Moreover, the authors use the Nordic project to illuminate some of the core elements of importance for values and values education in the early years as “something in between.” The chapter also suggests a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in ECEC.

In *Chapter 3, The Heart of Values Education in Early Childhood – Key Issues and Patterns*, Eva Johansson analyzes key findings in values education in ECEC settings, which draw on results from the Nordic ValuEd project. A variety of value fields representing clusters of values are identified and discussed. Ethics and democracy appears to be the most prominent value fields in the practices of Nordic early childhood settings, although variations in occurrence are recognized. Moreover, the value fields of efficiency and discipline appear to be influential as they present dilemmas for educators. Interestingly, individuality appears as a core value in the Nordic project as it influences the value fields in various ways.

Chapter 4, A Dual Perspective and a Communicative Approach to Values Education in Early Childhood Education, by Anette Emilson, scrutinizes the use of Jürgen Habermas’ theory in a research project on values education in ECEC settings. While highlighting the opportunities and limitations of using Habermas’ theory and concepts, the chapter assists readers in their own research considerations regarding conducting research on values education in early childhood settings. In addition, Emilson illuminates the utility of the theory for understanding pedagogical practice and the benefit of empirical analyses for developing the theory.

Chapter 5, Epistemic Climates for Active Citizenship: Dialogically Organized Classrooms and Children's Internal Dialogue, is authored by Jo Lunn, Sue Walker, Eva Johansson, Laura Scholes, and Mary Ryan. This chapter examines values education in the context of Australia. The authors underscore the role of reflexivity and the creation of a culture of dialogic persuasion and justification in relation to the promotion of active citizenship and inclusionary practices in the early years. A focus on children's epistemic beliefs regarding moral values is, argue the authors, best addressed in dialogically organized early years' classrooms in order to support children's reflexivity.

In *Chapter 6, Values Education in Early Childhood Settings: Challenges for the Future*, Robi Kroflič and Nada Turnšek present a meta-analysis of contemporary reflections on fundamental values and research findings on value development in early childhood. First, according to Malaguzzi, the child is a rich person from the very beginning, who uses several communication tools and searches for the meaning of life. Second, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is, from the beginning, a person with human rights, including "special" rights to ensure his or her protection *and* rights to provision and participation. Since these ideas have been widely accepted, values education has become a sensible activity even in very early childhood.

1.3.2 Part 2: Methodological Perspectives

This part of the book examines various methodological challenges as well as the potential of values research. The chapters address action research methodology, researcher ethics, encounters between researcher and educator, and horizons and narratives as supportive methods for practice and research on values. Four chapters are presented.

In *Chapter 7, Challenges and Advantages of Collaborative Action Research in Preschools*, Johanna Einarsdóttir and Ingibjorg Sigurdadóttir discuss the advantages and challenges they faced during their collaborative action research on values education in one Icelandic preschool. The action research model provided advantages for professional development, improvement of practice, and children's learning and well-being. However, there were challenges in terms of how to find time for conducting action research, uncertainty regarding action research and values education, and how to influence the whole preschool. The authors conclude that collaboration with the external researcher and colleagues was crucial to ensuring the success of the project.

Chapter 8, "Sharing horizons," Methodological and Ethical Reflections on Video Observations is authored by Hrönn Pálmadóttir, Jaana Juutinen, and Elina Viljamaa, who scrutinize the methodological and ethical challenges confronting researchers conducting video observations to explore lived values in ECEC settings in Finland and Iceland. During the research process, the researchers faced several methodological and ethical challenges in relation to values. These challenges

involved the researchers' influence on life in preschools and how to interpret videos in which one researcher was involved. Consequently, the confidence between the researcher and the participants in the study was crucial in observing the lived values of education.

In *Chapter 9, Sharing, Re-telling, and Performing Narratives: Challenging and Supporting Educators' Work with Values in Nordic Preschools*, Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson explore the manner in which narratives assist researchers and educators in generating knowledge about values. The analyses draw on Norwegian and Finnish studies on values education in preschools. The authors conclude that narratives involve the potential to promote educators' participation in the action research process by providing a meeting space for educators and researchers to collaboratively explore pedagogical situations. In addition, narratives offer fruitful ground for educators and researchers to reflect on how values are integrated into the complexities of educational practices.

Chapter 10, Towards the Fusion of Different Horizons: Methodological Potentials and Challenges When Exploring Values Education in Nordic Preschools is authored by Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson. The aim was to explore methodological potentials and challenges in cross-cultural research in three sub-studies within the Nordic project. The authors argue that collaboration between educators and researchers and between researchers from different countries constitutes the potential for encounters of different horizons. Encountering a different horizon may broaden the fore-understandings of the interlocutors, thus deepening their understanding. The study also draws attention to the challenges of understanding, such as the lack of a common language, and limitations when using translated texts.

1.3.3 Part 3: Empirical Perspectives

This part of the book presents empirical studies on values education in the preschools within the ValuEd project. The chapters explore various value fields such as democracy, ethics, discipline, and efficiency. They raise questions on values in relation to the reciprocity of care, ethnic diversity among children, tensions imbued in the communication of values for belonging, and how values are communicated with subtle gestures like pointing. Eight chapters are presented.

Chapter 11, Reciprocal Caring Values in ECEC Settings, by Kristin Fugelsnes, investigates the caring that is communicated and received in educator-child interactions in ECEC settings. The research material is based on video observations of interactions between educators and children, which was drawn from the Norwegian part of the study. The analyses rely on Noddings' and Løgstrup's perspectives on caring as a reciprocal relation. This theoretical framework enables a consideration of caring from the "one-caring" and "cared-for" perspectives. The findings illuminate how educators communicate caring through words, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, and physical closeness and that children's response to the caring communicated is mainly instantiated through their body language, gestures, and gaze.

Chapter 12, Educare: Care and Education in Planned Pedagogical Activities, by Anders Skriver Jensen, is based on an investigation of Danish preschool practitioners' views on care, upbringing, and teaching. The findings reveal how the educators related care to supporting children and to concern for each other involving both physical and verbal dimensions. Upbringing was connected to the pedagogical work regarding children's acquisition of values and norms. Teaching was closely related to upbringing, but it seemed to have a closer connection to cognitive processes such as knowledge, skills, and competences. Care, upbringing, and teaching are, conclude the author, difficult to separate in the practitioners' reflections and can therefore be viewed together as holistic and fundamental dimensions of a practice described as *educare*.

In *Chapter 13, Democracy and Care – Values Education in Nordic Preschools*, Ole Henrik Hansen, Anders Skriver Jensen, and Stig Broström explore caring and democratic values in interactions between practitioners and children (1–5 years) in Nordic preschool settings. Care is referred to as a specific emotional mode in encountering the child's needs and in striving to understand the child's perspective. Caring values are analyzed with reference to Tomasello in the sense that the educator creates zones of joint attention. Democratic values are analyzed on the basis of Biesta's concepts of normal and sporadic democracy. The analysis illuminates a concurrent prevalence of caring, disciplinary, and democratic values in the interactions and that while such values often overlap, they are expressed simultaneously.

In *Chapter 14, Recognizing Children's Diverse Backgrounds. Democracy and Equality in Preschool*, Berit Zachrisen explores how educators approach ethnic diversity among children in pedagogical practice in preschool. The analyses draw on observations of encounters between educators and children (3–6 years) in two Norwegian preschools. The theoretical framework is inspired by Bourdieu's theory. Two main approaches to pedagogical work were identified as emerging in various combinations: a unilateral approach and a multilateral approach. The study highlights the importance of educators' self-reflection on their own beliefs, values, and interpretations of diversity and equality and how these attitudes and values affect educators' didactic choices in preschool.

Chapter 15, "There is no Room for You!" The Politics of Belonging in Children's Play Situations, by Jaana Juutinen, Anna-Maija Puroila, and Eva Johansson, aims to deepen understanding of how the politics of belonging emerges in children's play situations in Finnish preschools. The politics of belonging refers to processes by which belonging and exclusion are constructed in children's daily lives in preschools. The research material consists of video recordings and observations from four preschools. The findings provide insights into the politics of belonging as constant movements between children being positioned as insiders and outsiders. Processes of belonging generate various tensions: between stability and variability, inclusion and exclusion, and individuality and collectivity.

Chapter 16, Tacit Discipline in Early Childhood Education, by Anette Emilson, analyzes tacit discipline in early childhood education and is based on findings from the ValuEd project. Two issues concerning discipline are outlined, the first of which refers to the finding that discipline is viewed negatively and is thus neglected in

educators' talk about values education. Emilson discusses what this might mean for the communication of discipline in educational practice. The second issue relates to the finding that the communication of discipline is often of a friendly and implicit character, whereby children are treated as rational subjects. This raises questions about the relationship between discipline and democracy, which is discussed from the perspective of Habermas' theory of communicative action.

In *Chapter 17, The Valuable Index Finger*, Berit Tofteland explores children's pointing as an instance in the communication of values. The empirical material consists of video observations from mealtime in Norwegian preschools. The study is framed within theories of democracy, values, and pointing as communication. The findings reveal how children who are less than 3 years old communicate values associated with collectivity, such as trust, discipline, unfairness, solidarity, care, and responsibility for others and values associated with individuality, such as their own enjoyment, satisfaction, and passion. The author concludes that it is important for educators to recognize young children's small utterances as communication and everyday situations, such as mealtimes, as important for practicing and promoting democracy.

Chapter 18, Values of Efficiency in Educators' Talk about Dilemmas and Priorities in the Daily Pedagogical Work, is authored by Anita Berge, Eva Johansson, Lise-Lotte Bjervås, Ingibjorg Sigurdadottir, and Anna-Maija Puroila. The aim of this Nordic study was to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators' conversations about everyday practices with children in the cloakroom. The findings highlight a network of various values in the educators' talk. This represented different discourses in the struggle to occupy a hegemonic position in the educators' utterances. According to the authors, this indicates an ongoing process of restructuring in the social relations in preschool and in the identities of preschool educators.

In sum, this book represents a holistic contribution to international knowledge formation on values education in the early years. With this book, we hope to provoke new ways of thinking and to add new knowledge – theoretically, methodologically, and empirically – on values education in the field of early childhood. Values education emerges as a multilevel phenomenon connected with individuals, the communication and relationships between the individual, institutional, and cultural contexts, and the practices of preschools. Founded in a participatory research design, the research presented in this book is akin to the values and value conflicts embedded in educators' everyday practice.

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Part I
Theory and Concepts

Chapter 2

Mapping the Field: What Are Values and Values Education About?



Eva Johansson, Anette Emilson, and Anna-Maija Puroila

2.1 Values and Values Education: A Neglected Area in Early Childhood Education and Care

All curricula for early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the Nordic countries maintain values as an important foundation for educational practices, and the educators' responsibility for addressing values in their preschool practice is evident. This assignment for values education in ECEC is demanding and requires professionalism, knowledge, and sensitivity. However, curricula, like other political documents, can be changed. Irrespective of any curriculum changes, values are continuously communicated and negotiated in preschool and are often imbued in a hidden agenda but also in more explicit pedagogical processes.

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual approaches to values education in ECEC settings. The analysis is based on previous international research and a Nordic research project called ValuEd. The concepts of values and values education are problematized, defined, and presented in accordance with how they have been used in the ValuEd project and, more broadly, in the literature. Additionally, we extract from ValuEd as a whole and its sub-studies some core elements of

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importance for values and values education in early childhood education. Finally, we suggest a broad and pluralistic way to address values education in ECEC.

2.2 Values: Definitions and Different Traditions

The term “values” originates from the Latin *valere*, which means to be strong, be well, be of value, or be worth (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2016; see also Sutrop, 2015). As Schwartz (2012) states, “When we think of our values, we think of what is important in our lives” (p. 3). Thus, a cursory glance suggests that the meaning of this term is straightforward. However, a deeper probe into the literature reveals that there is no coherent understanding of the concept of values. Even though researchers in diverse disciplines, such as philosophy, theology, human sciences, social sciences, economics, and education, have long been interested in values, this concept remains vague and undifferentiated (Halstead, 1996; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Rohan, 2000; Sutrop, 2015). There are various approaches within which the concept of values has different emphases and definitions. Sutrop (2015) addresses the variation in definitions as follows:

Values are described as desirable objects or conditions, ideas about worth, emotional commitments, things which promote human well-being, virtues worth having, or principles, i.e. fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior. (p. 194)

It is most striking that values appear to be an all-embracing element of human life; that is, values are connected both to the human mind and action, and they emerge at the levels of individuals, cultural groups, and societies. In the literature, the conceptualizations of values vary depending on whether the emphasis is on the human mind or action, individuals or cultural groups, or the situation-specific nature or universality of values.

A large body of research connects values with the *human mind*. From this perspective, values are approached as cognitive representations or mental structures and as concepts, beliefs, schemes, or principles that guide the selection of modes, means, and ends of human actions (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Schwartz, 2012). Halstead and Taylor (2000) define values as “principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behavior, the standards by which particular actions are judged to be good or desirable” (p. 169). Yet there are scholars who resist extreme cognitivism and highlight that values are more closely connected to affect than cognition (see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; Schwartz, 2012). It is also worth noting that approaching values in terms of the human mind does not necessarily mean considering values as being consciously held by individuals; values may be both *explicit* and *implicit*. Schwartz (2012), among others, notes that the impact of values on an individual’s everyday actions is rarely conscious, and individuals became aware of values especially when those values are opposed or threatened.

Especially in psychological research, values are often treated as static mental structures, and thus there is less emphasis on their significance to *action*. There is

criticism that this leads to viewing values as ideal ends and isolating them from the active process of valuing (see Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). For instance, Rohan (2000) argues that theorizing and empirical research on the valuing process are lacking. Further, noting that the word “value” is both a noun and a verb (see also Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004; see also Chap. 9 in this book by Puroila & Johansson), she states, “Used as a verb, value refers to the process of ascertaining the merit of an entity with reference to an abstract value system structure. Used as a noun, value refers to the result of this process” (Rohan, 2000, p. 258).

Despite the acknowledgment that values are connected both to the human mind and action, many crucial theoretical questions remain unanswered. For example, what is the relationship between the human mind and action when considering values? Williams and Gantt (2012) address the ontological gaps between thinking, feeling, and action in theorizing human conduct. They point out that human beings do not always act consistently with their values; thus, there is no direct, causal relationship whereby moral principles reliably lead to moral action. Thus, they propose moving away from regarding thinking, feeling, and acting as distinct and separable activities and toward a holistic conception of human action. Applying a holistic view when exploring values in education means, for instance, looking at how values, and which ones, are realized and communicated between human beings in educational settings.

The various theoretical approaches to values have been described as a continuum between objectivist and subjectivist perspectives on values (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012; see also Sutrop, 2015). In the *objectivist* view, values are regarded as absolute and valid at all times, regardless of context. From this perspective, values are conceptualized as abstract principles (e.g., Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 2012) or principled dispositions or virtues (Carr, 2011) that transcend specific actions and situations. Schwartz’s (2012) theory of basic values provides an example of an objectivist view that is cited often in the literature. He argues that people in all cultures recognize ten basic values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. He also argues, however, that individuals differ in how they rank the importance of these basic values.

According to the *subjectivist* extreme of the continuum, values vary from one individual to the next and from one situation to the next (Pantić & Wubbels, 2012; Sutrop, 2015). Hence, according to subjectivist conceptualizations, values are little more than expressions of personal opinions, preferences, tastes, or criteria for making judgments (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). The subjectivist view of values is linked to value relativism, according to which “no set of values can be shown to be better than other” (Halstead, 1996, p. 6).

The *pluralistic* view of values lies between the two aforementioned extremes (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). Within this view, values are recognized as socially constructed and as having the potential to vary over time and across different groups and societies (Halstead, 1996; Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). Unlike in the case of value relativism, the pluralistic approach to values is arguably objective in nature, despite the recognition that values may be addressed differently in different

contexts. The pluralistic perspective was promoted in ValuEd because this vantage point allows for regarding values as agreements situated in time and space, yet not as totally relativistic.

2.3 Values Education: Definitions and Paradigms

Three main paradigms for values education can be identified in the literature: traditional, progressive or constructivist, and critical (Lunn-Brownlee, Johansson, Walker, & Scholes, 2017; Thornberg, 2014, 2016). The *traditional* paradigm of values education rests on a teaching model emphasizing the transmission of values (Thornberg, 2014). In this paradigm, values are regarded as absolute and true and as constituting the glue that binds people and culture. Accordingly, the mission of preschool is to communicate certain values to children and thereby refine the character of each child using rewards and condemnation (Arthur & Carr, 2013; Johansson & Thornberg, 2014; Solomon, Watson, & Battistich, 2001). The teaching methods in preschool encourage children to exhibit what is regarded as good behavior and thereby develop good habits. There is no room for interpretation, since the meanings of values are already established. This places the educator's knowledge and values in the foreground, while the children's perspectives, values, and understandings remain in the background, invalid. This tradition is described as conservative in ideology (Thornberg, 2014).

The *progressive* or *constructivist* paradigm of values education is built on a dialectic model promoting the collective creation of meaning between educators and children (Thornberg, 2014). In this paradigm, interaction and understandings are at the forefront, and we can recognize the traditions of Dewey (1997) and child-centered pedagogy (DeVries, Hildebrandt, & Zahn, 2000). According to Dewey, education must involve children taking part in democratic discussions and decision-making processes. Constructivist theories of children's development of, and thinking about, morality developed by psychologists like Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1976) also belong to this tradition. In this paradigm, cognition is regarded as a cornerstone of the development of values, and the educators' role is to challenge and support children's understanding of values. The basic idea is that children actively construct their own understanding of values and that they become personally involved in justice and care while interacting and participating in moral discourses. Therefore, it is crucial to involve children in joint discussions on issues relating to values and moral conflicts as well as in decision-making regarding norms for the community of the preschool. This theory resonated in ValuEd.

The *critical* paradigm is built on the idea that the dominating morality of society marginalizes and oppresses certain groups (Tappan & Brown, 1996; Winton, 2013). Therefore, values education is influenced largely by the hidden curriculum as an implicit and ideological protector with the function of reproducing dominance and

thereby reestablishing social injustice and inequalities in the society. The moral impact on children in preschool has effects (often negative) far beyond what educators, politicians, and parents can imagine. Children internalize discourses that control and restrict their possibilities for defining themselves. Through control and discipline, what is “expected” and “normal” is rewarded, whereas what is “unexpected” and “uncommon” is punished. Furthermore, social and economic conditions limit and disorder human beings’ social, moral, and political conceptions. Analyses of educational processes for moral learning adopt different theoretical positions often in terms of discipline, power, and social or cultural reproduction, yet research within this paradigm exhibits that these ideas are seldom expressed when educators discuss their work and intentions for values education. However, this kind of pedagogy could be aimed at fighting injustice and oppression and visualizing the negative effects of the hidden curriculum while stimulating critical thinking (Thornberg, 2014).

A meta-analysis by Thornberg (2016) of six papers from ValuEd is presented in a special issue of *International Journal of Early Childhood* (Johansson, Puroila, & Emilson, 2016). Thornberg (2016) concludes that ValuEd can be situated between the traditional and constructivist paradigms. Whereas democratic values, according to Thornberg, can be examples of a progressive/constructivist paradigm, caring and disciplinary values represent a hybrid of the progressive and traditional paradigms. Moreover, Thornberg argues that the fact that educators often use a personal language rather than a professional one indicates a traditional position. The issue is complex, and one can question if such a conclusion can be drawn from the referred studies (Johansson et al., 2016). To reconsider how caring values came to the fore of education, we can look to the research of Gilligan and Noddings, for example, which presents what we can call a progressive criticism of the dominance of a (masculine) rationalistic orientation to values (Gilligan, 1993; Noddings, 1999). Perhaps we can say that the various sub-studies from ValuEd reside between democratic, caring, and disciplinary values. Hansen, Jensen, and Broström (Chap. 13 of this book), for example, describe how the values of care, discipline, and democracy often overlap and are expressed simultaneously in practice (see also Puroila et al., 2016). Other researchers describe a dominance of caring values in the participating preschools, which comes at the cost of democratic values (Johansson et al., 2015).

To conclude, we argue that the chapters of this book contribute to a plurality of constructivist and critically reflexive approaches to values education. A single approach to addressing values education in early childhood education does not exist; rather, values education is considered an issue of plurality. Still, a red thread is woven through all the chapters of this book highlighting the significance of a constant, dialectical relationship between theory and practice in values education. There is also a need to acknowledge and understand the complex, implicit, and embedded character of values in the lived experiences in preschool. What, then, do we know from previous research about values education in the early childhood education context?

2.4 Values Education in Early Childhood Education: Previous Research

Few studies have explored values or values education in early childhood education as an open, empirical question, focusing on what kinds of future citizens ECEC institutions foster. As an exception, Emilson and Johansson (2009) identify three value fields that are continuously communicated in teacher–child interactions in preschool: caring, democratic, and disciplinary values.

Caring values are strongly emphasized in early childhood education, and researchers often explain this as a consequence of the dominance of women in the field (e.g., Broström & Hansen, 2010; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Tallberg Broman, Rubinstein Reich, & Hägerström, 2002). Another explanation relies on history and how the first children’s institutions were aimed at providing care that children could not get from their mothers, who were forced to work outside the home to make a living (Holmlund, 1996). Although female educators are often portrayed as positioning themselves as caregivers protecting, comforting, and satisfying children’s needs, previous research has also demonstrated that educators strive to make children competent to provide care (Markström, 2005). Children are encouraged to comfort each other, show compassion for others, and pay attention when someone needs help (Broström, 2006; Emilson, 2008; Hansen, 2013; Johansson, 2007). ECEC in the Nordic countries is known for combining education and care through the promotion of the concept of *educare* (Broström, 2006; Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2001; OECD, 2006). However, the notion of care and learning as intertwined phenomena is not taken for granted, according to Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2001), who argue that a nonreflexive view of care and learning as contradictory can be counterproductive.

Research on *democracy* in early childhood education has increased during the last decade. According to OECD reports (2001, 2006, 2012), the Nordic countries are at the forefront when it comes to providing children with opportunities to experience democracy in ECEC settings. Nevertheless, several studies show that limited opportunities exist for exerting a real influence and participating actively, owing to educators’ attitudes, rules, and power (Broström, 2006; Eide, Os, & Samuelsson, 2012; Einarsdottir, 2005, 2010, 2011; Emilson, 2008; Puroila, Estola, & Syrjälä, 2012). Studies highlight how crucial communication is to democracy in early learning, and researchers have conceptualized specific communication qualities, such as the educator’s closeness to the child’s perspective, emotional presence, and playfulness (Emilson, 2008; Emilson & Johansson, 2013). Other studies show that democratic values benefit from communication characterized by weak teacher control – that is, communication in which both the educator and the child can take the initiative and develop the communication further (Emilson & Folkesson, 2006). Bae (2012) employs the metaphor of a spacious interaction pattern between educators and children to visualize democratic communication. A kind of interplay is jointly developed by the educator and the child, and the interaction is characterized by mutual understanding. Democracy in ECEC is often concretized as children’s

opportunities to make their own choices and take initiative. The underlying idea concerns children's autonomy and individual freedom, which in turn leads to an individual-oriented understanding of democracy (Bae, 2010; Emilson, 2014; Kjörholt, 2005; Westlund, 2011). Studies show that a focus on individual choices can give children a false impression of what democratic processes mean in everyday educational practices (Bae, 2009; Kjörholt, 2005). Children's opportunities for participation and influence are, according to Puroila et al. (2012), dependent on educators' approaches to the tensions between the individual and the collective, the child's autonomy and the authority of adults, the child's learning and the educator's teaching, and between being here-and-now-oriented and future-oriented. An overview of the research (Emilson & Johansson, 2017) shows that studies on democracy in Nordic ECEC have changed over the last 15 years. At the beginning of the century, normative approaches focusing on children's rights to exercise democracy were common, and the argumentation was often based on the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This trend gave way to more empirical research focused on determining how to transform normative ideas into concrete pedagogical action. Parallel to these normative and empirical studies, a more critically oriented research was being undertaken, in which democracy as a concept was problematized, to investigate how the child's perspective, participation, and influence were expressed in practice.

Research on *disciplinary values* highlights that children are encouraged to show obedience and adapt to the social order in different ways. According to some studies, disciplinary values tend to be communicated strategically and in an authoritarian way (Berthelsen, 2005; Ekström, 2006; Emilson, 2007; Emilson & Johansson, 2009, 2013; Johansson & Emilson, 2016), while other studies indicate that the disciplining of children is changing from open authoritative forms and becoming increasingly invisible and friendlier, often conveyed through routines, rules, and children's self-regulation (Bartholdsson, 2007; Broström, 2006; Emilson, 2008; Nordin Hultman, 2004; Puroila, 2002). Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell (2009) find that children do not simply adapt to the social order; they also reconstruct rules and norms formulated by adults. They negotiate the social order in their own peer communities. This result contradicts research indicating that children strive to adapt to the prevailing order (Johansson et al., 2014).

It appears that values relating to new *liberal* ideas and the *knowledge economy* are strengthening, especially at a societal level. Today, best practices for academic and effective knowledge are stressed as the biggest growth and competitive factors in a society (Vallberg Roth, 2015) and with that follows an emphasis on documentation and assessments of ECEC activities (Vallberg Roth, 2014). Knowledge as a value is highly prioritized in some countries' early childhood education curricula, like in Sweden (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015) but also in France and Great Britain, which both have long histories of encouraging academic achievement (Chalmel, 2003). As Berge (2015) shows, preschool can be regarded as functioning between tradition and new societal demands, and this influences the pedagogical practice. What appears to be desirable from a societal perspective are increased goal rationality, efficiency, and an approach to learning that

is based on the needs of the labor market (Berglund, 2007). There is a paucity of empirical studies exploring the connection between values and knowledge and the kind of knowledge being prioritized in ECEC settings. Hence, more research in the field is needed.

2.5 Values Education: A Matter of Being in Between

Values education in the early years can be characterized as the phenomenon of being in between, where the encounters between ideals and reality always intersect. The final analyses and conclusions from the different sub-studies, and from cross-cultural analyses of ValuEd, depict the core of values education as a dialectic relationship between clarity and unpredictability, the personal and the professional, the collective and the individual, and theory and practice. These core elements are dialectical and mutually dependent; thus, they can sometimes come into conflict and cause dilemmas for educators (Johansson et al., 2015). We posit that these core elements are important for informing and inspiring educational research and practice in the field of values.

The core elements of values education are presented in Fig. 2.1 below.

2.5.1 Between Clarity and Unpredictability

Values education is about the professional having the insight that values education is both about uncertainty and clear goals. Values are social agreements that may shift and be contextually related and open to various interpretations (Johansson &

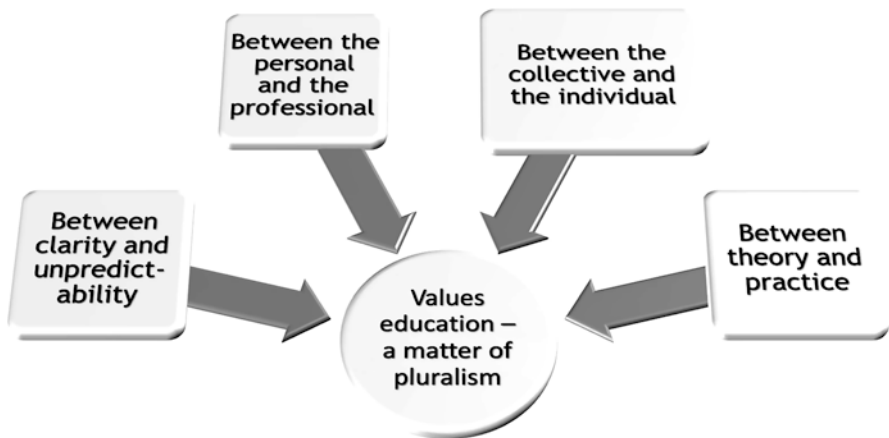


Fig. 2.1 Core elements of values education

Thornberg, 2014; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). Values are often tacit, emotionally loaded, and embedded in practice and are thereby difficult to identify and articulate (Gilbrant, 2012; Johansson, 2007; Johansson & Thornberg, 2014; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Tofteland & Johansson, 2017). This means that the work with values in preschool is associated with some degree of unpredictability. Even though the educator as a professional always strives for distinct goals, methods, and priorities in work relating to values, the results of our analysis of ValuEd show that this work is complex, difficult, arbitrary, and nonlinear (Puroila et al., 2016; see also Chap. 7 of this book by Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir). The interviews with educators, for example, shed light on their experience of values education as an erratic enterprise. As one participant from Norway expressed, “The road is constructed while we walk” (Johansson et al., 2015). Educators described endeavoring to grasp values, achieve clarity, and define and settle how to address their ways of thinking in their work with values in practice. This task was almost impossible. Parallel processes were undertaken by the research teams, and discussions on how to define, interpret, and communicate values were a frequent issue during researcher meetings (Johansson et al., 2015; see also Chap. 7 of this book by Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir).

Nevertheless, during the Nordic project, the educators seemed to develop a professional attitude toward the erratic character of values (Johansson et al., 2015; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). As Puroila, Estola, Juutinen, and Viljamaa (2018) show, the educators decided to literally sit down and carefully consider what was happening between the children. They also analyzed as a group how they themselves were contributing to the hidden curriculum. This work was built on both preplanned curricula and embedded values.

Being a professional responsible for values education means having the courage to reside in uncertainty – in “the unknown.” This requires the awareness that this work is fraught with dimensions of complexity linked to the character of values as agreements, contrasts, and imbued with various interpretations. However, this does not mean that values education should be unplanned, without goals and methods. Even though informal, often spontaneous and intuitive, formation processes are significant elements of values education, educators are urged to base their work with values on systematic and conscious professional knowledge. Otherwise, the values education in the early years runs the risk of relying on coincidences. Colnerud (2014) demonstrates that the work with values in educational contexts is not always based on careful considerations and professional competence. Instead, it is often based on intuition. This may lead to hidden practices and curricula promoting the evolution of values in preschool that are not necessarily wanted. The challenge for professionals is not to resist the intuitive and personal level but to have the courage, instead, to be in constant dialectical movement between the intuitive and goal-oriented levels of values education.

2.5.2 Between the Personal and the Professional

Addressing values as a professional in ECEC also occurs at the personal level (Malti & Ongley, 2014). In the interviews, educators described having been personally and emotionally affected by the work during the project (Juutinen & Viljama, 2016; Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilson, 2016; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). Such emotional and challenging processes involving personal identity are necessary, as development at the personal level always affects the professional level and vice versa. This does not happen automatically; both of these levels must be acknowledged and reflected on. If professionals do not consciously drive the educational process toward the profession, educational tasks, and professional skills, there is a risk that the values education will not progress beyond the personal and intuitive level. The required shift from intuitive to professional values education requires a process of reassessment. It assumes a mutual commitment in which the participants both give and receive input and knowledge from each other. Emilson (2016) describes the manner in which the project enabled the educators to turn their analytic gaze more often toward their own values and professional knowledge.

Allowing for one's own value priorities to be challenged and reviewed is time-consuming and sometimes agonizing work that requires courage and trust. This presupposes, argue Lunn et al. (Chap. 5 of this book), an understanding of multiple perspectives and the capacity to conduct analyses and entertain many ideas. Professionalism is about various forms of knowledge, both theoretical and practical. Hence, it is important for educators to possess knowledge of the goals and assignments of values education in the early years. Moreover, it is vital that they develop professional competence with deep insights into how values can be communicated and interpreted in different contexts of everyday life.

2.5.3 Between the Collective and the Individual

Values education is also a personal and collective issue. It is about extending awareness and building knowledge with others; thus, it concerns both self-empowerment and collective strength. Building professional competence in values education can be described as both a collective and a personal journey involving personal and common processes of understanding. It is about creating a communicative space (Habermas, as cited in Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) for critically appraising and exploring various views. Such a space can foster shared and personal experiences of empowerment and solidarity. The work in the ValuEd project has been a collective enterprise among and between leaders, educators, children, and researchers. Many participants described the joint work as a strength. Researchers have offered a similar description (Emilson, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016).

The value of community is a high priority in preschools as well as in the research community, as explored through extensive collective work with values. Even though we know that change begins with the individual, and that the individual is always concerned about and challenged when highlighting personal values, the different sub-studies show that the collective process is a prerequisite.

In the context of educational communities, the importance of leadership is evident. Leadership is associated with different positions in preschool, ranging from pedagogical leaders, preschool leaders, politicians, and leaders at the municipal level. It has been evident in the project that leaders play a central role in supporting and challenging the work with values (Emilson, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015). Leadership always rests on and involves expressing values, whether the leader is aware or not (Kirkhaug, 2013). We suggest a leadership that prioritizes a plurality of values and focuses on the contextual and relational. Such leadership relates to various values that are close to the democratic value field. The challenge for leaders is to maintain a participatory focus as a starting point and to stimulate and support emancipatory processes while using a professional language of values. Emancipation is about building on and supporting employees' competencies. For the leader, this may mean holding back personal opinions and allowing the staff's expertise to flourish. Thus, leaders must possess a professional competence for values, create space for collective processes, and build confidence. However, they must also negotiate between minimizing and allowing room for the personal level while also challenging the professional level of knowledge.

2.5.4 Between Theory and Practice

Knowledge of values is constructed in dialectical movements between theory and practice. Values education calls for the competence to identify values and develop a professional language for both values and skills to "do values" in practice, to paraphrase one of the educators in the study (Johansson et al., 2015). Colnerud (2014) states that teachers lack a professional language to talk about values, which makes it difficult for them to fulfill their educational task. The Nordic project supports these results (Broström, Jensen, & Hansen, 2016; Emilson & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). A conceptual framework is needed for values education that can serve as a tool for professionals to identify and explore values and value conflicts in everyday practice. The concepts describing the value fields and the values proposed in this book will support such analyses.

Jürgen Habermas's theory (1987) of communication inspired this project (see also Chap. 4 of this book by Emilson), and concepts from this theory served as tools for analyzing the work with values in the participating preschools. Examining the preschool practice from the system and lifeworld perspectives can help educators discern how different discourses compete for influence in preschool and how the encounters between the close lifeworld in preschool and society's more distant

demands impact the work with values. Reviewing pedagogical practice in this way can help educators identify dilemmas and value conflicts and prioritize and make professional decisions. The ValuEd project has shown, for example, how values of efficiency (representing the system) can overshadow caring values and how this may cause dilemmas for educators (see Chap. 18 of this book by Berge, Johansson, Bjervås, Sigurdadottir, & Puroila).

The concepts of strategic and communicative action (Habermas, 1987) can help educators identify different actions and the values that these actions convey. This means scrutinizing situations where children are addressed as objects and the key circumstances for such actions and the dilemmas involved. This also means investigating situations and actions where children are addressed as subjects. Concepts such as emotional presence, playfulness, and proximity to children's perspectives can contribute to such analyses (Emilson, 2008). The forms of action encompass different qualities and functions. While the goal must always be to meet children as subjects, it is important to remember that strategic action can sometimes be inevitable in professional assignments.

Reflection Tools for Values: A Matter of Creativity and Many Languages The ValuEd project incorporated various means of relating values to theory and practice, such as in conceptualizing values in lectures, texts, documentation, and discussions. Our participants demonstrated their ways of commuting between theory and practice and confronting each other with questions about values in everyday life, about how values are conveyed, and how they can spot values. Not least, it has been important for the educators to “do” values in everyday encounters with children, colleagues, and parents. The educators showed that values education is about communicating values in many different languages, through their own reflections, collegial conversations, in written texts, in diaries, and in aesthetic expressions, for example, in dramatic forms, poetry, and pictures (see Chap. 9 of this book by Puroila & Johansson; see also Puroila et al., 2018). We claim that educators' creativity is a fundamental driving force in their work with values. The work calls for educators to balance between their own competencies, the needs and experiences in the actual child group, and the local conditions of the preschool. As we have already suggested, this implies pluralism in approaches and methods.

Narratives and Video-Recordings Narratives and video-recordings are frequently used for studying dialectics between theory and practice, and working with narratives links theory and practice at different levels. The narratives gathered in this research started with the individual's reflections on a significant event in the everyday life of the preschool. Writing this story challenged educators' linguistic and conceptual awareness of incidents, and dialogues among colleagues about the story constituted a further step in the reflection process (Johansson et al., 2015; Johansson & Röthle, 2018). Narratives were frequently used by the Norwegian and Finnish teams, and the various strategies for these are analyzed by Puroila and Johansson (Chap. 9 of this book). Video-recordings served as a tool for stimulated recall, working in the same direction (Emilson, 2016), combining, visualizing, and returning to events in everyday practice. Emilson (2016) reports on resistance to video-recordings

in the Swedish team during the initial phase of the project, but as the project proceeded and trust was established, this resistance decreased, and the work with video analysis was greatly appreciated. The result of these various kinds of documentation and self-reflections was a more open and receptive climate for critical discussion (Emilson, 2016).

Critical Incidents We want to emphasize the importance of the professional being able to identify and utilize critical incidents of everyday life as part of values education. Critical incidents are, according to Halquist and Musanti (2010), events that compel us to take a fresh look at what we take for granted and (perhaps) identify a new meaning in what is usually obvious. Critical events have a specific meaning for the person(s) involved. They often comprise contrasting elements or dilemmas that force the subject to stop and consider, thereby creating possibilities for change. Resistance, whether it comes from adults or children, can reveal value conflicts and create room for change (Grindland, 2011; Johansson & Emilson, 2016). The ValuEd project has shown how influential reflecting on critical incidents is in changing potentials, for example, in narratives (Johansson & Røthle, 2018). The challenge is to regard such incidents, often involving conflicts, as a driving force for learning about values both for children and educators.

Reflection is a keyword here. Lunn et al. (Chap. 5 of this book) argue for educators and children to engage in a dialectical dialogue, where testing various and conflicting arguments and justifications for values is significant. These dialogues are to be built on joint respect and a multiplicity of ideas. The authors also argue for dialectics between educators' and children's beliefs about values and personal epistemologies. Reflexivity is central, and it not only means reflecting, discussing, arguing, and justifying but also acting in practice. Zachrisen (Chap. 14 of this book) highlights the importance of educators engaging in self-reflection that involves considering their own values and interpretations of diversity and equality in preschool and how these attitudes and values imbue their didactic choices.

In sum, the concepts and methods described above contribute linguistically, analytically, and methodologically to work with values in preschool. Building the preschool institution on certain values, and including the children in these values, requires professional insights into different theories regarding how children learn values, as well as insights into the children's perspectives on values and how those values can "be done" in practice. Thus, we need a language for describing and analyzing both hidden and explicit educational processes. Furthermore, we require awareness about the values of importance for children to learn and how they can contribute to the ethos of values in the group (see, e.g., Johansson, 2011; Pálmadóttir & Johansson, 2015; Sigurdadóttir & Einarsdóttir, Chap. 7 of this book). Our participants described how they had changed throughout the project (Emilson, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016). This change was related to a meta-perspective on their own values, an extension of their knowledge of values, and their development of an adequate language for values in combination with new methods for jointly "doing values" in preschool. This calls

for teacher education and for preschool teachers and leaders at different levels to build professional competence relating to values that include both theory and practice. However, the connection between theory and practice is complex, and theoretical knowledge neither guarantees a better practice nor solves lived dilemmas and value conflicts in practice (see Puroila et al., 2016). The dialectical movement between theory and lived and contextual practice is nevertheless both necessary and fruitful. Hence, a conceptual framework and tools for “doing values” are needed.

2.6 Values Education and Pluralism

In this chapter, we discussed theoretical and conceptual approaches to values and values education in ECEC contexts. We described values education as an enterprise of “being in between” and pointed out some core elements of importance: *clarity and uncertainty*, *professional and personal*, *collective and individual*, and *theory and practice*. The core elements are interdependent, yet they can create dilemmas and occasionally stand in conflict. They constitute characteristics of values education in the early years. To this portrayal of values education, we added pluralism (Johansson & Thornberg, 2014), which places the focus on variety and openness to different understandings of values, different approaches to how children can internalize values, and how values can be communicated explicitly and implicitly. Pluralism rejects the idea of the professional holding one correct position or reaching a singular, static understanding of values education in the ECEC context. Rather, pluralism is about dialectical knowledge, where different value concepts and theories can illuminate everyday practices, and vice versa, and where values education in practice can shed light on theory. Lunn et al. (Chap. 5 of this book) argue for developing a culture of dialogic persuasion (encouragement) and justification that involves scrutinizing a multiplicity of perspectives and using argumentation as a reliable process.

It is a challenge for educators to analyze what kinds of values children and adults are able to express. What values do educators desire, and how are these related to the professional assignment? Knowledge of theory and practice is required for such analyses. Pluralism and openness to different understandings of how values are conveyed and how children develop values can help to expand our perspectives on values. Thus, pluralism can support constructive discussions between different positions (Johansson & Thornberg, 2014). This is not the same as relativism. Certain values and approaches must be given priority over others, but the reasons for this may vary.

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Chapter 3

The Heart of Values Education in Early Childhood: Key Issues and Patterns



Eva Johansson

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, reoccurring patterns of values education in early childhood are discussed in light of the key findings from the Nordic project (ValuEd). The research questions are as follows: What kinds of values appear to be significant in the communication between educators and children and in educators' talk about values in the different sub-studies and in the ValuEd project as a whole? What kinds of patterns for communicating values can be identified, and what implications for practice can be drawn from the project?

3.2 Value Fields: Clusters of Values

The results of ValuEd highlight numerous values relating to different value fields – namely, democracy, ethics, discipline, competence, and efficiency. The value fields consist of clusters of values brought together because of their interrelated thematic. The value fields are presented in the figure below (Fig. 3.1). It is important to note that this is an empirically based construction, and as the value fields are shown to be of significance in early childhood education, they may be defined otherwise in different contexts (Emilsson & Johansson, 2009). They are both interrelated and sometimes in conflict, which demands prioritizing on the part of educators.

The well-being of others forms the basic idea of the *ethical value field*. Others' situations and needs, moods and experiences, and the ways they are taken care of

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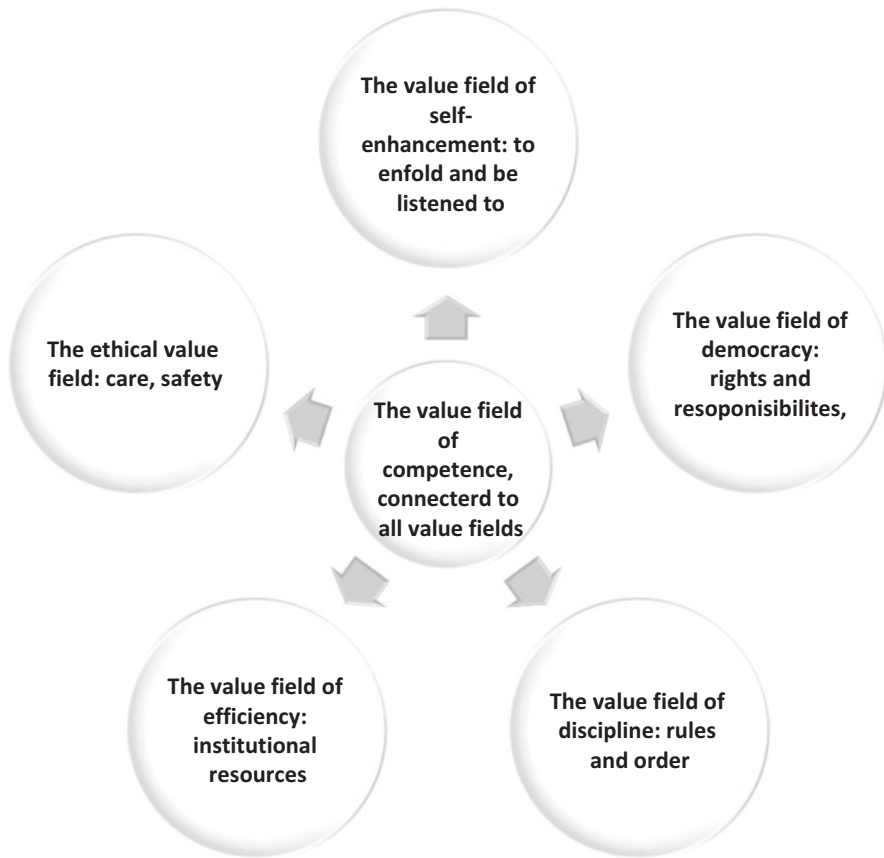


Fig. 3.1 Value fields (referred to in Johansson, 2018)

and recognized in a community are at the forefront of this value field (Johansson et al., 2015). Important values are care and safety. Care refers to a concern for others' needs, which entails acknowledging, respecting, comforting, and helping others. Safety refers to an existential dimension, where one trusts that one's needs as a human being can be fulfilled. This also involves questions regarding whether and how other people can be trusted and if everyday life is relatively predictable. The value field of *self-enhancement* relates to the ethical and democratic value fields. Self-enhancement refers to the experience of one's identity through the ability to express oneself freely. Self-realization, engagement, and playfulness are values connected with this value field. Since self-enhancement concerns the individual's possibility of being heard, it can also be linked to the value field of democracy, in terms of participation and influence.

The dialectic relation and tensions between the individual and the community are key issues in the *democratic value field* (Johansson et al., 2015). The conditions for community life, rights, and the responsibilities of the community and the individual are central values in this value field. The values of belonging and kinship are

connected, as are the values of influence and participation. Balancing between the wishes and needs of the child and those of the community can be a challenge for educators. In the context of learning, democracy resonates with a shared life and pluralism, but it also refers to methods of learning for democracy. As such, communication is important, and ambiguity and even conflicting ideas can be related to the value field of democracy (Grindland, 2011).

The institutional rules and order of a community are focal points in the *disciplinary value field*. These are the ways, and the extent to which, participants are expected to follow, relate to, and change this order. Basically, values of discipline are neither inherently negative nor oppressive but can be these things in practice. Although discipline is needed in a democratic society, too much discipline can become an obstacle. The disciplinary value field can also relate to the other value fields presented here. Values of discipline embrace expectations about individuals behaving in a morally accepted way, following rules, developing certain prioritized competencies, and adapting to the community, to facilitate democratic processes. A society must always rely on values of discipline, such as rules, and there is often a more or less implicit agreement that individuals will adhere to such values. Yet it is not evident that all rules and expectations are valid for all members of a community.

A closely connected value field is the *value field of efficiency*, which is related to societal aims. Now, the institutional conditions, economy, and organization of the preschool are prioritized. Efficiency involves managing the organization of the preschool, using resources effectively, and making accomplishments and achieving expected results. Values of efficiency concern the requirements that the organization of the preschool imposes on participants, which can cause dilemmas for educators in their everyday work with other values. Values of efficiency appear eventually to actualize the disciplinary value field.

The *value field of competence* relates to cultural and social understandings of prioritized knowledge and skills. This value field is designed by the other value fields and the various competencies prescribed or needed in those value fields. Independence, for example, is a skill and a value often maintained in preschool contexts, which can be related to the value fields of efficiency and democracy (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015). Social competencies serve as another example of prioritized skills in preschool. These competencies are associated with the ethical value field because they, at least on a discourse level, concern others' well-being (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). Social competencies can also be related to the disciplinary value field because they concern rules and order.

The value fields described in Fig. 3.1 above are more or less oriented toward the individual and/or the collective. The democratic value field, for example, considers the relationship between the individual and the community, whereas the value field of self-enhancement can be regarded as a value field oriented toward the individual. As we can learn from the Nordic project, values are often communicated individually, irrespective of their type.

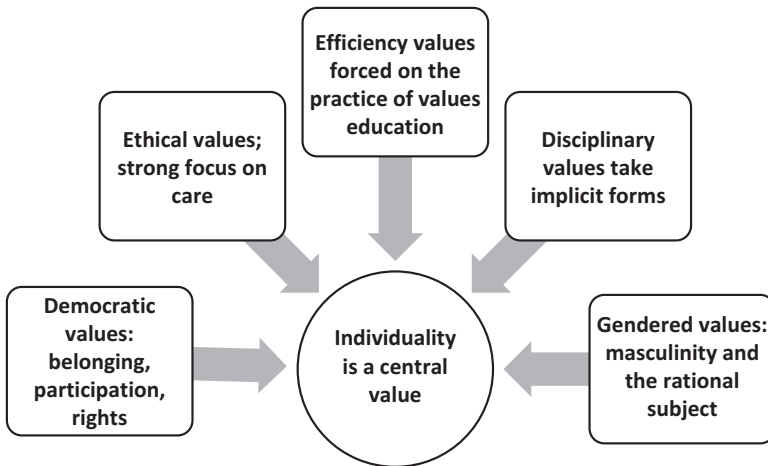


Fig. 3.2 Identified value fields, connected values, and their thematic, illustrating how individuality is communicated in all value fields

3.3 The Nordic Project: Identified Values

Educators across Nordic contexts communicate a diversity of values related to different value fields in their work. Ethics and democracy are influential value fields, but the relevance of discipline and efficiency also emerged in the project. The dominance of these value fields differs, however, in different contexts. This is the case, for example, of values related to the ethical and democratic value fields. Whereas ethical values (e.g., care) seem to be prominent in Norwegian and Finnish preschools, democratic values are given high priority in the Swedish preschools, and Danish and Icelandic preschools emphasize a mixture of care and democracy (Emilsson & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; see also Chap. 7 of this book by Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir and Chap. 13 of this book by Hansen, Jensen, & Broström).

When analyzing curricula from the different Nordic countries, we also learned that values of competence are prioritized in the Swedish curricula, while caring values are sparsely referred to (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). Figure 3.2 above illustrates the various value fields and the thematic on which each one touches.

3.4 Ethical Value Field: Strong Focus on Care

Care is a value that was frequently communicated in many of the participating preschools. Furthermore, care is connected to the ethical value field, and it appeared to be important as an ethical modus for embracing children for many of the educators who participated in the project. According to the results of many of the sub-studies, care is either a particular value or a value in interplay with other values.

Care was highlighted in the group interviews when the educators discussed a narrative relating to a Swedish day-care setting that exemplified the interplay between one educator and seven children in a small cloakroom (Johansson, 2003). In their Nordic cross-cultural analysis, Puroila et al. (2016) describe the participants' disapproval of educators' ways of addressing children in the narrative, including their wordings, emotional distance (and presence), and disciplining of some of the children. Even though the educators did not use the term "care," they showed concern about the lack of care for children. In the analyses, no cross-cultural discrepancies appeared between the educators; irrespective of the cultural context, the educators disapproved of the communication between the educator and the children in the cloakroom.

Care was communicated in various kinds of interplay with the children in the Norwegian settings, for example, in interactions in the cloakroom and during play, as shown by Fugelsnes (Chap. 11) in this book (e.g., Johansson et al., 2016; Røthle & Fugelsnes, 2018). Care is a value that the educators wanted to focus on in the Icelandic sub-study conducted by Sigurdadottir and Einarsdottir (2016). The educators regarded care as the most crucial value for children to learn. They highlighted their importance as role models guiding the children toward care in the peer community. In these processes, the educators observed the importance of closeness to the children. In addition, in their analyses of curricula for values education, Jensen and Broström (2018) illustrate how educators in the Danish sub-study devised goals and strategies to inspire children to develop caring attitudes toward each other. The goals for caring affected both the educators and the children. Further, the analyses in the Norwegian participating preschools revealed that educators highlighted caring attitudes among children in many of their written narratives concerning their practice (Johansson & Røthle, 2018). These narratives often reflected the educators' pride when the children showed concern for, supported, or helped each other in various ways.

The results of the project indicate that care was taken for granted as a positive value for the good of the children. This was not always the case, however, and caring could sometimes conceal power processes. Care is about a concern for others, without exercising power over them (Halldén, 2016). The reciprocity of care is analyzed by Fugelsnes (Chap. 11 of this book) in the context of a Norwegian sub-study. According to Fugelsnes, the challenge is recognizing the power of care and how the other (the child) may receive the care. This demands that educators be sensitive to children's responses to their caring actions and that such care empowers the child even after the situation in question is over. The difference between power and empowering processes can be subtle. Regarding the Danish sub-study, Broström, Jensen, & Hansen (2016) report that caring values are linked to a specific relationship that targets and supports the child's needs. However, there is a risk of mistaking approval and positive feedback for caring while overlooking the fact that care is a way to engage with other people that requires conscious effort on many levels – ethically, cognitively, and emotionally. "Reflecting on what is going on in the relationship, the pedagogue thereby learns new things about him or herself while he or she learns about the children. In this way, caring relationships construct the child as well as the pedagogue" (Broström et al., 2016, p. 32).

3.4.1 Communication Forms of Ethical Values

To a large extent, it is the form of the communication that designates the dignity of care. The analyses of the various studies illuminate that care was differently communicated. Care was often communicated through mental and physical closeness, joint communication, support, and encouragement. The educators would tune in the children's voices and talk with the children in a light, often playful, tone of voice (Johansson et al., 2015). Children were met with recognition and respect, and the educators endeavored to foster interactions based on intersubjectivity.

Care was also communicated by presence, in terms of "being there" mentally, emotionally, and physically. In the participating Finnish preschools, the educators developed what they described as "armchair pedagogy," which was based on the value of care (Puroila, Estola, Juutinen, & Viljamaa, 2018). Significant dimensions of this pedagogy were being calm and sitting down; being emotionally, mentally, and literarily close to the children; and being attuned to the children's modes and activities. The findings from the Norwegian sub-study also illustrate the power of gaze to express either emotional presence or distance, which supports earlier research (Johansson et al., 2015; see also Fugelsnes, Röhle, & Johansson, 2013). When care was communicated, an adult's range of vision would often seek out the child's gaze, and when care was absent, the adult's gaze and presence would often drift in other directions. This extends the concept of emotional presence as developed by Emilson (2008) and includes gaze as an important part of communicative action. Paraphrasing Habermas's (1987) various forms of communication, the communicative action is paramount in caring actions.

When the ethical dimension is lacking, however, care can be reduced to instrumental actions. Adults can be physically close to children but emotionally absent. A strategic action dominates the communication (Habermas, 1987), and children become objects of the educators' intentions. We have identified these kinds of actions in situations where educators found themselves under pressure (Johansson et al., 2016; Puroila et al., 2016). These situations may cause strategic actions, and they are characterized by mental distance. Adults find themselves captured in organizational efficiency demands, and the situation must end quickly and smoothly, as time and resources are limited. In such situations, the institutional demands provide foresight, and values of efficiency dominate, often at the expense of values of care. This is confirmed by Berge, Johansson, Bjervås, Sigurdadottir, and Puroila in this book (Chap. 18). Specifically, they show how values for efficiency and care come into conflict, often at the cost of care.

3.4.2 The Intertwined Character of Values: Encounters Between Care and Justice

In practice, values are constantly confronted, negotiated, & prioritized. In a Norwegian sub-study, Mørkeseth, Tofteland, Johansson, Röhle, and Fugelsnes (2015) illustrate educators' concern about the distribution of care. The pedagogical

ideal emanating from the group interviews was to ensure that each child receives their legitimate share of care (see also Bjervås, 2016, 2018; Folkesson, 2016). The educators' ambition to provide each child with care was confronted with the value of justice – a value related to the democratic value field. Yet this was a difficult task, which was underpinned by various principles for justice. In some situations, justice meant equal sharing and giving children similar amounts of recognition. In other situations, the distribution of care was motivated by the children's different needs. Justice was thereby based on a compensatory idea: the (resource) weak child should receive more time and acknowledgment than the (resource) rich child (Mørkeseth et al., 2015; see also Gilliam & Gulløv, 2012). Another principle for justice identified in the analyses is the meritocratic principle, based on the idea that children should deserve the care they are given. The educators disapproved when children received care with what they described as “sharp elbows,” in an unjust way and at the cost of other children. However, this meritocratic principle did not appear frequently in the data (Mørkeseth et al., 2015).

Similar principles for the distribution of care are discussed by Colnerud (2006, 2014) with reference to teachers in school contexts. In their profession, teachers increasingly must balance between values of justice and care and resolve how to organize and distribute care to students in a just way (Colnerud, 2014). This dilemma was also present for the educators in ValuEd.

Recognizing each child appeared to be an ideal for many educators that could be difficult, or even impossible, to realize in the complex preschool practice, where there are many children, who must all be recognized. This form of personal care was primarily visible in dyadic interactions, when one educator communicated with one child. Care among children was also important for the educators, and it was visible, for example, in group-oriented interactions (Zachrisen, 2016). In many such situations, care could be communicated as a collective value. For example, children were asked to recognize each other, listen and show concern for each other, and at the same time hold back their own needs and wishes (Folkesson, 2016). Nevertheless, our analyses evince that care tended to be communicated individually.

To conclude, it appears that adults consider themselves to be the main partner in a caring relation. This may be both relevant and important in a profession addressing the education of young children, yet a dilemma is implied. If there is a strong focus on the educators' role as the main caregivers, there is a risk that the potential for children to be caregivers will be reduced. According to previous research (Hägglund & Öhrn 1992; Johansson, 2007), children rely on teachers to be responsible for them, since adults comfort, help, and support them. From this, we may conclude that concern for the other is not actualized as an issue for children. This poses an important challenge for educators – that is, balancing between being a professional educator responsible for the values communicated and lived in preschool and not taking this responsibility away from the children.

3.5 Democratic Values: Belonging, Participation, and Rights

Other values prioritized in the project relate to the democratic value field, such as inclusion or belonging, participation, and rights. The idea that everyone should be included is strong in early childhood education and was so in many of the preschools that participated in the ValuEd project (Johansson et al., 2015; Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Puroila et al., 2016; Söderlund Wijk, 2016). This is often expressed as “Everyone should join.” Other significant values refer to the rights of all children to make their own choices, to participate and be given space for action, and to have a voice and be listened to (Folkesson, 2016; Johansson et al., 2016; Rosendahl, 2016).

The value of belonging was underscored by the participants in the notion that no child should have the feeling of being outside the community. Despite this recognition of belonging as essential for all children, we identified some patterns that at least partly seemed to counteract this ideal. In the participating preschools in Norway, for example, values connected to the value field of democracy were less visible than values of care (Johansson et al., 2015). None of the participating preschools in the Norwegian sub-study chose values of democracy as part of their work in the project. Instead, they focused on caring values. In Finland, values of inclusion were maintained at the level of educational policies. However, enhancing belonging did not seem like a conscious aim of the practitioners. Like the Norwegian educators, the educators in the Finnish preschools focused on care (Puroila et al., 2018). This is comparable to the Swedish sub-study, as all participating preschools chose a democratic value to work with during the project (Emilson & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016).

Zachrisen (2018) explores the value of belonging in ethnically diverse preschools in the Norwegian context. Her analysis reveals that children from an ethnic minority background can run the risk of being outnumbered in play. This calls for teachers’ awareness of inclusion and exclusion processes and understanding of the complexity of values of belonging. Using the analytic concept of “the politics of belonging,” Juutinen, Puroila, and Johansson (Chap. 15 of this book) reveal that processes of belonging and exclusion in preschool are fraught with tensions between stability and variability, between including and excluding, and between individuality and community. Constant movements appeared between children being positioned as insiders and outsiders. According to Juutinen et al., there is a need to consciously consider processes of belonging and exclusion in order to create possibilities for every child to feel a sense of belonging in the early childhood education setting. This calls for further research addressing political processes for belonging.

3.5.1 Democratic Values: Different Forms of Communication

Inside the value field of democracy, we have identified both communicative and strategic actions (Broström et al., 2016; Emilson & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016; Röthle & Fugelsnes, 2018).

Strategic actions aligned with values for inclusion can sometimes lead to the formation of an organizational community (Zachrisen, 2016). The possibility of participating in a community was sometimes given an instrumental character. In these situations, the adults seemed to work with the intention of creating an intersubjective community with each child. Many children could be gathered, but the interaction was still dyadic, and the children seemed not to be encouraged to develop fellowships with their peers. In addition, the adults appeared to regard themselves as the main partner in interactions with children concerning the democratic value field.

Rights of priority were often individually addressed, and they concerned, for example, the individual's right to play without being interrupted and the individual's right to an equal share of the adult's attention. According to the Nordic cross-cultural analyses, children were accorded the right to express meaning and were listened to, but their claims for rights were constrained if they clashed with institutional rules (Johansson et al., 2016). The findings exhibit how limited the processes supporting children's empowerment and collective claim for rights were. The teachers' right to prioritize seemed overarching. Such processes have been described as exclusive with regard to children's rights (Arce, 2012).

The dominance of individual rights in values education in the Nordic ECEC settings studied in Valued challenged us to question if collective rights were being neglected. The interactions appeared to be embedded in a strong, individualistic paradigm, where collective rights for building communities may have been invisible. Helping children identify and embrace collective values is a complex but important issue for educators. Again, we could identify a dilemma between a child's personal rights and the rights and expectations of the community, which seemed difficult for the educators to handle. The emerging paradox is that the issue of community runs the risk of turning into an individual question and belonging in preschool to be constituted by the dyadic interplay between one adult and one child.

Dyadic interplay is often (but not always) built on communicative action and is based on respect and reciprocity. Individual-oriented interplay situations between one adult and one child can create a space for constructive dialogue and establish the appropriate conditions for inclusion, affording children possibilities to influence the community. In addition, we identified group interactions in which values for democracy took the form of communicative action. The communication in these intersubjective interactions flowed between educators and children but was also rich and fluent among the children themselves. Furthermore, these situations afforded children the space for initiative and influence. The educator would communicate to the children that they were expected to participate and contribute. There was a certain space for disagreement and resistance both for the community and individual children. In the narratives and interviews, for example, we were able to identify such an attitude, where the children's intentions were taken seriously and the adults placed themselves in the background while giving the children space to influence. However, we could also observe how children's communities were being restricted. This was evident, for example, in the analyses of rights in the Nordic observation data (Johansson et al., 2016). There were limits for children's rights and for their communities to flourish. When children created playful communities during meal-

times, educators could restrict these communities because they were interfering with rules for the community during mealtimes. Strategic actions could be used, and resistance may not have been permitted.

3.5.2 *Difference and Harmony*

Many of the Norwegian participants showed evidence of upholding the importance of respecting difference (Johansson et al., 2015; Zachrisen, 2018). The educators across the project also pointed to the fact that their experience of the project had helped them accept each other's differences (Emilson, 2016b; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, Chap. 7 of this book). Diversity is encouraged in all curricula in the Nordic countries. Early childhood educators' ability to create opportunities for belonging for children in preschool is significant in a democratic educational institution (Zachrisen, 2018). This means valuing diversity within the collective and welcoming children as equal, respected members, who will enrich the community through both their commonality and uniqueness. According to Zachrisen (2018), highlighting similarities in diverse groups may support children's feelings of sameness, friendship, and belongingness to the peer group. However, highlighting equality can also hide important differences in power and influence. Emphasizing similarities requires respect, awareness, and recognition of *diversity* (Zachrisen, 2018). Instead of reducing differences in preschool, there is a call for teachers to explore how differences within and between groups can create possibilities for the children and the pedagogical work. The value of difference was not a key question in this project; yet we can ask ourselves if there are limits for difference in our preschools.

In the narratives in the Norwegian sub-study, for example, "good events" in preschool practice were frequently described (Johansson et al., 2015; Johansson & Røthle, 2018). The narratives portrayed children interacting respectfully, supporting each other, and solving conflicts by helping each other. These narratives were characterized by harmony and agreement. Moreover, our analyses of conflicts between educators and children in the Nordic data (Johansson et al., 2016; see also Bjervås, 2018) depicted the adults striving to help children reach agreements as smoothly as possible (also Johansson & Emilson, 2016). We also identified that discipline was often expressed implicitly by the educators (see Chap. 16 of this book).

In sum, this can be interpreted as an ideal of harmony, where consensus and agreement are important. This ideal is anchored in the Nordic culture and preschool tradition (Korsvold, 2013). Gullestad (1992) refers to the Scandinavian ideal of agreement as an expression of likeness/similarity. This ideal of likeness can lead to the fact that disagreement can be regarded as a problem to solve as quickly and as smoothly as possible (Johansson & Emilson, 2016). Even though adults emphasize diversity as enriching the community through interactions among children, research shows that children are corrected when they accentuate differences (Gilliam & Gulløv, 2012).

In addition, research supports that strategies for resistance can be important for children to develop as responsible citizens. Skills for criticizing, challenging, and resisting authority and injustice (Schultz, 2005) are important in a democratic society. Conflicts can challenge children to clarify their opinions, intentions, and ethics (Björk-Willen 2012; Corsaro, 2005; Johansson, 2007; Johansson & Emilson, 2016). Grindland (2011) refers to Mouffe's (2005) theory regarding disagreement and encounters between different perspectives as preconditions for democracy. Here, we can draw interesting parallels to our project, based on the educators' resistance to the project (Johansson et al., 2015; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, Chap. 7 of this book). When the preschool leaders encountered resistance from staff, for example, when things were not done, this could lead to critical incidents and turning points. The leaders were challenged in their leadership role and were forced to reflect on the situation and attempt to see it from a new angle. They had to confront their own values that they took for granted. They realized that their priorities hindered, rather than supported, the educators in developing shared ownership of the project. This critical incident brought about a democratic process that strengthened the educators' involvement in the project.

3.6 Gender: Neutrality, Masculinity, and the Rational Subject

The Nordic project also addressed gender issues in relation to values. Values of gender can connect to all value fields. This section will establish connections from the findings addressing the educators' beliefs relating to gender, their approaches to children, and prioritized values.

The analyses of interactions between educators and children across the Nordic countries raised questions about the educators' ways of addressing children. We have described this attitude toward children in terms of masculinity and rationality (Johansson et al., 2016). When analyzing the observations to identify rights, we distinguished a communicative approach toward children that could be interpreted as a perspective of a child as an autonomous and rational subject. The educators addressed the children as persons able to reason, make decisions, negotiate, and reach agreements with others. They spoke with the children in a neutral, often friendly, tone of voice, and the children were given space for expressing opinions and solutions. These ambitions to treat children as rational subjects and reach consensus were built on respect, yet they involved implicit disciplining processes and could undermine the collective empowerment and education for rights and democratic values. Moreover, we noticed that expectations for adaptation tended to be directed more toward girls. Demands seemed to be placed on girls to compromise and, sometimes, to waive their rights, in relation to boys but also as part of the idea of conforming to the community.

In sum, according to the analyses, masculinity was given hegemony in interactions regarding rights. This indicates that when it comes to rights in ECEC settings, gender equality cannot be taken for granted. The challenge for the educator is to remain cognizant of potential gender biases when communicating with children. Of particular importance is to consider value conflicts in relation to children's rights and how more or less hidden traditional gender patterns might influence the communication.

In a Swedish sub-study, the aim was to explore practitioners' beliefs about gender in relation to values (Emilson, Folkesson, & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016). Data from ten semi-structured group interviews with practitioners in eight Swedish preschools were analyzed. The analyses revealed a strong belief in gender neutrality and preschool as a place where traditional, gendered behavior should be rejected. However, dilemmas about gender values in practice emerged. Ideas that gender is primarily a social construct were confronted by ideas that gender is primarily determined by biological sex. Another dilemma relates to the goals of the curriculum. On the one hand, there was a demand on educators to counterbalance children's activities built on traditional gender roles. On the other hand, the activities in preschool had to respect the interests of individual children. Additionally, while boys were encouraged to embrace femininity, girls were paradoxically deterred from femininity (Emilson et al., 2016). Whereas boys were encouraged to role-playing like "a princess," for example, the girls were not always praised for similar play activities.

The findings from the Nordic project support previous research arguing that preschool represents a gendered practice (Hellman, 2010). However, the picture is complex. The dominance of caring values identified in Norwegian and Finnish preschools, for example, is one aspect of traditional gender patterns influencing values education, even though caring was addressed with both boys and girls. Another aspect relating to gender is the dominance of masculinity that seemed to characterize educators' approaches toward children in the participating preschools. Eventually, this hegemony led to undemocratic processes, for example, when girls were encouraged to waive their rights. The strong idea of gender neutrality identified in the Swedish sub-study is yet another aspect of gender imposing on values education. Paraphrasing the concept of the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1990), we can ask how these ideals for rationality, gender neutrality, and care can impose on the identities and values that girls and boys may develop in the early years. It remains important, however, to further explore values education in relation to gender and also increase educators' (and researchers') awareness of their gendered practices and values in the everyday life of preschool.

3.7 Disciplinary Values Take Implicit Forms

An overall impression from the Nordic project is that disciplinary values were communicated more implicitly than explicitly. In our analyses of rights, although based on conflict situations, there were few expressions of strong emotional outbreaks or

negatively loaded interactions driven by the educators (Johansson et al., 2016). The rational way of addressing children has already been described as an approach toward children, and communicative actions appeared to occur frequently. This does not mean that there was a lack of discipline in these preschools. Nor does it mean that conflicts or children's resistance were not present. We saw many expressions where educators negotiated, neglected, and refused children's transgressions, for example (Johansson et al., 2016). Moreover, the organization of the preschool practice could be both a substitute for rules and a form of discipline (Kirkhaug, 2013). Various values are implied in rules aimed at children (Emilson, 2007; Johansson et al., 2015, 2016; Söderlund Wijk, 2016). Both disciplinary and democratic value fields can be embedded in rules for waiting for one's turn, demands to be quiet and listen to peers and teachers, as well as to share and give each other space for action. Demands for self-regulation can serve as discipline but can also assure values for equality (Johansson et al., 2016). These findings resonate with previous research showing how disciplinary action takes place in indirect, implicit, silent, and friendly ways (Bartholdsson, 2007; Nordin Hultman, 2004). The responsibility for discipline is also partly transferred from the adult to the child, who is expected to both learn self-control and follow and uphold the rules (Nordin Hultman, 2004).

The work with disciplinary values in practice and in the research has been extended with the ValuEd project. Sigurdadottir and Einarsdottir (2016), for example, display how some educators from one Icelandic preschool chose to address the value field of discipline during the project, together with values of care and respect. The educators had a sense that disciplinary values were complex and often negatively loaded. The silence around disciplinary values and complexity, however, challenged the educators to address this value (Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). These findings are followed up in depth by Emilson (Chap. 16 of this book). The analyses revealed two issues concerning discipline. The first issue relates to the finding that discipline was negatively viewed and was often silenced and neglected in the educators' talk about values education. The second issue relates to the finding that the communication of discipline was often of a friendly and implicit character, where children were treated as rational subjects. This raises questions about the relationship between discipline and democracy, and it is discussed from the perspective of Habermas's theory of communicative action.

3.7.1 Communicative Forms of Discipline

Discipline was often communicated physically, with subtle and sometimes playful gestures, in order to gently limit a child and/or remind the child of the rules (Johansson et al., 2015, 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). These interactions were characterized by intersubjectivity and closeness, even though the educators' goal was to influence children to adapt and follow the rules. Discipline could also be communicated more explicitly as a confrontation between the different ideas or intentions of adults and children. Disciplinary actions could be undertaken as

targeted, strategic actions, where the child would become an object of the adult's action, which Bjervås (2018) illuminates when analyzing how justice was addressed by a teacher and the children in a Swedish preschool. The teacher's endeavor to make the children solve a problem in a specific way was ultimately strong, restricting, and oppressive for the children.

It appears that both adults and children accepted and approved of the rules. In some interactions, communication about rules seemed to be in focus and has features of strategic action (Habermas, 1987). In other interactions, the rules appeared to be subordinate and more indirect, and communicative actions tended to characterize those interactions. These variations were found in the Nordic analyses of conflicts (Johansson et al., 2016). Here, we would like to point to the powerful, implicit forms of discipline and the risk of fostering children to unreflectively accept and adapt to rules. This calls for researchers and educators to scrutinize how these friendly power processes can take different forms and under what conditions they might suppress, rather than empower, democratic processes in preschool.

3.8 The Value Field of Efficiency Forced into the Practice of Values Education

One value field that emerged as important in the project is linked to effectiveness, performance, and results. Using Habermas's (1996) terminology, we can say that values linked to productivity, efficiency, and results are part of the system, which can also intrude on the lifeworld of the preschool. Values of efficiency sometimes seemed to induce strategic action, thereby involving the disciplinary value field.

Values of efficiency seemed to cause dilemmas for the educators, for example, when they were forced to choose between such values and values connected to the democratic or ethical value fields (Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila & Haho, 2017; Puroila et al., 2016). The educators described in the interviews and narratives how they sometimes experienced feeling squeezed between the requirements of the system calling for results, flexibility, and goal fulfillment *and* close encounters with children in the lifeworld of the preschool, where care and community processes were important. According to the Nordic interview data analyses, the educators used various metaphors to describe this dilemma. They described their own role as that of an octopus with many arms to illustrate their sense of being unable to care for each child. They also envisioned the preschool as a post office, describing how children were addressed as if they were packets (objects) to send (see Chap. 18 by Berge et al.). In those cases, care was at risk of becoming instrumental, without ethical dimensions, and characterized by strategic action. Democracy issues could be neglected and children could become objects for the adults' intentions. However, it is not only the children who were objectified in these contexts. The educators also experienced being objects for the requirements of the system. Paraphrasing Habermas, we can say that the system colonized the lifeworld.

In particular, the cloakroom situation outlined in the interviews can be understood as part of the system being a place where value conflicts arose, forcing educators to prioritize values (Röthle & Fugelsnes, 2018). It is easy to imagine how efficiency and achievement can be given hegemony in such interactions, where many children are gathered, clothes are to be removed or put on, and the children are to go out. Consequently, the focus for the adults turned toward efficiency, quickly dressing the children and adapting, rather than addressing them as subjects. Thus, the dilemma was not merely related to the wardrobe. At the same time, we see that participants made choices and related to the system's requirements; it was not always the value field of efficiency that dominated.

Efficiency and outcomes have been described in the literature as new ideals in education, and this is also true in the preschool context (Biesta, 2009). Economic thinking has gained a more influential position in practice, according to several researchers (Berge, 2015; Kjørholt, 2005; Johansson & Emilson, 2010; J-E Johansson, 2010). This does not mean that values associated with efficiency (and the system) always have a negative impact and necessarily lead to the exercise of power at the cost of values of care and democracy. On the contrary, efficiency can be both necessary and important in preschool. This was also described by educators in the interviews (see Chap. 18 in this book by Berge et al.). The balance between values of efficiency and other values in preschool is, however, a significant matter for educators to reflect on and relate to, but this (im)balance is also an important issue for further research.

3.9 The Nordic Project: A Multiplicity of Value Fields

To sum up, preschool is a place for expressing, negotiating, and prioritizing values. Values are constantly communicated between children and educators through language, actions, attitudes and feelings, organization, rules, content, and materiality. It is impossible for educators and children to reframe from communicating values, whether consciously or not, explicitly or indirectly. Several value fields were actualized in the educators' work with values throughout the Nordic contexts. We identified the ethical, democratic, and disciplinary value fields in the interactions between educators and children and in the educators' talk about values. We further discerned value fields of self-enhancement and competence in everyday practices in all studied preschools. Rather often, values came into conflict, and this required the setting of priorities. Many preschools in the project can be characterized by a strong emphasis on the value of care, while others showed a stronger focus on the value of democracy. This does not mean that care or democracy was not present in these contexts; perhaps we can say that the values were taken for granted and not conceptualized. However, there may have been a risk that these value fields would be neglected. The challenge for the educator was to constantly reflect on the balance between various values communicated in practice.

The value of individuality appeared as a red thread throughout the project, although we also recognized many expressions of values of community and belonging. This gave us a reason to reflect on what kinds of values were being prioritized in preschool and on what basis. It appeared that the value of efficiency sometimes interfered and caused dilemmas for the educators. Sometimes, efficiency functioned as an intrinsic value supporting other values, such as care. In these cases, we can ask, is the impact of the value of efficiency something new in Nordic early childhood education? Efficiency has always been part of everyday life in preschool (and will always be). Several studies have shown that a lack of time is a key issue for educators (Berge, 2015; Johansson, 2013; Puroila & Haho, 2017; Sheridan, Samuelsson, & Johansson, 2009). Value conflicts are part of everyday life in preschool, and educators need to be skilled to identify, reflect, and prioritize values. Being able to relate to the system as well as to different life-worlds is part of the profession. However, perhaps values related to production, efficiency, and achievement are becoming increasingly important values in contemporary preschools.

3.9.1 Lack of Language for Values

A general finding from the Nordic project is that educators lacked an adequate language for values. The analyses of the interviews revealed how abstract and difficult values appeared to be for the educators, particularly at the beginning of the project (Emilson, 2016a; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). They found it hard to conceptualize values, and they described how challenging it was for them to communicate values in words. This does not mean that they did not express, discuss, or problematize values in practice; rather, it suggests that the values were more implicit and often described in terms of behavior. As the project progressed, this uncertainty diminished. The educators seemed to be acquiring a language for identifying, describing, and interpreting values. These findings support previous studies carried out by Colnerud (2014) and Thornberg (2016), for example, whose results display a similar lack of concepts relating to values among teachers. When teachers lack concepts for pedagogical practice and theory, the risk is that they also lack important tools for values education and for helping children identify values and value conflicts in practice. However, we must note that it is not enough for values to be conceptualized. The importance of relating discussions about everyday work and practices, including educators' emotions toward their work, to concepts of values cannot be underestimated. Thus, telling and retelling stories about everyday work can reinforce educators' awareness of the ethical dimensions of early childhood education (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016).

3.9.2 *Individuality: A Central Value*

Values prioritized by adults in the interviews and in their communication with children tended to be individual oriented (Emilson et al., 2016; Johansson et al., 2015; Puroila et al., 2016; Zachrisen, 2016; see also Berge et al., Chap. 18 of this book). The values expressed by the educators were often directed at individual children. This is not to say that collective-oriented values were absent. However, the values oriented to individuals seemed most visible across value fields. This finding compels us to reflect: Is this focus on individuality a new trend in early childhood education? And what does this mean for the future child in a democratic society?

Perhaps the ideal of engaging with each child also reflects the neoliberal ideology. Neoliberal societies are often described as having strong individualistic courses and as encouraging the prominence of the individual (Bauman, 1997; Nielsen et al., 2011). Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, and Park (1997) argue for the idea that some cultures (mainly western) are characterized by an individualistic, ethical orientation, where individual rights and autonomy are important norms (see Taylor, 1991). Penn (2009) describes the power of individualization in neoliberal societies. In societies where individual choice and freedom are strong, children learn to consume and to become advocates for themselves. Johansson (2013) identifies a similar phenomenon in a Swedish study on pedagogical work with young children. The individual perspective appeared to be prioritized in relation to the community, by the educators in this research. This gives us reason to question if there is a risk that heavy individualization can result in children experiencing such a strong sense of being unique individuals that the sense of others may be reduced and less important.

A challenge for educators was understanding the relation between the individual and the community and how values were to be distributed between an individual child and the group. The pedagogical duties were strong, and children's rights were highlighted in all Nordic curricula. Like other researchers, we noticed that the discourse of rights was often interpreted in terms of individual rights (Kjørholt & Winger, 2013). This can be connected to ideals of flexibility and freedom of choice in a neoliberal society (Berge, 2015; Korsvold, 2008; Seland, 2009). At the same time, there was a societal development reflecting globalization and diversity, which also influenced the understanding of children. There is a possibility for early childhood education to strengthen children's and adults' sense of belonging to a larger community and to establish the preschool as a place for cultural encounters (Korsvold, 2013; see also Hägglund & Johansson, 2014). Parallel to the frame of individualism, there are studies illuminating how these discourses are challenged by other discourses that connect participation with relations and caring responsibilities for a community (Kjørholt & Winger, 2013). This appears to be one of the most important challenges for our participants to reflect on: How can the preschool be a cultural meeting place that affords space (qualitative and quantitative) for intersubjective-oriented communities *and* dyadic interactions?

3.10 Values Education: A Shared Responsibility

Values education in preschool is an area of high engagement with children and staff. We want to emphasize that values are not just the responsibility of professionals; they are equally relevant to decision-makers at various levels of society. Work on values in preschool is not just about the present but about the child's future as a responsible citizen. During this project, a huge societal change occurred involving new citizens and forcing issues of (limits for) inclusion, belonging, and diversity to be pushed up on the agenda. Our impression is, however, that the debate is still fairly quiet regarding children developing "soft" values, such as solidarity and democracy. On the contrary, it seems that values related to individuality, academic knowledge, and efficiency have greater priority in the official discussion about education. As educators, politicians, and researchers, we can ask ourselves the following: What societal competencies do policy documents expect children to develop? What kinds of competencies are highlighted in societal discussions about preschool? It is a major challenge for society, research, education, and educational practice to raise questions, problematize, and explore both the explicit values in preschool and the implicit and hidden values. Not least, it is crucial for policymakers to reflect on what values children should learn and strive for as citizens of society and what kind of society these values can create. Values based on diversity, democracy, and community cannot be taken for granted; they must always be defended.

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Chapter 4

A Dual Perspective and a Communicative Approach to Values Education in Early Childhood Education



Anette Emilson

4.1 Introduction

Every scientific work involves a lot of conscious standpoints about ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Positioning and explicitly outlining the foundations of a study are, however, not an easy task. Scientific standpoints are often described as dichotomies where idealism is set in contrast to materialism, philosophy of mind to praxis philosophy, positivism to hermeneutic, and qualitative in contrast to quantitative positions. In this chapter my intention is to go beyond such polarizations and not get caught up in the “either/or” thinking where the poles appear as essentially different scientific realities. This does not mean to belittle the importance of trying to make basic assumptions explicit, since these undoubtedly have decisive consequences for both the design and the findings of a study. With ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions in mind, the overall aim of this chapter is to outline and discuss the use of Jürgen Habermas’ theory in a Nordic participatory research project¹ about values education in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Hence, in this Nordic project, Jürgen Habermas’ theory about communicative action was used as an overall theoretical frame. The aim of the project was to deepen the understanding of the institutionalized fostering of values, and the research questions concerned the communication of values between educators and children, focused on both the “what” and the “how” aspect of the communication. Another research interest was to find out the educators’ perspectives on, and intentions with, values and values education, also in relation to gender issues. Moreover questions about how national educational policies frame values education in

¹ The research project Values Education in Nordic preschools: Basis of education for tomorrow, Project No. 53381.

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preschool were raised. Finally an interest was directed toward commonalities and variations in values and values education among the Nordic countries. Thus, these research issues involved different levels: a micro level including the educators' perspectives on the phenomenon in focus and also educator and child interactions in the institutions and a macro level including the society's interests in the Nordic early childhood education as expressed in policy documents.

To position a project about values and values education in ECEC settings in Jürgen Habermas' ideas about social reality is definitely rare. This is not very surprising since Habermas has not been explicitly interested in very young children's communication acts or in a communication between educators and children, which can be seen as a very asymmetrical relationship (Emilson, 2008). Therefore the critical question about the strength of the theory in this context has been ever present: we need to discuss why Habermas' theory was chosen in this project. Two main issues are in the forefront for this chapter. One issue is of an ontological character and concerns the choice of Habermas' theory to explore values education. Another issue is of an epistemological and methodological character and refers to the relationship between theory, project design, and findings when investigating values and values education.

4.2 Choosing Habermas' Theory: A Matter of Ontology

An ontological foundation of a research project is often based on assumptions that cannot be scientifically proved. Instead it deals with essential beliefs about human life and how the world is constituted. A basic assumption in the values project was that Habermas' way of viewing the world from a dual perspective, which is from both a lifeworld and a system perspective, was valuable. This refers to an assumption that values in ECEC concern both a communicative rationality, emanating from the lifeworld, and goal rationality, derived from the system – a belief that will be developed below.

In the values project, we understood *values* as socially constructed and something people experience, express, and negotiate together with others as good, bad, right, wrong, et cetera. Values concern how something should be and how people should act; in other words, we viewed values as something desirable and good in life (Emilson & Johansson, 2009; Halstead & Taylor, 2000). This broad understanding of values actually opened up different possible ontological perspectives. However, the dual perspective, derived by Habermas (1987, 1995), appeared as a relevant overall tool for deepening the understanding of values and values education in ECEC, since it offers the opportunity to investigate the phenomenon from both a system and a lifeworld perspective, which in turn are based on different rationalities.²

²The concept of rationality is used by Habermas and refers to what is to be viewed as reasonable, logical, and rational. Different rationalities essential to this chapter are communicative rationality and goal rationality.

A basic idea was that institutionalized fostering of values differed from the fostering of values at home, since educators are paid professionals with a societal mission directed by different policy documents. This means that educators are obligated to enact the values articulated in the policy documents. Therefore values education includes both a public dimension, i.e., the professional assignment and the values established in the policy documents, and a personal level, i.e., the educators' (but also the children's and the parents') own values. By using a dual perspective, an assumption was that we could prevent a focus on either the personal or the public level for the benefit of both. A main reason for choosing Habermas' theory was the idea that educational processes are at the intersection of the individual and the society, between the lifeworld and the system. Thus, how educators and children prioritize, interpret, and work with values at an individual level in ECEC were also seen as related to societal conditions. It must, however, also be mentioned that Habermas' theory is a huge work with the pretension of providing a comprehensive theory of society at the macro level. This means that his ideas sometimes were difficult to adapt to our project that was very much focused on the micro level. Before a further discussion on applying Habermas' ideas about the lifeworld and the system, we need to define these concepts.

Habermas (1987, 1995) presents the lifeworld as a resource for interpretations of what happens around us. This resource should be seen as a linguistically organized store of fundamental, unconsidered cultural knowledge, and in that way the lifeworld is taken for granted and consists of people's very close experiences, built on basic components such as culture, society, and personality. According to Habermas, the lifeworld is based on a communicative rationality, and by that, the lifeworld holds a strong belief in the power of communication. Communication becomes the core of the individual's integration into society by shifting the focus from the individual subject to the interaction. It means that investigations about values education cannot focus on how to correct and change an individual child but rather on what happens between individuals, in intersubjective encounters. Due to the strong belief in communication, the lifeworld is seen as constructed and reconstructed in every communicative action by language, norms, and values. A basic assumption here is that knowledge is always fallible and only valid until further notice (Eriksen & Weigård, 2000; Habermas, 1987), which is why Habermas introduces a procedural rationality. He stresses the importance of the procedure before the content, meaning that what is most important is to stick to a procedure in which the content can always be challenged, criticized, and reconsidered (Habermas, 1984). What is to be viewed as rational in this procedural idea is reliance on the strongest argument, which is not necessarily the right or even the best answer, but the procedure guarantees the opportunity to reconsider conclusions or statements, if we doubt their veracity (Eriksen & Weigård, 2000). Thus there is a basic idea of a communicative-created understanding between people, and in this project, this understanding concerns values and values education, i.e., the prioritizing of values, how to understand them, and how to mediate and work with them.

Applying the ontological idea of the lifeworld entailed certain consequences for the project. Of course the communication and the interactions became important in different ways, partly to come close to the participants' point of views and partly to make use of the procedural idea by organizing opportunities for the educators to challenge, question, and reconsider their own views on values and values education together with others. In order to acquire an inside perspective from the participants' point of view, we organized observations of communication acts between educators and children as well as group interviews with the educators. To implement the procedural idea and make a deliberation of values possible among the educators, and also between the educators and the researchers, we organized seminars and lectures. Since values and values education appeared as complex and inexplicit for both the researchers and the educators, we believed this lifeworld approach directed the attention toward creating new understandings and knowledge together.

However, if the purpose is to understand a practice as fully as possible, the lifeworld perspective is not enough according to Habermas (1987). He writes:

Every theory of society that is restricted to communication theory is subject to limitations that must be observed. The concept of the life world that emerges from the conceptual perspective of communicative action has only limited analytical and empirical range. I would therefore like to propose that we conceive of society simultaneously as a system and as a life world. (Habermas, 1987, p. 120)

Hence, to understand society more deeply, in this case early childhood education and the institutionalized fostering of values, a system perspective is needed as well. According to Habermas (1987, 1995), the system refers to those aspects of society that are disconnected from norms and values based on a communicative consensus. These system aspects are therefore removed from people's immediate experiences, and they follow an independent, objectified logic based on goal rationality. According to Habermas (1995), this rationality works best within the capitalist market economy and the hierarchical heads of state bureaucracy. In the system the control media are money, power, and to some extent politics. As long as the system controls the production of tangible assets, it is rational, but if the system also controls the symbolic reproduction, then there is an ensuing disorder in society, which Habermas conceptualizes as the system's colonization of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1987, 1995). Suppose that the system advocates values that are in conflict with the values supported and encouraged in ECEC practices, based on a communicative consensus. If so, the educators may find themselves forced to work in a way they are not comfortable with. Then it might become relevant to talk in terms of the system's colonization of the lifeworld. It is often emphasized that societies of today are value pluralistic, and it is not sure that the values promoted in the lifeworld coincide with the system. An illustration of this can be the objections toward the increased goal rationality in early childhood education, where there is a rationality advocated by the system in which children's learning emerges as a key to economic growth (e.g., Berglund, 2007; Bjervås, 2011). This is based on the labor market needs and refers to a learning lifestyle. As a consequence, methods are developed to document and measure children's knowledge from an early stage. Criticism is directed toward

early academics in ECEC, guided by standards, accountability, and testing, not least by Peter Moss (2016) when he problematizes PISA testing in the early years. An educational consequence, according to Olfman (2003, p. 2), is that educators become compelled to “teach to the test,” and she argues that early academic skills training does not benefit children’s learning and development.

Thus, an assumption in the project was that a system perspective was necessary to understand better the encouraged values and values education in a Nordic ECEC context. The belief was, in accordance with Habermas’ idea, that there is a point to looking upon values education in ECEC from both a lifeworld and a system perspective, to be able to gain knowledge from both an inside perspective, which is from the participants’ point of view, and from an outside perspective, which is from the spectator’s point of view including the conditions that might frame values education, like policy documents and the organization. Emphasizing the duality enables visualizing a field of tension between the perspectives. Such a visualized tension field becomes a topic for people to relate to and argue about, which in turn can lead to a development of practice. Thus, on the basis of Habermas’ theory, the ontological foundation of the analysis in the project is to focus on the lifeworld and the communicative rationality without ignoring conditions derived from the system and its goal rationality.

To sum up, there are three main reasons for choosing Habermas’ ideas as an ontological foundation for the project:

- *The belief in the power of communication:* The theory puts the communication in focus for the individual’s integration in the society; this is an issue closely connected to the fostering of values. This means that the focus moves from the individual subject to the interaction between subjects, which implies that educational practice basically consists of interactions and relationships.
- *The belief in the dual perspective:* This idea is appealing because this dual perspective can prevent a focus on either the individual or the society for the benefit of both. It is not about reducing the educational practice to either of the perspectives; the pedagogical practice holds both, but it is in the tension field between them that important issues might emerge about values and values education in ECEC.
- *The belief that educational processes are at the intersection of the individual and the society, between the lifeworld and the system:* By making such a tension field visible, a discussion and an argumentation become possible that might lead to positive consequences for the educational practice.

4.3 Choosing Habermas’ Theory: A Matter of Epistemology

A basic epistemological question concerns how possible it is to achieve reliable and valid knowledge. Habermas’ epistemology is based on three knowledge interests: a technical, a practical, and an emancipatory. These in turn are related to different

scientific paradigms: a positivistic, a hermeneutic, and a critical. Each paradigm, with its knowledge interest, offers opportunities to gain scientific knowledge about the world. Habermas, however, is critical toward the positivistic and hermeneutic paradigms for being too universalistic in their claims; these are not the only legitimate knowledge interests according to Habermas (1995). Instead he tries to create a symbiosis of explanatory (positivistic) and interpretative (hermeneutic) approaches.

Nevertheless, to create appropriate methodology, researchers need to be aware of both strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm (Saidi, 2015). The knowledge interests in this project are to be viewed as both practical and emancipatory, and an epistemological assumption is that knowledge is formed in praxis. Praxis can be understood as “the (sensuous) activities people are undertaking to process their physical and social environment” (Stensmo, 1994, p. 140. My translation). Hence, a belief is that it is in praxis that thoughts and actions are combined into one unit, in the *doing*. Liedman (2001) has expressed that it is through their actions that people get to know the reality, and it is also through their actions they can transform this reality radically. This means that people both change and get to know reality at the same time through actions. In relation to our project, this points to the dialectical relationship between the actors, who are educators and children, and the educational environment, and this relationship includes both sensuous experiences and practical actions. With hindsight, we know now that a major turning point in the project was when the educators started to talk about *doing* values, which refers to when gained theoretical knowledge of values was transformed into educational action (Johansson et al., 2014; Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilson, 2016). But it is not only relevant to transform theory into practice, it is just as important to let educational actions develop theoretical knowledge. Therefore the dialectical relationship between theory and practice should be emphasized as well.

Thus during the project, we held a belief that it is in and through the ECEC practice that educators and children are shaping and changing their minds concerning values. Hence, the epistemological question was not about either mind or action when investigating values and values education but the mutual relationship between them; one is to be viewed as a prerequisite for the other. As a methodological consequence, we directed attention toward what and how the educators talked about values and also what emerged in their actions. However, it is in the very act that it becomes clear if the knowledge is praxis relevant or not, and it is also in practice that this kind of knowledge can be validated. But as mentioned above, it is also necessary to talk about the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. In the project it was assumed that knowledge about values education was developed in the encounter between theory and practice, and a challenge was to create a design which enabled such encounters (see methodological consequences). Thus, theories were used in the project to interpret and understand values and values education, and examples from educational practice were used to develop theories.

Before I continue to discuss the epistemological question about how knowledge can be validated, I need to go back to the ontological level for a moment and say something about the action concept since it is fundamental in Habermas' communication theory. The concept consists of two main aspects: action and communication.

Theoretically it is possible to treat these aspects as two independent entities, but in practice they are inseparable (Fritzén, 1998). Habermas' action concept is closely connected to meaning, and he argues that an action must be understood as guided by intentions (Habermas, 1984, 1995), something that is questioned by some researchers in the project. But according to Habermas (1995), an action needs to be understood in the light of the intention behind the act, which is in line with the reasoning above about mind and action. In this context Habermas presents different kinds of human actions: instrumental, strategic, and communicative, and the intention behind each action differs considerably. In the project, strategic and communicative actions became important concepts for interpreting and understanding the communication of values, while instrumental action was put aside since it refers to a nonsocial aspect such as that taking place between the individual and nature. According to Habermas (1984), a strategic action is guided by the intention to achieve goals and success, which often leads to an asymmetric relationship between the communicating participants. A communicative action, on the other hand, is oriented toward mutual understanding, where the recognition of the communicating participants is necessarily implied. Both actions of communication are rational but in very different ways. Previous research has shown how these two actions make it possible for different values to emerge (Emilson, 2008; Emilson & Johansson, 2009), which is why these concepts were considered valuable for use in the analyses of the data in the project. However, Habermas (1984, 1995) has not only been interested in describing the various patterns of action but also in evaluating when an action is rational and in making reliable and valid knowledge. Now let us turn back to the epistemological issue.

In this context Habermas (1984, 1995) presents three validity claims and argues that an utterance can always be questioned and examined in terms of truth, accuracy, and truthfulness. These validity claims relate to the world in different ways: an objective, a social, or a subjective way. Nevertheless, this validity process did not become relevant in the project for mainly two reasons. Firstly, the project involved educators and very young children who maybe did not yet have a developed verbal language. It was not assumed reasonable to believe that the children were able to make use of the validity claims in the communication with their educators. Secondly, we assumed the validity claims would lead the analyses of the communication in a very deductive direction and that was not of interest for the project. It was not seen as valuable to judge if a statement was true, correct, or truthful. This is not necessarily a criticism of the theory; it might as well be a criticism of how the researchers have decided to handle this issue in the project. The ontological ideas of Habermas' theory and his belief in intersubjectivity and symmetry in interpersonal encounters are more important to put forward. Instead of Habermas' validity claims to maintain a communicative action, Emilson (2008) has shown that maintenance of a communicative action requires specific qualities when very young children are involved, namely, teachers' closeness to the child's perspective, their emotional presence, and playfulness. When these qualities characterized the communication act, both educators and children seemed to participate genuinely, and both parties were oriented toward mutual understanding. Since these communication qualities have been

shown as prerequisites for the maintenance of a communicative action, they were also viewed as valuable in this project.

I summarize the epistemological beliefs in the project based on Habermas' ideas:

- *The belief in combining different knowledge interests:* The knowledge interest in this project is of both a practical and an emancipatory character, and even if interpretative approaches dominate our investigation of values and values education, explanatory approaches are not rejected.
- *The belief that knowledge is shaped in practice and in the dialectics between theory and practice:* It is in praxis that thoughts and actions are combined into one unit, in the *doing*. Hence, we assume it is in, and of, ECEC practice that educators and children shape and change their minds concerning values. Epistemologically it is not a question about mind or action but the mutual relationship between them.
- *The belief that it is in practice that knowledge can be validated:* Unlike Habermas' belief in the use of validity claims of truth, accuracy, and truthfulness, an assumption in the project was that it is in the very act that it becomes clear if the knowledge is relevant to the praxis or not. This may not, however, mean basic contradictions, only different views on how a communicative action can be maintained in the relationship between adults and young children. In the project we promoted closeness to the child's perspective, emotional presence, and playfulness as important qualities especially in the communication of democratic and ethical values.

4.4 Methodological Consequences

The next issue to discuss is the theoretical impact on the design of the project, data constructions, and the conclusions that can possibly be drawn from such basis. With the ontological and epistemological beliefs in mind, it became important to design a practice-oriented project with an interest for both developing research *and* ECEC practice, focused on values education. So again, an intention was to go beyond thinking in terms of "either/or," with the purpose to highlight the relation between, in this case, research and practice, and how these two activities are to be viewed as mutually dependent. A participatory design (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) fitted very well with the project foundation. Even if there were some preconditions for the project, formulated by the researchers, there was also space for each preschool to design the project in line with their specific interests. Hence, an implication of the ontological and epistemological beliefs was a close collaboration between the researchers and the educators to enable a design based on both research aims, guided by questions built on the identified gap of knowledge, and development aims, guided by praxis-related questions formulated by the educators themselves. Such an interactive research approach has been developed and described by the research group HELIX (2009) at the University of Linköping. In their model they visualize

two systems: the research system and the practice system, which have been helpful for some of the research teams in the project in order to clarify the different responsibilities for researchers and practitioners as well as the different expertise in the two groups (Johansson et al., 2014; Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilson, 2016). The systems should be viewed as two intertwined learning cycles where each is inspired by the other, and it is in the encounter between them that the collective development of knowledge can take place.

Another implication of Habermas' ideas is the starting point in the lifeworld perspective. To come close to the participants' point of view regarding values and values education, an assumption was that a mix of methods was desirable. To satisfy the epistemological belief in the mutual relationship between mind and action, there was a need for both interviews and observations. Interviews were organized to highlight the participants' voices about values and values education but also to enable interpretations of the intention behind an action. Observations were conducted with the purpose to gain knowledge about the teachers' fostering of values, their beliefs, and intentions, as these appeared in action. The method can also be seen as having theoretical impact, since observations make possible the analysis of strategic and communicative actions in values education. Other methods that provided an inside perspective were collected narratives, field notes, logbooks, and video clips. The data construction within this perspective is almost exclusively of a qualitative character and has foremost enabled interpretative approaches. Hence, the conclusions that can possibly be drawn are based on interpretations on a micro level of tendencies and patterns in data.

In order to comprise also a system perspective, it became important to include a policy study at an early stage in the project. A comparative study of the Nordic curricula was carried out with the purpose of being aware of, and gaining knowledge about, the different conditions in the Nordic countries (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015). An intention during the project was to take society conditions into consideration and to finalize the project with a meta-analysis to illuminate values education in an institutionalized context from both perspectives. However, after completing the project, one reflection is that more meta-analysis could have been done. But at the same time, the society perspective was ever-present since the researchers from the different Nordic countries represented different societies, and our different conventions and interpretations became important also when contextualizing studies at a micro level. This can also be discussed in terms of an inside and the outside perspective. A researcher, for example, could represent an inside perspective in the analyses of data from one's own country but an outside perspective in the analysis of data from the other Nordic countries (Puroila et al., 2016). In order to avoid ethnocentrism in the analysis process, we sometimes started with interpretations of national data from specific analytical questions. Thereafter the data was interpreted cross-nationally from the same questions. Finally, the analyses could be drawn together by the main researcher of the study, now focused on similarities and differences (see Puroila et al., 2016). Thus, the idea of the inside and outside perspectives was also useful in cross-culture analyses (see also Johansson et al., 2016).

4.5 Discussion

The overall aim with this chapter was to outline and discuss the use of Jürgen Habermas' theory in a Nordic project about values and values education in early childhood education and care. So far the arguments, mostly highlighted as beliefs, say something about the benefits of the theory but not much about the limitations. However, one must consider both opportunities and limitations in the use of a theory in research. Some limitations were noted before the project started, often connected to the ontological ideas. Other limitations became visible while the project was going on. In this final section, I want to discuss some limitations of Habermas' theory and also share some experiences of having used the theory in a project related to an ECEC context.

The project referred to in this chapter involved many researchers from the Nordic countries with different expertise in early childhood education and care. Nevertheless, not all researchers were familiar with Habermas' theory in the beginning of the project, and it was a hard task to read and understand his ideas in a short time. Everyone who has read Habermas' texts knows that his style of writing is extremely difficult to access. This inaccessibility of the theory must be viewed as a limitation. Moreover, his cumbersome way of writing can also be seen as contradictory to the fundamental idea of the communicative action that he develops, which is communication without distortion and misunderstanding rooted in power, status, prestige, fear, or insecurity. Texts that can hardly be understood by the uninitiated are definitely an expression of power. This creates an asymmetry between the communicating parties, in this case between the writer and the reader, which may lead to questioning the reliability of the basic idea of a communicative-created understanding between people. At the same time, Habermas theoretically emphasizes a communication based on goodwill, argumentation, and dialogue. He argues that language itself holds an expectation and a desire to be well understood and trusted by others and also an implicit expectation that others will accept our arguments and statements. If we do not believe in this, we would not have any inclination to engage in a discussion or to comment on anything at all. A critic could say that Habermas does not live by what he preaches. Probably Habermas would disagree, saying that his texts are not written to the ordinary person but rather to a specialized audience (Månsson, 2000) in which his arguments can be questioned and justified in a true, deliberative sense. However, an experience from the project is that his cumbersome style of writing limits researchers' opportunities to use and develop the theory in a manageable way.

Continuing the reasoning above, it can be added that Habermas has been criticized for expecting too much of the individuals, since his ideas about communicative action and communicative rationality basically are built on qualified skills of the communicating parties, in terms of having "clear, unfettered access to their own reasoning, possessing clear preference rankings and defensible rationales for their goals and values" (Rienstra & Hook, 2006, p. 313). This would mean that if we do not possess such skills, there is the risk that the idea about a procedural, discursive,

and deliberative democracy fails. With this in mind, one can really question if this theory is an appropriate choice for a values project including such unequal communicating parties like educators and children. One could argue that the linguistic conditions differ too much and that it is reasonable to believe that young preschool children are not clear about, and able to bring an argument from, their own rational way of thinking. Another opinion, however, is that young children are both rational and capable of negotiating and arguing from their own point of views. So instead of emphasizing that children lack skills for communicative action, we suggest turning the attention toward the adults and the competences needed for how to maintain communicative action when young children are involved. Therefore a review of Habermas' agency in communicative action is necessary in order for the theory not to limit itself. Habermas' (1987) ideal about equal conditions for everyone can in this context be concretized as equal opportunities to have a voice and to participate, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or education. In order to turn the limitation into an opportunity to concretize and use the theory in new contexts, a suggestion is that when the communicative action involves children who still do not possess a developed verbal language, then the adults must strive to come close to the child's perspective, show emotional presence, and engage in playfulness (Emilson, 2008). This means being educators who empower children and are curious about the way children understand the world and who are also keen to respond respectfully to their way of understanding. If we understand the theory in this way, not only new applications of the theory appear but also new opportunities for ECEC practice to be interpreted and developed. Thus a suggestion is that a theoretical contextualization to preschool practice can contribute to the understanding of the pedagogical practice and to the development of the theory through empirical analyses of preschool practice. This highlights the interdependence between theory and practice, as well as between theoretical and practical development.

One of the arguments for using Habermas' theory was to prevent thinking in terms of "either/or." One experience, however, is that the theory easily led to a black-and-white argumentation. There was the risk that the discussion and the analyses initially resulted in a classification of empirical data into already given categories: as either communicative or strategic action and as either lifeworld or system. It also became obvious that the lifeworld and the communicative action almost always were interpreted as something good, while the system and the strategic action most often were negatively interpreted. The point is that one of the strengths of the theory, which is to avoid a dualistic approach, also became its weakness. There was a need to remind one another that it was not about "either/or" but rather about both the perspectives and communication forms. In any event, the lifeworld and the system perspectives were seldom used in the same study to understand a specific phenomenon. Most of the studies from the project took a starting point in the lifeworld with the purpose to grasp an inside perspective from the participants' point of views. To put the system perspective into play as well is to move toward a macro level and a higher grade of abstraction, which proved to be challenging. Even if it is difficult to make use of the dual perspective, especially in the format of scientific articles that often are limited in space, it is worth striving for. Habermas has accomplished a

huge work with the pretension of providing a comprehensive theory of society at the macro level. It means, however, that his ideas cannot be free from problems when adapted to projects that foremost focus on a micro level. Taking the dual perspective into account is perhaps a challenge, but the theory still offers the important opportunity to understand more fully an investigated phenomenon and its conditions.

Finally, no matter what theory you use, there will be both opportunities and limitations and both strengths and weaknesses, to consider. What I want to point out in this chapter is the importance of making ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations, in order to consider also the consequences of different standpoints when designing and implementing a project. I have also tried to concretize and contextualize the theory regarding early childhood education practice by pointing at some qualities of importance in educator and child interactions. To develop the utility of the theory in an ECEC context further, we need to use the theory more when analyzing educational practice but also use the empirical data from educational practice to improve upon the theory.

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Chapter 5

Epistemic Climates for Active Citizenship: Dialogically Organised Classrooms and Children's Internal Dialogue



Jo Lunn Brownlee, Sue Walker, Eva Johansson, Laura Scholes,
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5.1 Introduction

Internationally, investment in children's early learning experiences is regarded as a key mechanism for promoting long-term social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes. However, we know little about how we might support children's early learning about moral values for active citizenship (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, Walker, & Scholes, 2017). There is some research to suggest that prejudicial behaviours can be evident in early childhood when children interact with diverse others (Killen, Rutland, & Ruck, 2011), yet there is little research to inform how to promote social inclusion and reduce exclusionary behaviours in young children. One promising line of research involves considering children's reasoning about moral values for active citizenship.

Children's moral reasoning influences how they engage in social inclusion on the basis of gender, race, or ethnicity (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017; Mulvey, Hitti, & Killen, 2010). Such reasoning is a key component of learning to become active citizens who make decisions about, and then enact, social inclusion (Lunn

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Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). There is also research to suggest that reasoning is influenced by the core beliefs we hold about knowing and knowledge, otherwise known as epistemic beliefs (for a review, see Brownlee, Schraw, & Berthelsen, 2011; Lunn, Schraw, Walker, & Ryan, 2016). In previous research, we investigated early years elementary children's epistemic beliefs for reasoning about social inclusion of others (see Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017; ARC Discovery Project DP130102136). Our research showed that when 6–8 year-old school children believed knowledge to be a personal construction rather than an absolute, right or wrong version of a truth, they were likely to reason in ways that showed empathy and tolerance about the inclusion of others in their play (Walker, Lunn, Sizemore, Johansson & Scholes, unpublished manuscript). While we are starting to develop some understandings about the interplay between epistemic beliefs and reasoning, we know much less about how to support the development of such epistemic beliefs (Hofer, 2016) – especially for young school children.

A recent line of theorising is concerned with reflexivity as a mechanism for supporting changes in teachers' epistemic beliefs (for a review, see Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, & Ryan, 2017; Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). Reflexivity is a process of engaging in internal dialogue that takes account of personal and situational experiences, which leads to action in the classroom. We have argued elsewhere that reflexivity has relevance for our understanding of children's moral reasoning because it helps us to appreciate how children might evaluate competing points of view, leading to the enactment of such decisions in order to take a stand on injustice (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). In this chapter we extend on this theorisation by proposing that epistemic reflexivity for learning moral values requires an understanding about early years classroom contexts which are dialogically organised.

This chapter will first examine values education and children's learning of moral values. This is followed by an overview of children's epistemic beliefs for moral values. We then argue that a focus on children's epistemic beliefs for moral values is best addressed in dialogically organised early years classrooms, which we argue are more likely to support children's reflexivity.

5.2 Values Education in Australia

Values education has become part of the curriculum in many schools, including the early years of elementary education, throughout Australia and also internationally. Values education relates to ways of thinking about morality, including the question, "what kind of person shall I be?" (Halstead & Pike, 2006, p. 15). National reports also highlight the need for educational programmes to support children's moral learning and active citizenship learning (DEST, 2003; MCEETYA, 1999). Since 2003, values education has been a national priority in Australia. This focus has been reflected in the development of a federal policy on values education in Australian schools. This policy considers values education as an important part of children's

development as active citizens and contributing members of society (Lovat & Toomey, 2007). In 2005, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) acknowledged that education should be about building character as much as developing other specific skills (DEST, 2005b). This formed the basis for the development of the Australian National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (DEST, 2005a).

The National Framework for Values Education in Schools acknowledges that values education is an essential part of effective schooling and that schools and teachers have a role to play in successful values education. The framework was designed to reflect the values that were considered important in supporting a democratic way of life (DEST, 2005a). Of significance, the values reinforced the importance of a diverse and environmentally sustainable society in which every citizen has the right to justice and equity. The national framework identifies the following nine values for Australian schooling: care and compassion, doing your best, fair go, freedom, honesty and trustworthiness, integrity, respect, responsibility, and understanding, tolerance, and inclusion (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). The national framework also sets out some key elements that can assist schools in implementing effective values education. These include that values education is an explicit goal in school planning and that there should be consultation with the local community on the values that should be fostered. In addition, the framework emphasises that a whole school approach is important in providing a safe and supportive learning environment and that, most critically, teachers need skills in good-quality values education (DEST, 2005b). In support of this, the framework encourages a range of pedagogies including the use of both implicit and explicit teaching strategies, explicit planning, implementation, and monitoring. Students should also be provided with opportunities to practice values and learning through all facets of school life including through the use of discussion and reflection.

A key development in Australian education policy was the publication in 2008 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, MCEETYA, 2008). The promotion of social cohesion is central to this document, and schools are seen as playing “a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4). The notion of values education as a key driver in the development of young Australians as active and informed citizens is implicit throughout the document which cites an important goal as promoting “moral and ethical integrity” in students (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9). In 2011, Australia’s first national curriculum commencing from foundation when children are 4–5 years of age was introduced. This document cites seven “general capabilities” which are designed to be integrated throughout the curriculum. While there is no specific mention of moral values, three of the general capabilities are related to values education more broadly. These are “personal and social competence; ethical behaviour; and intercultural understanding” (Christian, 2014, p. 35). How this moral-based education is enacted and how moral values or capabilities are developed in everyday classrooms by teachers needs further exploration. While there is

an agenda to support, develop, and as a society benefit from such endeavours, the rhetoric of values education requires fine-grained examination about the role of teachers and, importantly more broadly, the role of schools.

5.3 Children’s Learning About Moral Values for Active Citizenship

The term “values education” can be used broadly to reflect moral education, civic education, and citizenship education (Thornberg, 2014). As one component of values education, Thornberg suggests that “active citizenship” specifies a focus on the teaching and learning of moral values that are concerned with a “reflection on choices, exploration of opportunities and commitment to responsibilities” (p. 3). Phillips (2011) notes that active citizenship is defined by opportunities for children to develop as “social agents expressing opinions, making decisions and enacting social actions as an expression of civic responsibility” (p. 779) and draws a clear distinction between active and passive citizenship. Active citizenship, according to Phillips, concerns citizenship participation as opposed to simply being counted as a citizen and encompasses opportunities for children to participate in collective decision-making and express views on issues affecting them (Bartholomaeus, Gregoric, & Krieg, 2016).

An emphasis on active citizenship then, as part of values education, reflects a view of children as being an active part of society today and also into the future as children develop into active and responsible members of society. Values education, and specifically active citizenship, involves more than learning right and wrong; it entails children learning to negotiate, justify, and question moral values (Giddens, 2000). When children engage in these processes of negotiation, questioning, and justification, they are actively involved in critical reflection (Sigauke, 2011). An integral part of this process is a focus on democratic participation and the exploration of conflicting perspectives enabling children to develop an understanding of equity and justice (Winton, 2007). From this perspective, children’s learning about moral values is realised when children are provided with opportunities to analyse a variety of moral perspectives and take responsibility for their choices. We argue that this focus on critical reflection as well as taking responsibility for social justice is supported by a focus on reflexivity in the classroom.

5.4 Children’s Epistemic Beliefs for Active Citizenship

Our central argument is that young school children’s capacity to think about, and adjudicate on, many perspectives and opinions about learning moral values is related to their epistemic beliefs and those of their teachers. Epistemic beliefs involve the

views individuals hold about the certainty, structure, justification, and source of knowledge. There is a large corpus of research which demonstrates relationships and causal links between epistemic beliefs and learning for adults and adolescents (for a review, see Brownlee, Berthelsen, & Schraw, 2011). More recently, research points to the relationship between elementary school children's epistemic beliefs and learning, for example, math academic performance (problem-solving and grades) (Schommer-Aikins, Duell, & Hutter, 2005), metacognition in online learning contexts (Barzilai & Zohar, 2012), and learning in science (Yang & Tsai, 2009). Yang and Tsai (2009) noticed that the more older school children (aged 11 and 12 years) expressed subjectivist epistemic beliefs in the field of science, the more likely they were to be able to consider theory and evidence as well as engage in science reasoning. While it seems plausible that relationships between epistemic beliefs and learning noticed in science education might also be evident in moral learning for active citizenship, little research has taken place in this specific field.

Earlier research on children's epistemic beliefs considered that such beliefs followed a developmental trajectory (for a review see Brownlee et al., 2012; Burr & Hofer, 2002). Such a developmental stance argues that children's beliefs about the nature of knowing and knowledge change in a systematic way over time. One of the first studies to explore children's epistemic beliefs investigated longitudinal changes from preschool through to adolescence (Mansfield & Clinchy, 1985). In this study, the children who were 3–4 years of age tended to hold absolutist epistemic beliefs in which one right answer exists, representing a black and white view of reality. This finding has been replicated elsewhere (Burr & Hofer, 2002; Chandler, Hallett, & Sokol, 2002; Kuhn & Weinstock, 2002). Critiques of these developmental views of children's epistemic beliefs have led to research which takes a domain specific approach (Mason, Boldrin, & Zurlo, 2006; Wainryb, Shaw, Langley, Cottam, & Lewis, 2004; Wildenger, Hofer, & Burr, 2010).

The domain-specific approach explores epistemic beliefs in judgement such as personal taste, aesthetics, morals/values, and facts (Hofer, 2006). Wainryb et al. (2004) and Wildenger et al. (2010) explored children's reasoning in judgement domains with scenarios in which puppets held alternate views to the children. These domains included (a) values, (b) personal preferences, (c) facts, and (d) ambiguous facts (different interpretations on a fact). After reading the scenarios to the children and introducing the two puppets (one who agreed with them and one who didn't), they were asked if one of the beliefs could be right or if both beliefs could be right. If children agreed that both beliefs could be right, they were further probed to reveal their views about whether or not one belief could be better than another. The research suggested that children's epistemic beliefs range from absolutist through to evaluationism, with changes more likely to occur across a range of judgement domains rather than through universal development (Mason et al., 2006; Wainryb et al., 2004; Wildenger et al., 2010).

Although developmental accounts portray epistemic development as a domain-independent process of cognitive maturation, recent studies have found trajectories of epistemic development to vary in interaction with specific contexts (Gottlieb, 2007). For example, Johansson (2009) argues that morality does not simply involve

autonomous logical thinking but is part of children's lifeworlds. This means that certain interpretations, activities, and knowledge affiliated with values in the daily life of preschool are relevant, while others may be not because the child's moral development emerges in interaction with others and the child is an active part in this process (Dunn, 2006). As Johansson (2009) has shown, very young children demonstrate values and norms concerning treatment of and behaviour towards each other in their everyday lifeworld of day care. In this way, children defend and value their own and others' rights and care for others' well-being.

Children's reasoning in context may resonate with Feucht's (2010, 2011) notion of epistemic climate created by school structure, teaching approaches, interactions in classroom, and teachers' and children's personal epistemologies. Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al. (2017) have shown that classroom epistemic climates may influence the way young school children think about knowledge and point to the salience of school environments, the contextual nature of reasoning, and the need for further examination of the role of schools in supporting children's development of epistemic beliefs for moral reasoning.

A more recent line of research that also acknowledges the role of contexts involves Clark Chinn's AIR model (epistemic aims, ideals, and reliable processes; Chinn & Rinehart, 2016; Chinn, Rinehart, & Buckland, 2014). The AIR model has been applied in the context of elementary school children's learning in science. In a recent review by Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, et al. (2017) the model is summarised by exploring epistemic aims, ideals, and reliable processes as part of context-specific approaches to epistemic cognition.

Epistemic aims are key to understanding epistemic cognition (Chinn, Buckland, & Samarapungavan, 2011). Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, et al. (2017) suggested there may be a range of epistemic aims that include developing knowledge, understanding, and explanations. The epistemic aim related to children obtaining knowledge involves a focus on justified true beliefs which reflect a specific "aspect of the world (at least approximately) and that are supported by accurate reasons" (Chinn et al., 2011, p. 147). The epistemic aims of children developing understanding and explanations are considered more likely to lead to learning processes which help the learner to engage in reasoning and explanations for events (Chinn, Duncan, Dianovsky, & Rinehart, 2013). Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, et al. (2017) argue, following Chinn et al. (2011, 2014), that epistemic aims reflect epistemic values. For example, an epistemic aim related to developing understanding may emerge from a teacher's values related to children making meaning of their experiences.

Next, *epistemic ideals* are the criteria that can be used to ensure that epistemic aims have been achieved (Chinn et al., 2014). An example can be found in science education. Ryu and Sandoval (2012, p. 494) identified criteria for ensuring argumentation is achieved in science. They argued that causal structure (science needs to include claims about causality), causal coherence (needs a coherent set of claims), citation of evidence (arguments need to include data in support of claims), and justification of evidence (needs to provide reasons to support claims-evidence relationships) are epistemic ideals that are needed for understanding argumentation in the field of science education.

Finally, *reliable processes* constitute the final part of the AIR model. These reliable processes are the ways in which “epistemic products (such as knowledge, understanding, explanations, or models) are produced” (Chinn et al., 2014, p. 436). In the example of learning moral values for active citizenship, a reliable process to achieve the epistemic aim of understanding or explanation might be the use of dialogue which helps children to engage in peer-to-peer discussions and negotiate multiple points of view in classroom contexts. This is a process which reliably leads to the achievement of the epistemic aim of understanding. Conversely, an unreliable process for achieving the epistemic aims of understanding and explanation might be the children engaging in recitation of school rules and norms about engaging in appropriate behaviours at school. This is an unreliable process because, while it may lead to children following school rules, it is unlikely to be a process that will help children to understand how to interact with others in respectful and caring ways. It is also important to ensure the conditions which support the extent to which a process is reliable. Extending on the example of argumentation as a reliable process (Bråten, Muis, & Reznitskaya, 2017), if conditions are such that children become disrespectful or lack clear processes for engaging in dialogue, then it may not be considered a reliable process.

Chinn’s AIR model is an example of epistemic cognition which is context sensitive. Johansson’s (2009) reflections on children’s lifeworlds and Feucht’s (2010, 2011) epistemic climates also speak to the need to consider specific contexts in understanding children’s epistemic beliefs for learning moral values. In particular, learning contexts which support children’s dialogue may be a significant way in which the epistemic aims of understanding and explanation can be supported. We turn now to a discussion of dialogic cultures in classrooms, as a way to further explore epistemic aims, epistemic ideals, and reliable processes for promoting young school children’s understanding or explanation of moral values for active citizenship. This approach to understanding dialogic classrooms also moves the field of research into children’s epistemic beliefs beyond a developmental paradigm to one that acknowledges the school and classroom contexts as important in shaping children’s beliefs.

In the next section, we explore classroom cultures and pedagogies based around dialogue which we argue foster reliable processes for engaging children in understanding and explanation (as epistemic aims). Pedagogies which are dialogic in nature can support children to think about and challenge their epistemic beliefs and knowledge in the context of learning moral values for active citizenship. Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the conceptual framework which will be explored in the remaining parts of the chapter. First we will examine what we describe as persuasive dialogic cultures for active citizenship using Chinn and colleagues’ AIR model (2014; see top box in the figure). Next, we will consider in more detail the nature of dialogic classrooms in terms of how we might promote argumentation (bottom left hand box), and finally children’s internal dialogue will be explored using the 3R framework for epistemic reflexivity (bottom right-hand box in Fig. 5.1).

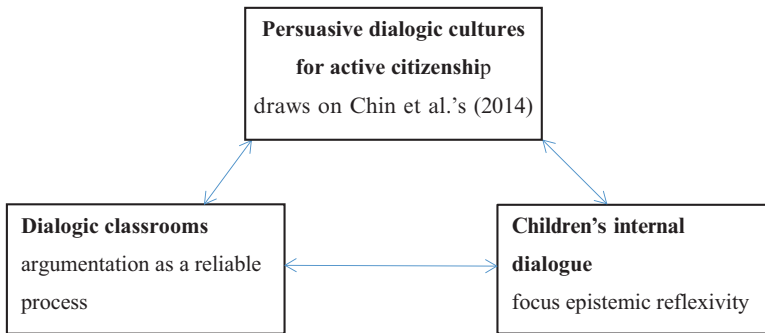


Fig. 5.1 Conceptual framework for learning moral values for active citizenship through dialogue

5.5 Persuasive Dialogic Cultures for Active Citizenship

Much of the developmental research into children’s epistemic beliefs has focussed on isolated learning tasks that might take place within a classroom context. We argue that a focus on overall classroom culture provides a way in which to examine holistically the nature of young children’s epistemic beliefs. Following Feucht (2010, 2011), we argue that classrooms which are dialogic in nature have an epistemic culture in which teachers, children, the curriculum, and teaching strategies all interact in such a way to address epistemic aims of understanding and explanation. In such persuasive dialogic cultures, children are encouraged to listen to, identify, and adjudicate on different points of view within a classroom through a process of argumentation. Such adjudication requires that children are supported to engage in persuasion and argumentation in their classroom dialogues.

5.5.1 *Dialogic Classrooms*

Persuasive dialogic cultures can be evident in the ways in which classrooms for young school children are organised pedagogically. Aukerman and Schuldt (2015) identified the differences between monologically (MOC) and dialogically (DOC) organized classrooms in the context of children learning to read. This work has much to offer the current discussion about promoting dialogue for learning about morals for active citizenship with young school children. Aukerman and Schuldt argued that MOCs are characterised by teacher-centred discourses in which teaching interactions support children to arrive at answers that the teacher has predetermined, often without interacting with other children. This is reflective of the earlier described epistemic aim of developing “true beliefs”, which leads children to establish facts. On the other hand, DOCs support a dialogic culture in which collaboration exists between children and between children and the teacher.

DOCs enable children to identify and justify opinions in class in respectful and supportive ways – which reflects the epistemic aims of understanding and explanation. This reflects Bråten, Muis, and Reznitskaya's (2017) recent claims about the role of argumentation as a reliable process for achieving the epistemic aims of deep understanding. Teaching which supports children to construct opinions and knowledge through child-to-child and child-to-teacher dialogue is important in persuasive dialogic discourse. Using the example of a literacy classroom, Aukerman and Schuldt (2015) suggested that children in DOCs are more likely to engage in argumentation to construct knowledge, clearly reflecting the epistemic aim of understanding described earlier. Such dialogue is likely to lead to shifts in children's epistemic beliefs according to Aukerman and Schuldt (2015). Children in MOCs tend to focus on getting the right answer and view the teacher as the expert, who transmits the correct information to the learner. This is suggestive of absolutist epistemic beliefs (from a developmental tradition) and epistemic aims for developing "true beliefs" (the AIR model). On the other hand, children in DOCs:

saw themselves as agentive makers of meaning who generated ideas and questions. They spoke of a social responsibility to help others (including both peers and teacher) better understand the text. They saw discussion with peers as a way of helping further their own textual understandings, and the teacher as someone who sought to understand and learn from student textual perspectives. (pp. 115–116)

Such dialogue therefore was not only more likely to promote evaluativist epistemic beliefs and epistemic aims but also supported children to enact such knowledge and beliefs in the classroom.

Dialogue to promote reasoning and epistemic beliefs has also been explored in the context of parent-child interactions. Tafreshi and Racine (2016) described how mothers who held evaluativist epistemic beliefs were more likely to engage children in dialogue which focused on interpretations rather than acceptance of ideas. In other words, an epistemic aim of understanding and explanation seems to be evident. However, "children's ideas about knowledge might also be hypothesized as influencing mothers' PEs (epistemic beliefs) in a bidirectional manner" (Tafreshi & Racine, 2016, p. 68). Luce, Callanan, and Smilovic (2012) noted that parents with more evaluativist epistemic beliefs predicted the extent to which children spoke about the use of evidence. This suggests how important it is to understand the role of parents' conversations and their epistemic aims for children's learning in such dialogues. Luce et al. argued that children who are encouraged through conversation to understand knowledge as needing to be justified may be less likely to accept knowledge that lacks such evidence. This has implications for reducing stereotypes in children's moral reasoning. Dialogical interactions, either with parents or in classroom context, have at their very core the epistemic aim for children to understand and explain by engaging with others in a persuasive rather than a passive learning experience.

Both dialogic teaching and parenting interactions are about responsive interactions with children. When adults engage in responsive pedagogy, they encourage children to reflect on their ideas in ways that others can access and engage with – a collaborative meaning-making process (Colley & Windschitl, 2016). This is clearly an essential component of DOCs (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2015; Johnston,

Woodside-Jiron, & Day, 2001). Colley and Windschitl remind us that responsivity is about collaborative meaning making which involves children's knowledge and experiences being recognised and enacted in dialogic processes. Responsivity is therefore about developing shared constructions (Colley & Windschitl, 2016) and a key quality of dialogic interactions.

5.5.1.1 Argumentation as a Reliable Process in Dialogic Classrooms

Dialogue has been argued to be an important feature of classrooms that promote understanding and explanation as epistemic aims. In this section we extend this line of thinking by exploring how dialogue can be promoted by harnessing argumentation as a reliable process for achieving such epistemic aims. Such a focus on argumentation supports a persuasive dialogic culture (Aukerman & Schuldt, 2015). Ryu and Sandoval (2012) investigated dialogue in classrooms by exploring "whether and how a sustained instructional focus on argumentation might improve individual children's understanding and application of key epistemic criteria for scientific arguments" (p. 489). They argued that supporting children to develop skills in argument is important for developing scientific literacy that moves beyond children simply producing the right answers for teachers. Scientific literacy involves written, numerical, and digital literacy as they pertain to understanding science. In the context of science education, Ryu and Sandoval refer to Palinscar's seminal work on argumentation which involved collaborative knowledge building and supporting children to construct, evaluate, and justify opinions.

There is also evidence to suggest that engagement in argumentation is related to epistemic beliefs (e.g. Mason & Boscolo, 2004 cited in Walker, Wartenberg, & Winner, 2013). Epistemic belief development is considered to be influenced by peer-to-peer dialogic interactions in which children may experience different and competing ideas (Walker et al., 2013). Walker et al. (2013) explored the impact of dialogic peer-peer interactions in a philosophy class (3 months) with children aged 7–8 years. The dialogic interactions embedded in the philosophy curriculum taught specific skills that helped children to build their own opinions and arguments that led to increased subjectivist epistemic beliefs in the judgement domain of values. Kuhn and Crowell (2011) also explored middle school children's long-term experiences of engaging in peer-peer dialogue (which included providing evidence for opinions) and noticed that children showed gains in their ability to engage in written arguments.

While argumentation can be the vehicle for supporting children's learning and epistemic beliefs in science education (Ryu & Sandoval, 2012) and philosophy (Walker et al., 2013), we argue that argumentation might also be a reliable process to support children to engage in learning moral values for active citizenship. In this respect, it could be a reliable process for helping children to develop the epistemic aim of understanding and explanation for learning about moral values rather than the aim of achieving "true beliefs" (knowledge).

Of course, the conditions for argumentation need to be examined within specific classroom contexts. It is possible that if children have not been supported to engage

in argumentation or if the interactions are not respectful, then it may not be a reliable process. This suggests that promoting argumentation as a reliable process requires specific teaching strategies that are enacted over extended periods of time, such as:

1. Promoting a culture of persuasion which means providing children with many opportunities and partners with whom to engage in dialogue (Berland & Reiser, 2009 cited in Ryu & Sandoval, 2012).
2. Helping children to take on specific roles as one whose job is to explicitly challenge other children's opinions (Ford & Forman, 2006 cited in Ryu & Sandoval, 2012). "Justification... is an assertion of the relationship between data and claim" (Ryu & Sandoval, 2012, p. 514).
3. Including persuasion/explanations as an epistemic aim (goal) (Sandoval & Reiser, 2004 cited in Ryu & Sandoval, 2012; see also Chinn et al., 2014).

Further, it seems that children need to be engaged in determining their own classroom norms for persuasion to ensure that they are successful in classroom contexts (Ryu & Sandoval, 2012).

5.5.1.2 Argumentation and Epistemic Ideals: A Focus on Rigour

So far we have explored the epistemic aims of understanding and explanation in the context of using argumentation as a reliable process in persuasive dialogic classrooms. Included in this has been an assertion that responsive teaching is critical to such persuasive cultures. Colley and Windschitl (2016) argue that apart from responsive teaching, there also needs to be a focus on rigour. Rigour, according to Colley and Windschitl, involves an understanding of multiple perspectives and the capacity to engage in analysis and evaluations of many ideas. We are not suggesting that responsivity and rigour constitute binaries. Indeed, responsivity in teaching is inextricably linked to rigour because engaging with and being respectful of children's ideas (being responsive) are integral to the process of accessing multiple perspectives in the process of evaluating a range of perspectives (Colley & Windschitl, 2016). Such responsive and rigorous classrooms clearly support argumentation as a reliable process in DOCs that were described earlier by Aukerman and Schuldt (2015) and Johnston et al. (2001).

One way in which we can address rigour in teaching is to reflect on the final element of Chinn's AIR model, the "I" or ideals. *Epistemic ideals* are significant because they identify epistemic standards for judging knowledge. As described earlier, Ryu and Sandoval (2012) argued that there are four main epistemic standards for understanding argumentation in the field of science education (p. 494):

- Causal structure (science needs to include claims about causality)
- Causal coherence (needs a coherent set of claims)
- Citation of evidence (arguments need to include data in support of claims)
- Justification of evidence (needs to provide reasons to support claims-evidence relationships)

These standards or ideals help teachers to make a decision about the extent to which epistemic aims of explanation (the “A” of the model) through argumentation (the “R” or reliable process) have been addressed and achieved in the classroom with children in their class. The standards described by Ryu and Sandoval that are related to causal structure, coherence, evidence, and justification enable us to judge if the epistemic aim of explanation has been met. When supported, young children have the capacity to engage in arguments and “through these practices, develop(ing) an understanding of core epistemic criteria of scientific argument” (Ryu & Sandoval, 2012, p. 516). Such epistemic ideals are clearly important criteria for children learning to argue and be persuasive in the context of learning about moral values for active citizenship.

5.5.2 Children’s Internal Dialogue for Dialogic Classroom Cultures

In this chapter we have argued that persuasive dialogic classrooms are well placed to promote epistemic aims of understanding and explanation through argumentation. In Fig. 5.1, the far right bottom box identifies children’s internal dialogue as a significant component of dialogic classroom cultures. These internal dialogues are core to Margaret Archer’s theorisation about reflexivity (Archer, 2012). We have argued elsewhere that reflexivity might be a useful framework for theorising teaching and learning about moral values for both teachers and children (see Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson, et al., 2017; Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). In this section we extend on this earlier theorisation by considering reflexivity as internal dialogues that can be promoted in the context of dialogic classroom cultures.

Reflexivity is more than simply reflecting (as a subject) on an issue or idea (object) because it involves an internal dialogue at a deeper level (subject-object-subject) (Archer, 2012, p. 2). This means that reflexivity involves bending back issues or ideas on oneself so that action ensues. Archer (2012) describes this internal dialogue as comprising:

1. Discernment: initial reflection on an idea or issue of importance
2. Deliberation: subject-object-subject dialogues which evaluate and mediate both personal and situational issues
3. Dedication: decision-making and action

Reflexivity, according to Ryan and Bourke (2013), is transformative because internal dialogue takes place in situ and leads to some sort of action and change. Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al. (2017) applied this earlier work of Archer (2012) and Lunn Brownlee et al. (2016) to argue for a framework to promote children’s epistemic reflexivity for active citizenship. This means that in addition to being reflexive about different ideas, we argue that children need to be explicitly reflexive about epistemic aims associated with learning moral values. This framework and its three main phases are presented in Fig. 5.2 and discussed below.

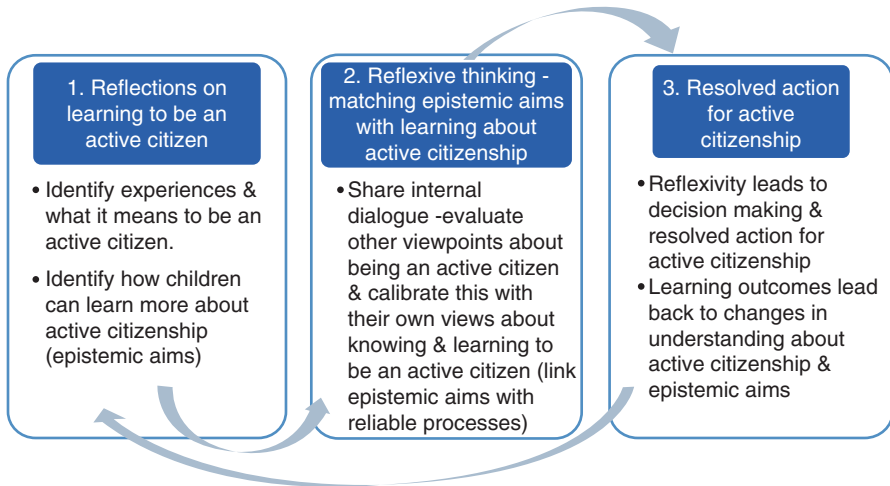


Fig. 5.2 Epistemic reflexivity for learning about moral values for active citizenship. Adapted from “Reflection and Reflexivity: Higher Order Thinking in Teachers’ Personal Epistemologies,” by J. Lunn Brownlee & G. Schraw (2017), *Teachers’ Personal Epistemologies: Evolving Models for Transforming Practice*, edited by G. Schraw, J. Brownlee, J., L. Olafson, and M. VanderVeldt, Charlotte, NC: Information Age. © IAP – Information Age Publishing Inc. Adapted by permission of IAP – Information Age Publishing Inc. Permission to reuse must be obtained from the rightsholder

The 3R-EC model of epistemic reflexivity (Lunn et al., 2016; Lunn Brownlee, Ferguson et al., 2017) can be used as a mechanism to promote a culture of persuasion by focusing on epistemic aims of explanation and argumentation and finding reliable processes to achieve these epistemic aims. This leads to dedication or resolved action in the classroom.

1. Reflections on Learning to Be an Active Citizen

In Fig. 5.2, the first phase of the framework is about helping children (as subjects) to explicitly reflect on or identify their experiences of what it means to be an active citizen in their school context (the central problem or object). Archer referred to this as discernment (Archer, 2012). Here children are encouraged to reflect broadly on social justice experiences, why active citizenship is important, and what they need to know to learn more about being an active citizen. Children could be encouraged through teacher scaffolding, for example, to identify the nature of their experiences with cultural diversity in the classroom and playground. They would also be encouraged to identify epistemic aims and how these aims might be achieved to develop understanding and explanation of issues and opportunities associated with cultural diversity (object) (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). Through dialogic processes between peers and with teachers, children can reflect on questions such as: What sort of knowledge is important in helping children from other countries to feel included? How do you make up your mind about how to make others feel included? How do you know if they feel included? Does this knowledge come from inside

you, or do others tell you what to think? (object – epistemic aim of understanding and explanation) (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017).

Of importance in such dialogic processes is to begin with children's own questions and understandings as the basis for further collective reflections on values and rights (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017) and to focus on supporting children to engage in and share internal dialogues about epistemic aims. Such dialogic approaches are both responsive and rigorous (Colley & Windschitl, 2016) because they seek to engage both collaborative meaning making (responsivity) and evidence-based reasoning (rigour). In this beginning phase, children are supported to discern epistemic aims for developing new knowledge about addressing social justice around cultural inclusion.

2. Reflexive Thinking for Learning About Social Inclusion

Once children have discerned epistemic aims and issues of concern, the next phase is to extend the process to develop and share their internal dialogue. We believe that children should be supported to consider, argue, and weigh up a range of different perspectives and ideas in class using dialogic interactions (teacher-child and child-child) so that their internal reasoning becomes transformative as a social inquiry process (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). For example, children can be encouraged to think about the variety of different ways in which they can achieve epistemic aims (of explanation and understanding) and learn more about inclusion of others from diverse cultures. These might include finding out about recent issues related to cultural inclusion in the broader community (an inquiry approach into inclusion of cultural differences at the broader community level), sharing narrative texts that explore these issues in different ways, and listening to the views of other children in the class about these issues. The key is to consider different ideas about cultural inclusion and then weigh these ideas up before making decisions, perhaps as a group, about specific actions that could be taken to promote cultural inclusion (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). This reflects our previous discussion about the role of argumentation. To stand up for a position or defend a peer in conflict with others demands courage and epistemic sophistication as children put themselves at risk (Johansson, 2009).

Through this process children can be supported to engage in and share internal dialogues about how their epistemic aims and beliefs match up with certain actions for social justice (subject-object-subject) (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). For example, children can be encouraged to think about how simply following what others tell them to do (epistemic aim of justifying true beliefs) without thinking through and evaluating different ideas of others (epistemic aim of reasoning and explanation) might lead to actions that cause others to experience exclusion in the playground. When children do not consider the perspectives of others, they pay attention to only one form of knowledge and in doing so do not examine different ideas, relying on the one source of knowledge that is provided. However, children need to engage in critical reflection and adjudication on different perspectives, rather than simply accepting others' knowledge or believing in everyone's right to a personal opinion about including others from different cultural backgrounds (cf., Taback & Weinstock, 2011).

3. Resolved Action for Active Citizenship

Children make choices about which approaches they take to active citizenship, enacting a form of social justice. As children engage in reflexivity, the aim is for them to be aware of, engage with, and take a stand on social justice issues (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). Taking a stand or resolving action first requires children assessing their personal values and beliefs with consideration of others' perspectives within the context of social injustice that may be experienced within the classroom or broader contextual environments. The second stage involves implementation of a course of action to address the identified form of inequality or oppression. In this way children may, for example, take steps to ensure their play is inclusive in the school playground. As children are supported to make decisions about a course of action, they can see how to actively work towards redressing social inequality. The aim is for this action to then lead to shifts in their epistemic beliefs as their beliefs and practices address social justice. As education encourages children to become active and responsible participants with the ability to discern, deliberate, and dedicate to (re)act on oppressive, violent, exploitative, or inequitable conditions in their surroundings, children move closer to fulfilling their role as active citizens (Lunn Brownlee, Johansson, et al., 2017). Children should come to know that moral and democratic values, rights, and equity are not automatically afforded for all. They need to learn how to constantly reconsider and defend these social justice principles and should be given opportunities to enact this reflexive process. Children learn and develop active citizenship through education, support, and experiences with their fellow class members facilitated by their teachers. How children then enact citizenship is underpinned, we argue, by their epistemic beliefs.

5.6 Conclusion

Schools have a moral imperative to develop and promote active citizenship and inclusionary practices in order to achieve positive long-term social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all. Rather than indoctrination, however, this imperative must be achieved through a culture of dialogic persuasion and justification (Colley & Windschitl, 2016). Young school children need opportunities to engage in dialogue with others. Deep and sophisticated ways of knowing through understanding and explanation can be enabled in dialogic early years classrooms that promote a culture of persuasion.

While we have acknowledged that epistemic cognition and the development of reliable processes for knowing are essential in dialogic classrooms, we have argued in this chapter for a necessary new element: epistemic reflexivity. The use of reflexivity to frame epistemic contexts places the focus firmly on achieving and evaluating moral action to achieve epistemic aims, rather than just interrogating knowledge, beliefs, and understandings. We have shown through the example of active citizenship how the 3R-EC framework can be used to encourage children to interrogate their epistemic beliefs, their internal dialogue, and their actions in relation to classroom epistemic aims of social justice and inclusion. This conceptualisation of epis-

temic reflexivity considers both the contexts of learning and the internal processes of learning as important to discuss and problematize for transformative outcomes.

Diverse and evolving societies engender multifarious understandings, viewpoints, and actions. There is no single way to be an active member of society; however, there are varying consequences and outcomes for how we choose to participate and engage with others. If children develop as epistemically reflexive citizens, they will be capable of weighing up the local and global implications of their decisions and actions. If a key goal of schooling is social inclusion, then we argue that an epistemic reflexive approach in dialogic classrooms can be a useful way to prompt action to achieve such a goal. It is however important to consider that a plurality of methods is useful in this work. The dialogical climate can involve not only cognitive skills but also creativity and emotions. Dialogues can also take many forms including the use of drama, poetry, and the arts. These can be used as alternate ways in which to promote dialogue about values and epistemic reflexivity and could form the basis of interesting future research.

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Chapter 6

Values Education in Early Childhood Settings: Concepts, Approaches and Practices



The Challenges for Future Research and Pedagogical Practice on Values and Values Education in Early Childhood Settings

Robi Kroflič and Nada Turnšek

6.1 Introduction

Questions concerning values education in the preschool period must be defined as pedagogical, as well as epistemological, ethical and political. If we place J. J. Rousseau and his famous *Emile, or On Education* as the starting point of systematic thought on values education, history shows us that such a work provoked a violent political reaction from the Catholic Church, which a fortnight after its publication, together with Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, publicly burned the treatise in Paris (Kroflič, 2012b). And if we cast our eye over the historical development of the principal ideas in preschool pedagogy in the twentieth century, we can see that following a period dominated by developmental psychology, an essential transition towards more modern perspectives occurred (Edmiston, 2008). These developed under the influence of new ethical and political theories (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005), such as the ethics of care (Noddings, 1998), communitarian ethics (Strike, 2003), the ethics of personal encounter (Levinas, 2006), the theory of social justice (Rawls, 1999), the theory of empowerment (Freire, 2005) and subjectification (Ranciere, 1991). Those research approaches, which established the observation of the child within their authentic environment (the family and preschool) and the hermeneutic

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understanding of the child's perceptions, experiences and thinking as the bedrock of their research, were also significant in this shift. This substantiates Moss and Dahlberg's claim that in Reggio Emilia, one of the most groundbreaking projects in preschool education in the second half of the twentieth century, the practitioners and experts 'describe their experience as [...] a choice of ethics and values. But it is also, in their view, a political choice' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 136).

Establishing the image of the child as a rich being, ascribed to the founder of the Reggio Emilia concept, Loris Malaguzzi, and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which alongside protection and care also acknowledged the child's right to participate in decision-making concerning their life, are two approaches that must not be overlooked when considering contemporary theoretical and practical approaches to values education. Both events are connected with a similar revolution in thinking about children to the one triggered by Rousseau's *Emile*. In this work, Rousseau (2011) rejected the idea of original sin, that is, of being born as a morally corrupt being, but instead that the child possesses abilities significant for the development of morality, such as compassion and consciousness, an inclination towards freedom, the ability of improving oneself, sociality, an aspiration for happiness or human flourishing, love of humanity/justice and love of beauty (heroic actions, acts of mercy and generosity) and moral imagination (Kroflič, 2012b). However, at the same time, he pointed out in several works that 'everything degenerates in the hands of man', that '[m]an is born free, and everywhere he is in chains', because 'as every advance made by the human species removes it still farther from its primitive state'; thus 'it is, in one sense, by our very study of man, that knowledge of him is put out of our power' (Rousseau qtd. in Kroflič, 2012b, p. 18).

According to Rousseau, the view of the child, particularly their amoral, selfish and corrupt nature, led education, and even politics and science, down the path of dubious practice, doing more harm than good to man as a creature of freedom and infinite capability (a belief characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment). In today's terminology, the incorrect, even unjust recognition of the child as a morally corrupt and intellectually lacking being affirmed authoritarian educational and political approaches that stripped the child of their right to make independent decisions; considering the then predominant image of the child, this was a logical decision, as it would, in the name of protection, be irresponsible to give one deemed incompetent the right to participate (Kroflič, 2012a).

Two prominent ethical/political ideas, signifying new challenges in preschool pedagogical theory and practice, can be under our opinion attributed to today's post-modern fermentation of ideas in the fields of ethics and politics of living in a globalised world that encompasses many diverse life practices. The first is Gert Biesta's 'new' argument for democratic politics, developed in *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (2006). He writes that democracy is a commitment to the development of a world of plurality and differences and a commitment to a world in which the individual's freedom enables them to fully express their own self as unique, different from that of the other members of a community/society. The second is Peter Moss's attempt to define a number of fundamental values in general education. Besides the classic values of democracy, critical thinking, creativity,

social justice and solidarity, he particularly highlights the meaning of relational ethics (postmodern ethics, the ethics of care, the ethics of personal encounter). These establish the common themes of ‘responsibility for other humans, other species, and the environment; rejection of calculative thinking; making contextualized judgments rather than conforming to universal codes; and a respect for otherness’ (Moss, 2008, p. 116). Both authors point out an extremely important idea for pedagogy, namely, that the presence of diversity is a condition for a rich educational environment. For decades, aided by classic theories of developmental psychology, claims that diversity presented a threat or an obstacle to achieving higher educational goals had promoted the idea of a normalised educational environment. Such a setting, where the age, culture and learning ability of children, adolescents or adults involved were as homogeneous as possible, was seen as presumably the most effective.

The main aim of this chapter is to carry out a meta-analysis of contemporary reflections on fundamental values and research findings on value development in early childhood. We also focus on those contemporary research methods that have led to new insights into moral development during the preschool period. The chapter concludes with a brief description of a practical example of values education. It consists of a comprehensive inductive educational approach to prosocial and moral development and includes the use of artistic experiences as an important tool for values education. We have developed and tested our model during the last decade at the Vodmat Preschool in Ljubljana, Slovenia, according to the theoretical and methodological ideas presented in the first part of this chapter.

We begin with a short overview of thoughts of the preschool child and preschool education that was established under the influence of classic ethical and developmental psychology theory (particularly psychoanalysis, cognitivism and cognitive behavioural theory) and a more detailed description of those epistemological (and methodological), ethical and political ideas, which have put forward a different view of the preschool child and, consequentially, new approaches to values education, which we regard as central for future developments in this field.

6.2 The Image of the Child As an Incompetent, Vulnerable Being in the Light of Kantian Deontological Ethics and Classic Theories of Developmental Psychology

During times of increased interest in child development, the anthropological thought of the Enlightenment, a period marked by faith in the power of educational endeavours, and the nineteenth century, which saw the dawning of an institutional educational system, various images of the child as an incompetent and vulnerable being were developed. We of course know today that the image of childhood is a social construct, one that reveals at least as much about the object of observation (the child) as about the person doing the observing and describing. Furthermore, we know that the formation of such an image is one of the central elements of

discursive practices, characterising the workings of social institutions such as the family, school, social politics, academic institutions, etc. In the background of these lies the recognisable interest of social power, creating regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980; MacNaughton, 2005). Images of childhood are certainly a central part of the pedagogical regimes of truth, and the analysis of characteristic images of childhood and the circumstances under which they change play a key role when it comes to the possibility of changing unsuitable pedagogical theories and educational practices (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007).

The child's inability of moral judgement and action was particularly highlighted in Kant's deontological ethics. Here, moral judgement and responsibility are placed exclusively within the realm of the rational subject, one whose decisions are based on evaluation and whose intention to act is in congruence with the supreme moral law of the mind – the categorical imperative. Any other motives for an individual to act in socially desirable way (e.g. empathetic immersion with the position of another, the desire to help or even the desire to meet the expectations of an important adult figure or social institution) can form a basis for legal, but certainly not moral action. An individual's moral capabilities only develop because of appropriate education. This includes consistent discipline in early childhood and the cultivation of the child's mind when their cognitive abilities of deductive thinking and adopting a moral perspective are sufficiently developed (Kroflič, 1997). Edmiston (2008, p. 179) is right when he claims that this theory perceives younger children as amoral. Consequently, they were rarely given the opportunity to negotiate the terms of complying with the social rules that are imposed on them by adults in educational situations (ibid, p. 93) or to independently evaluate the moral meaning of conflict situations.

Another aspect of this classic image of the child, *vulnerability*, was pointed out during the Enlightenment by Rousseau (2011), who linked the source of man's immorality with incorrect education; the profound influence of education in early childhood on the development of the child's moral self-image and mental health was further reinforced by Freud at the turn of the twentieth century. This idea of a vulnerable being further augmented the Enlightenment's image of the child as an emotionally dependent, mentally and socially incompetent being, one who could only become a person in the full meaning of the word by the application of suitable care, guidance and education. Unsuitable education would under the influence of psychoanalysis and studies on authoritative education (Horkheimer, Fromm, & Marcuse, 1936) lead to frustrations and/or destructive social movements, which occurred in the form of fascism, Nazism and Stalinism in the first half of the twentieth century.

Particularly following the horrors of the Second World War, and the search for the underlying causes of such mass immoral action, there was an appeal in pre-school education that the child's optimal development could only be achieved by complying with professional standards, while any developmental deviation and social harm caused by it were seen first and foremost as consequences of incorrect upbringing. Thus, paternalism began to take hold in academic fields and social institutions 'helping' the family to care for children, particularly by increasing the

pressure on parents, who became the main culprits for the unsuitable development of the child's cognitive, emotional and especially prosocial competences. Work in professional institutions became linked with increasingly extensive diagnoses of children's developmental problems and the offer of providing, on the one hand, professional instruction to parents (school for parents) and, on the other, compensational activities for their children. The effect produced by this intensive societal care for the child was twofold. First, it established an ever increasing societal control over the child (Beck, 1994), and second, it also increased the parents' fear that they will not know how to properly raise their child, consequently leading to paranoid parenthood (Furedi, 2001) and transferring the role of parent onto the experts (Lasch, 1979).

6.3 The Significance of Supplemented Ethical Definitions of Values and the Understanding of the Child's Moral Development in New Ethical Theories

Values education is necessarily linked with its specific accompanying framework of values established by ethics and educational politics. Deontological ethics developed in the milieu of modernist optimism, which saw the possibility of defining human and social activity using universal ethical principles and a selection of moral and political values. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the first thoughts on universal human rights as an ideologically neutral value framework that will make the optimal development of all individuals and life in a just society possible occurred at this time. Deontological ethics also had a powerful impact on the methodology of moral education, the main purpose of which is to prepare the child to internalise the societal moral code and learn to make judgements and act in accordance with societal norms.

So-called postmodern ethics are important for the development of new ethical theories and value frameworks in two ways. Firstly, they shed new light on the meaning of fundamental values, which need to reflect cultural pluralism and lifestyle diversity. Secondly, they presuppose an alternative approach to ethical judgement, resulting in the consideration of new methods of values education.

As previously mentioned, Moss (2008) in his selection of values particularly foregrounds the importance of relational ethics; responsibility for one's fellow man, other species and the environment; ethical judgement that is context-sensitive; and respect for otherness. Among theoreticians that developed the relational view of morality and paved the way for new solutions in the field of values education in the second half of the twentieth century, Levinas's ethics of personal encounter, Noddings's ethics of care and Bahtin's and Ricoeur's dialogical ethics stand out.

We can illustrate the fact that these ethical theories of prosociality and morality development helped to shed new light on children's moral judgement with our own example. In the 1990s, we conducted a process model of encouraging moral

development at Preschool Nova Gorica, Slovenia. The model was based on the psychoanalytic principles of child identification with symbolic norms and Kohlberg's model of moral judgement development. We encountered an ethnographical note, which bears witness to the extreme level of ethical sensitivity in a 6-year-old girl and the convincingness of her ethical argument:

An ethnographical note: A change of a playing corner

Since children no longer play with dolls, we decided that we will change the babies corner into a beauty parlour. When I told them that ('motivation to act'), Saša reacted: 'Leave the babies corner as it is, Marija plays there every day. She loves babies, she loves them so much she'll have nine of her own when she grows up.' (Marija is a handicapped child!) We left the nook as it was, and arranged a beauty parlour elsewhere. (Kroflič, 2000, p. 117)

Saša's moral reasoning, which points to a highly ethical (inordinate) decision beyond conventional morality (as it contradicted the opinion of the preschool teacher and that of the majority of her peers), considering her age could not be explained using the then prevailing psychological theories of moral development. This steered us towards researching new theories that were formed in response to a revised Kantian version of the definition of moral development, namely, Rawls's theory of justice and Kohlberg's theory of moral judgement development. The most convincing explanation for this six-year-old girl's decision were the arguments of the ethics of care, establishing the key moment in making moral choices in the situational nature of the care relationship, which makes it possible to imagine yourself in the place of someone close to you, and a motivational shift, triggered by insight into the importance of their specific needs (Kroflič, 2003). A structurally similar approach in responding to moral dilemmas was also found in other examples of relational ethics and provided inspiration for formulating new pedagogical methodological solutions.

The common core of relational ethics relevant in formulating values education in the preschool period can be described by using the following points:

- Moral responsibility is primarily the responsibility to one's fellow man, group or environment and not responsibility to a symbolic law.
- Immersing yourself into the position of someone close to you or a fictional character triggers the first prosocial emotions (such as emphatic distress, emphatic guilt and compassion) and later moral judgement and the child's narrative identity.
- For the purpose of values development, the educational environment is best shaped as inclusive, one that encourages entering into various relationships and activities within the group and stories that describe man's existential dilemmas.

The shift from responsibility to a deontological symbolic law to responsibility as the answerability for social relationships and consequences of social activity was described most convincingly by E. Levinas in his ethics of the 'face-to-face' personal encounter. According to him, a person's authentic subjectivity comes into being through the encounter with the face of the Other, meaning that as ethical subjects, we are called into being only through response, through taking responsibility

(the call of the Other's face), which precedes our subjectivity. That is why responsibility in the form of a respectful relationship with the Other as with the whole world is not the result of accepted ethical principles but a precondition of ethics (Levinas, 2006). But because this Other is exactly that which I am not, the condition of an ethical relationship cannot be the understanding of the Other but a sensitivity to absolute difference:

To follow Levinas, when I think I know, when I think I understand the Other, I am exercising my knowledge over the Other, shrouding the Other in my own totality. The Other becomes an object of *my* comprehension, *my* world, *my* narrative, reducing the Other to me. What is at stake is my ego. But if I am exposed to the Other, I can listen, attend, and be surprised; the Other can affect me, she 'brings me more than I contain'. (Levinas, qtd. in Todd, 2001, p. 15).

Not the inferred truth of our own subjectivity and mind-centred autonomy, not a false conviction of recognising the Other's subjectivity and not a preconception of ethical principles can thus induct us into a moral relationship according to Levinas. Yet this does not mean that the principles of morality developed by ethics have no significance. On an individual level, simply put, Levinas sees respect for another person as decisive, with their face eliciting an ethical response and transforming me into an ethical subject (Biesta, 2013). On a socially collective level, Levinas (2006) also points out that we need to be aware that among the perpetrators of evil and their victims (as occurred in Nazi concentration camps), the face-to-face relationship is no longer possible, so fundamental justice must be safeguarded under the pressure of the law. However, the legitimacy of these laws must always be tested against the face of the Other or risk the state degenerating into a totalitarian institution.

The fact that the relation towards the face of the Other is not simply a 'theoretical condition of ethics' but also the ontogenetic origin of initial prosocial feelings, which later lead to the development of morality, is convincingly demonstrated in the field of ethics by the advocates of the ethics of care, by Kristjansson (2004) and the theory of moral emotions and in psychology by Hoffman (2000) and the theory of empathy development.

Following Noddings, the ethics of care can be described as a course that stems neither from defining virtues/values nor a rationalist conception, but from the primacy of caring for other people, a relationship where an equally important role is played by the 'subject' (*the carer*) and the 'object' of care (*the cared for*) (Noddings, 1999). The fundamental acts of informed ethics of care are 'engrossment,' the attention directed towards another person and their specific position, and 'motivational displacement,' the desire to help another (Noddings, 1998). For a preschool to successfully encourage the development of a child's moral consciousness, it needs to ensure the presence of caring pedagogical workers, as well as give children the opportunity for experiential learning when it comes to caring for others, for ideas and for things. This includes the development of that most basic form of caring, according to Heidegger, caring for existential questions such as Who am I? What kind of person do I want to become? How do others see me? Where do I come from? What is the meaning of life? (Noddings, 1999). The ethics of care develops its form of rationality based on recognising needs, relations and answers within the context

of a relationship. In this way, it stresses community living rather than decision-making in moments of heightened moral conflict or ‘justifying’ (legitimising) one’s own decisions. Education within a community occurs through modelling, dialogue and practical experience in activities that require the child to show care for another and for activities within the community (*ibid.*).

With the help of new theoretical approaches, we nowadays have a much higher level of sensitivity in perceiving a preschool child’s ability to establish friendly relationships, their wish to perceive and understand a peer’s perspective during a joint activity and through emphatic engrossment with the position of another to feel the distress of a peer or adult, which awakens the desire to help the person in distress (Hoffman, 2000; Kristjánsson, 2004). When considering these new findings, we must pay attention to another established fact, namely, that preschool children only exhibit these prosocial abilities in a safe and encouraging environment.

It is precisely consideration of what kind of environment would be most encouraging for the development of prosocial behaviour, morality and narrative identity in children that has led to the biggest differences between deontological and relational approaches. If deontological ethics favoured objective, personally uninvolved judgement and consequently encouraged children to think about abstract moral dilemmas, then relational ethics advocate for the importance of community and encourage entering into various relationships and activities based on personal involvement and mutual care. They thus establish a pedagogical culture that is inclusive and sees heterogeneous ability, age, gender, cultural background, etc. grouping as an advantage rather than an obstacle in the way of achieving the goals of values education.

This is because the heterogeneity of children in the educational environment is characterised by ‘polyphony’ (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981) and the children’s various perspectives and experiences invite them to examine their own ideas and wishes against those of the others. For Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Emerson, 1984), and similarly for Levinas, actions are ethical, when they are a response to another’s appeal, requiring us to be affected by the idea of someone close to us, and change us, for which we have to develop our dialogic imagination (Edmiston, 2008). Ricoeur also develops an identical view of dialogue in his work on the concept of narrative identity: for him, the self is ‘a cloth woven of stories told’ (Kearney, 2004, p. 10), and the shortest route to the self is through the other (Kearney, 1996). In other words, a person establishes self-awareness and a feeling of identity by entering into the stories of others and at the same time, by making responsible decisions, creates their own life story:

The ‘Other’, through which we find our way to our self, is the Other of personal or historical memory, the imaginary Other of the stories past and present, and of course the real [other] person with whom we are entering into a direct relationship; therefore, the mysterious ‘Other’ resides in ourselves – within our unconscious, in the witnessing and depictions of the past and present moment, in the fictional projections of a future (un)wanted, as well as, of course, in concrete persons and communities we interact and connect with. (Kroflič, 2015, p. 88)

6.4 The Impact of New Political Concepts

Similar shifts to those in the field of ethics can be found in political theory or in the pedagogical approaches of critical pedagogy, which see the development of the child's ability to battle unjust social conditions as a way of creating the conditions necessary for a more humane way of life.

Among the concepts aiming to ensure equal social opportunities for people from minority cultures or marginalised social groups, it is worth mentioning the concept of just recognition that has developed from the premise that every person, regardless of their specific identity markers, deserves an equal position, in various pedagogically significant directions.

Honneth (2005) points out the epistemological and thus pedagogical significance of recognition. According to him, a small child must first emotionally identify with a person they are attached to and can only then also accept this person's stance towards the world as an authority. The latter translates into the mutual striving of both the teacher and pupil for positive recognition in their relationship (Kroflič, 2010). This is why the possibility of knowing the world must be based on the prior position of care, existential engagement or recognition; Noddings (1998) advances a similar thesis, claiming that in the phenomenon of care, confirmation must occur in the relationship of the people involved. Honneth (2005) concludes his exploration of the epistemological meaning of recognition by saying that our knowledge of an individual object will be more sound and precise, the more perspectives we are able to hold on it.

Discussions on recognition as a political concept emphasise the requirement that an individual's identity or social status must not present an obstacle in holding social positions, goods, rights and freedoms, while at the same time, every person must have the possibility of publicly expressing their own identity (sexual orientation, immigration, disability, etc.) without the danger of being marginalised by the majority culture. Frazer's (Frazer & Honneth, 2003) essential theoretical stance is that all concrete forms of social injustice cannot be reduced to a violation of Rawls's principle of fair equality of opportunity and access to social goods and liberties.

The realistic opportunity for asserting the child's right to participation in decision-making, intrinsically linked with the image of the child, falls within the same area. The social representation of the child as an egotistical, cognitively incompetent, immoral or even morally corrupt being certainly makes it impossible to meet the demand for participation in decision-making concerning the child's own life, because it denies them the status of a being that is capable of making appropriate decisions for themselves or others. Besides a biased evaluation of the child's weak cognitive ability or even immorality, characteristic forms of unsuitable recognition also include invisibility (when the child is not even noticed) and pressure to assimilate (determining that the child's identity markers must be altered through education).

In order to be able to ensure the child's participation in values education, we must therefore first accept the child as a person in a relationship based on partnership.

From an educational viewpoint, it is important for the child to acquire new experiences and abilities for making ethical judgements through pedagogical activity because this will empower them to make better moral choices. For values education, it is not only learning about different methods of solving moral dilemmas that is important; it is enabling the child to enter into a situation as the subject of their own decision-making and action that particularly empowers them to make increasingly competent moral decisions.

Although the awareness that experience is the easiest way to learn social participation has a long history, it is worth pointing out Ranciere's (1991) idea of subjectification as the foundation of human learning. If the emancipation theory of the Enlightenment and critical theories were built on the logic of fundamental inequality between the teacher as the one who knows and the student as one who doesn't yet know, with the teacher imparting their knowledge to the student, their main paradox is that, although emancipation is directed towards equality, independence and freedom, it actually places dependence at the very heart of emancipatory education. According to Ranciere, emancipation can only occur when the teacher-student relationship is based on the principle of equal intelligence, enabling conversational instead of the explanatory methods of classic education. Educational emancipation depends on the initiative of individuals or groups, who resist the established order of events, set by the teacher (*ibid.*). A similar thought is expressed by Biesta, who says that emancipatory education must be seen as a 'collection of practices and traditions that ask students for a response and that provide different ways for newcomers to respond and come into the world' (Biesta, 2006, p. 150). The central idea of subjectification, then, is in providing the child with the opportunity to respond in a personal encounter to another who needs help or to a social group that requires the child's inclusion and activity to achieve its goals.

Many examples of empirical research have also firmly established children's ability to enter into dialogue in the preschool period as will be described in the next subchapter.

6.5 Epistemological and Methodological Shifts in Teaching Preschool Children and the Advent of the Image of the Rich and Capable Child

Shifts in scientific and professional approaches to studying pedagogical phenomena can be described using two definitions of pedagogical activity. According to Dahlberg and Moss (2005), education is a relational activity, and for van Manen (2015), it is even one of the forms of relational ethics. If this fact is not taken into account when studying childhood, 'the child becomes a complete stranger, not a known quantity through classificatory systems and normative practices whose progress and familiar development must be steered to familiar and known ends' (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005, p. 93).

A vital role in moving away from developmental psychology's study of the general characteristics of child development was played by the methodological and paradigm shift towards ethnographical field research of peer culture and recognising child perspective. The concept of universality had already been disturbed by early anthropological research from the 1920s onwards (Malinowski, Mead, & Sapir) with its cultural criticism of developmental theories. Ethnographers interpreted their results from theoretical perspectives that were primarily ecological and cultural. The documented diversity of parenting when it came to norms, values and practices pointed towards a diversity of environments in which children acquire cultural meanings through participation. Furthermore, context-sensitive observation of children also led to insights into their numerous (prosocial) abilities.

From the 1970s onwards, new paradigms have also appeared in sociological research, attempting to surpass 'the model of the socially developing child' (Jenks, 2009), firmly established both in developmental psychology and in traditional sociological thought. Researching children's numerous, diverse social realities makes it possible for the child's existence to even acquire validity. Newly emerging approaches study the ways in which consciousness and social representations of childhood are formulated within a specific social, political, historic and moral context and thus support the concept of a socially constructed childhood. In connection with poststructuralist thought on regimes of truth, which cultivate myths about knowing the general characteristics of child development, these new approaches recognise not only the ideology of privileged social classes but also establish tools for the (self-)reflection of pedagogues and changes in pedagogical practice (MacNaughton, 2005). Doubt in the universal laws of child development is joined by doubt in the concept of 'developmentally appropriate practices'.

The 1990s are marked by the proliferation of innovative and inventive qualitative projects that provide diverse opportunities for child participation and consultation; at the same time, they recognise the child's perception/experience of their own lives, their interests, their expectations, etc. In their overview of the studies of the period, Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003) find that the pedagogy of listening had an impact on children's improved self-awareness and social competences, including higher abilities in decision-making processes. Meanwhile, the fragmentary nature of methodological approaches and findings signals the need for comparative studies.

The interpretative paradigm, meaning the tendency towards a deepening of understanding of the child's world, and the interactionist paradigm have become established particularly in studying children's peer cultures. Research is interested in the child primarily as the participant (and agent) of a peer group, relationships and interactions and highlights curiosity for the child's own problems concerning play, friendship, autonomy, etc. Studies have enhanced our understanding of socialisation as a process that includes the *collective* participation of children in society and their *creative* response to the world of adults. Corsaro's extensive research (including such diverse approaches as reactive methods, where adults enter into interaction with a child by waiting for the child's reactions, videotapes of common routines and comparative analysis of observation) reveals that 'children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating

information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns' (Corsaro, 1997, p. 18). The author's research implies that the development of prosocial abilities and moral judgement might (also) be more decisively formed within peer culture and children's collective activities, than through the intentional influence of adults.

A step further in peer culture research is taken by participatory models researching children's perspective and voices, for example, by formulating documentation about children's activities in Reggio Emilia and the Mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2001), where the child is invited to become a participant and coresearcher of their own life. This approach incorporates a particular sensitivity to the way the child perceives, understands and represents the world to themselves and others. It is founded on the theoretical concepts of making 'the child's voice' visible through visual and verbal techniques, on the image of the competent child, on the pedagogy of listening and on relational pedagogy. An important advantage of this model is its reflexive nature. 'Internal listening' makes it possible for children to examine their own experience (perception) of the world and reflect on its meaning; it also gives them the freedom to express themselves in their own way. 'Visible listening' focuses on documenting the child's process of learning in various ways; according to Rinaldi (2005), documentation creates 'traces' and, as such, makes learning possible. The idea of 'multiple listening' meets the demand for recognising diverse perspectives and creating space for the 'Other' and so establishes listening as an ethical principle. Reggio Emilia and the Mosaic approach create a platform for facilitating communication between children, educators, parents and researchers and provide opportunities for the development of new shared languages between adults and children (Clark, 2005).

New research approaches are thus focused on the critique of classic normative positions of universal child development and recognising the child's specific ability in various contexts. This further supports the idea of the child as a competent/rich being, one who responds intelligently to various educational demands, occasionally resists the demands of adults that they find senseless and further develops their abilities for ethical argumentation and caring and respectful relationships with peers and adults.

These approaches often harbour the seeds for new pedagogical practices in values education. Encouraging the use of artistic language (drawing, photography, dramatisation) to represent their own existential perspectives (Reggio Emilia, the Mosaic approach), encouraging the participation of adults in children's authorised symbolic play (Corsaro, 1997; Edmiston 2008) and encouraging conversation about life's great (philosophical) questions (Matthews, 1994) and particularly conversations about the conventional and moral nature of disciplinary rules (Turiel, 2002) are characteristic educational activities that were created in close connection with institutional pedagogical practice and contemporary study of childhood within the context of institutional environments.

6.6 The Development of the Comprehensive Inductive Educational Approach and the Use of Art in Education

New theories and methodological approaches to studying early childhood have led to the development of many interesting new pedagogical methods that place the child in a more dialogue-based and thus participatory position in educational activities. The most famous of these in the field of preschool education, the Reggio Emilia concept, has been presented and analysed many times, which is why we wish to conclude this chapter with a brief description of the comprehensive inductive approach to child prosocial skills and morality development that we have developed in Slovenia and which reflects the fundamental spirit of the theoretical and empirical innovations we have presented thus far.

We developed and tested the comprehensive inductive approach to prosocial skills and morality development at the Vodmat Preschool in Slovenia; it is based on Hoffman's (2000) findings on inductive discipline, the findings of relational ethics research and numerous empirical findings on children's prosocial sensitivity. Besides inductive discipline, the approach encompasses a wide array of educational activities, among which we wish to point out education through artistic experience, as it was this that enabled us to perceive its communicative nature (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004) and the inductive logic of describing real-life situations with the aim of recognising general truths (Kroflič, Štirn Koren, Štirn Janota, & Jug, 2010).

We based our framework for educational work in the kindergarten on two approaches. First, we followed Levinas's (2006) concepts of moral responsibility as the relationship to one's fellow man, other living beings and the environment. Second, we observed the common thread of relational ethics, where engrossment in the position of a person close to you or an imaginary character triggers the first prosocial emotions and subsequent moral judgement, as well as the child's narrative identity. The resulting framework for our work is as follows:

- Even if ethical consciousness requires complex cognitive abilities, children in the early periods of development are already capable of entering relationships based on friendship and love through which they develop *relational response-ability* and *normative agency* for prosocial activities in the most authentic way.
- Because relationships with personal involvement make it possible to hurt another person (as prosocial emotions do not fully safeguard against emphatic over-arousal, emphatic bias, pity and paternalism), the second step is developing a *feeling of respect* for a specific person (in personal encounters) and for activities that require group participation.
- The final step of moral education is the awareness of ethical and humanist principles that concern human rights and ecological values and learning how to utilise them as the foundations of democratic negotiation and conflict resolution (ibid.).

Hoffman (2000) already ascertained that besides the characteristic authoritative and permissive disciplinary styles, we also perceive in parenting practice a specific inductive element. The comprehensive inductive educational approach encompasses various educational activities that require encouraging relationships based on respect in personal encounters, various forms of mutual help, group participation, dispelling fear of difference, eliminating preconceived value judgements fueled by stereotypes, using mediation in conflict resolution and, last but not least, *education through artistic experience* as a particularly effective area. This can be understood as an inductive experience somewhere between a concrete experience of a relationship and classical moral learning:

If traditional views on good and evil are passed on to us by our important others or institutions such as preschool or school, the key prosocial experience stem[s] from our desire to attune our own wishes to the expectations and reactions of important others (Benjamin, 2000 [...]). This attunement fortifies the compassionate contentment with actions that make close relations happy into a certain type of scripts of fulfilling decisions. Somewhere between the transfer of tradition and one's own experience lies the deep-felt processing of an artistic depiction of a concrete event, because, as we have realised with Aristotle, on the one hand, a work of art constitutes a depiction of a virtuous or vicious act, while on the other hand, our compassion towards the agent and the event creates a prototype of an imaginary experience. Thus, this connects the ethical to the aesthetic dimension – moral judgment to the poetic creation of a new reaction to an existential situation. (Kroflič, 2015, p. 88–89)

Ethnographical and classic empirical study of educational activities that employ the arts has shown that preschool children can enjoy beauty, creatively use artistic metaphor to better express their thoughts, recognise narrative cause and effect, empathise with the fate of heroes in stories, are able to link the morals of stories with solving real conflicts, cathartically process their repressed traumas and fears (Kroflič, 2011) and make an emancipated entrance into the wider social world with their messages in the form of graffiti (Kroflič, 2013). The empirical study that measured the influence of our comprehensive inductive educational approach on the development of children's social competence has shown that in comparison with the control group, the children taking part in the project manifest a higher level of social adjustment that is statistically significant. Considering the fact that the inductive approach in early childhood is directed first and foremost towards encouraging compassion and emphatic guilt, it is particularly encouraging that children who took part in the project showed reduced emotional troubles with internalisation, which often accompanies education based on emotional conditioning and guilt induction (Kroflič & Smrtnik Vitulić, 2015).

6.7 Conclusion

Despite the marked heterogeneity of values education research and practice in contemporary preschools, we can determine that a fundamental shift has occurred from the deontological to the relational understanding of morality and values. Qualitative

ethnographical research, based on philosophical hermeneutics and a dialogical understanding of education, have put forward a new image of the child as a curious, cognitive and socially capable being, one that merits a participatory role in educational activities. New educational methods, for example, the Reggio Emilia approach and the comprehensive inductive educational approach, have shown that even in early childhood, the child's prosocial and moral abilities can develop with far less ideological pressure from adults than was typical of approaches based on deontological ethics and developmental psychology.

A wealth of new insight into the child's prosocial and moral development calls for further research into the pedagogical possibilities open to values education, as well as for a re-evaluation of certain traditional dilemmas, for example, how much space to afford a child for independent exploration or how and to what extent to transmit culturally established moral norms and expectations. While traditional approaches promote various styles of educational communication between the adult and the child (authoritarian, permissive, authoritative; cf. Baumrind, 1966), new ones focus on establishing conditions that facilitate the child's dialogue-based exploration of moral conflicts and the importance of prosocial/caring relationships with both peers and adults. One thing is certain; the possibilities in this field have yet to be exhausted.

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Part II
Methodological Perspectives

Chapter 7

Challenges and Advantages of Collaborative Action Research in Preschools



Ingibjorg Sigurdadottir and Johanna Einarsdottir

7.1 Introduction

Action research is an effective method for educators to develop professionally, and it also adds new knowledge to the field being researched, namely, values education. Collaboration with an outsider increases the possibilities for successful action research. In this chapter, a collaborative action research project conducted in an Icelandic preschool is discussed, with special focus on the advantages and challenges that the participating preschool teachers faced during the process. The participating preschool is given the pseudonym Hill Park. The study is part of the Nordic research project, *Values education in Nordic preschool: Basis of education for tomorrow* (Values Education in Nordic Preschools, project number 53581). Hill Park is one of two preschools in Iceland that participated in the Nordic project. The action research project at Hill Park lasted 18 months. Seven preschool teachers participated and focused on their own professional development while working on values education.

The first part of this chapter explains the main features of action research in general and then more specifically focuses on the characteristics of collaborative action research. Next, the process of the action research implemented in the study is explained. The participants are then presented, as well as the research material, followed by a discussion of the ethical issues of the study. In the second part, we present the findings of the study, the advantages and challenges the preschool teachers faced during the project, and how they experienced the collaboration with the external researcher and with colleagues. Finally, in the discussion and summary section, we reflect on the findings in relation to the existing knowledge.

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7.2 Action Research

Action research is an umbrella term for research conducted with or by practitioners. The methodology can be traced back to Kurt Lewin, who is often referred to as the originator of action research, having conducted his first action research around 1934 (Adelman, 1993). Many researchers have defined this methodology, and the keywords of these various definitions include “better understanding, improvement, reform, problem-solving, step-by-step process and modification” (Koshy, 2010, p. 9). Action research is highly personal because the participants may undergo changes during the process. Although the research is indeed a form of personal self-evaluation, it also creates the context for critical conversations in which all participants can learn as equals. The aim is always to improve practice and to create new knowledge for the benefit of children and the professional development of educators. The methodology can mobilize against professional stagnation, whereby educators often perpetuate old habits. The aim is not to come to certain final results or answers; rather, the findings of action research should always lead to new questions, which make them a powerful and practical mechanism for improvement (Einarsdottir, 2013; Gordon, 2008; Guðjónsdóttir, 2011; Guðjónsson, 2011; Koshy, 2010; McNiff, 2010).

According to McNiff (2010), action research consists of “taking action to improve practice” (p. 20); for Guðjónsson (2011), the aim of action research is to “struggle against isolation and for collaboration” (p. 3). Koshy (2010) understands action research as “a continuous learning process in which the researcher learns and also shares the newly generated knowledge with those who may benefit from it” (p. 9).

Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014) talk about critical participatory action research and say that it “offers an opportunity to create forums in which people can join one another as co-participants in the struggle to remake the practice” (p. 20). Kemmis (2010) argues that action research should be critical and transformative and that the researcher should be willing to tell unwelcome truths, however uncomfortable they may be. Furthermore, action research should contribute to the evolution of the professional practice, rather than simply protecting old practices from changing times. The aim of such research, Kemmis claims, should be to achieve a better world, not simply to achieve mere knowledge of the world.

The prevalence of action research in educational research has grown rapidly in recent years. Dick (2009) suggests we can expect more action research in the near future, as well as even more methodological flexibility and variety in purpose. Such increased interest might be attributable to educators finding action research more interesting than educational research, which is simply conducted by university researchers alone. In action research, educators become researchers themselves, which makes action research more effective for them. They have the opportunity to develop the methods themselves, and their own participation has meaning in terms of their professional development.

7.2.1 *Collaborative Action Research*

The study presented in this chapter is a collaborative action research. This means that an expert from the outside – in this case, a PhD student who is also the first author of this chapter – worked with the preschool teachers during each phase of the research. The collaboration with an outsider distinguishes collaborative action research from other types of action research, which are conducted by individual educators or an entire preschool (Gordon, 2008). In collaborative action research, scientific and practice communities meet and work together to produce new knowledge. The collaboration between these two communities of researchers and educators has been described as the “third space” (Arhar et al., 2013). The collaboration is understood to involve two joint learning cycles, the research system and the practice system, that together create a change process. The aim is to create tools for practitioners to make changes themselves (Sandberg & Wallo, 2013). The focus is different from traditional educational research in the sense that the university researchers do not see educators as research subjects but rather as partners. Likewise, the educators focus not only on their own classroom and students but rather on the whole school culture. The third space created has also been described as a bridge between the school and the university (Arhar et al., 2013).

Collaborative action research is seen as a good way to narrow the traditional gap between research and practice for the benefit of both parties (Bruce, Flynn, & Stagg-Peterson, 2011). The process is an important part of educators’ professional development, and the researchers from the university get an opportunity to connect theory and practice. The researchers support the transformation process and gain new knowledge in the field, while simultaneously, the preschool teachers get support from the researchers, for example, to gather research material, analyze, and present the findings (Catelli, Padovano, & Costello, 2000). Traditional educational research is criticized for failing to connect to practice and the real-life experiences of educators and students. Collaborative action research is, therefore, seen as a more effective way of reaching educators, since it constitutes an insider perspective. Thus, it is conducted by educators in the field, in collaboration with external researchers, leading to a mutually beneficial relationship (Curry, 2012; Mills, 2007). In fact, research findings show that a collaboration of educators and outside specialists is an important factor when working on changes or transformations in schools (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyso, 2004; Angelides, Georgiou, & Kyriakou, 2008; Catelli et al., 2000; Gillberg, 2011; NG & Chan, 2012). Learning through action research is regarded as more effective for the participants’ professional development, and the learning is also more likely to be sustained if the action research is collaborative (NG & Chan, 2012).

Below we will explain the process of collaborative action research that was conducted in an Icelandic preschool, here called Hill Park, where the focus was on professional development in relation to values education. In this chapter, we focus on the advantages and challenges that the participants faced during the process.

The following research questions will be addressed:

- What benefits did the preschool teachers experience from participating in the action research focusing on values education?
- What challenges did the preschool teachers face during the action research?
- How did the preschool teachers experience the collaboration in the action research, with an outsider researcher and with colleagues in the setting?

7.2.2 *Process of Action Research*

There is no single correct way to conduct action research, although the process typically begins with the researcher asking the question: *How do I improve my work?* She constantly checks the process and evaluates whether or not she is actually influencing the situations (McNiff, 2010, 2013). Many of those who have written about action research summarize the process and present it graphically, for example, as a circle or as a spiral. However, these studies seem to possess their own specific process. It is common to talk about the process as consisting of phases. MacNaughton and Hughes (2009) call the first phase *choosing to change*, where the educators choose a topic and ask questions. The second phase is called *planning for change*, where a literature review is done, ethical responsibilities are discussed, the practice is discussed and reflected on, and the planning is done. The third phase is called *creating the change*, where educators start to create a change and research material is gathered and analyzed. After the third phase, the educators either choose a new topic and return to phase one or move to phase four, which MacNaughton and Hughes call *sharing the lessons*. At that phase, conclusions from the research material are made, and lessons from the project are shared.

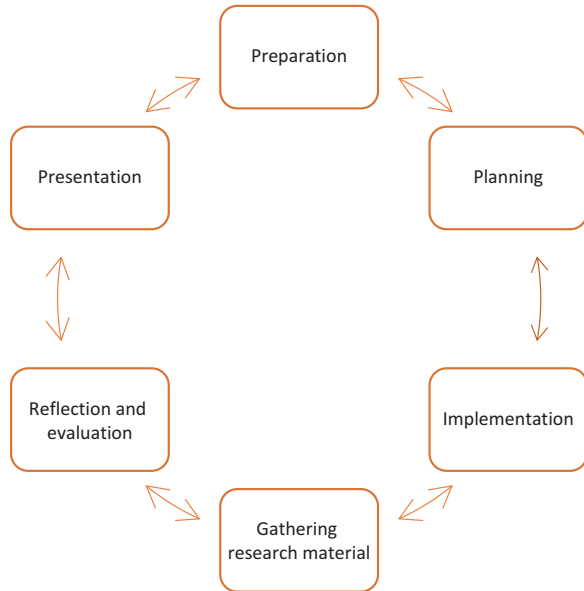
At Hill Park preschool, it was helpful for the participants and the external researcher to see the process graphically to better realize where they were in the process, reflect on what had been done, and determine the next steps. A summary of how they saw the process of the action research can be seen in Fig. 7.1.

The preparation, in collaboration with the participants, began when an Icelandic research team, comprising two university researchers and one PhD student, introduced the notion of action research in the preschool, the focus of values education, and the responsibilities of each party.

In the planning period, we planned the process, identified the focus of interest, and clarified key concepts (Einarsdottir, 2013; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009). The preschool teachers chose to concentrate on the values of care, respect, and discipline; however, the focus on values education had already been decided beforehand by the Nordic research team. The preschool teachers chose these three values because they believed that they would make the children socially stronger individuals in the future.

In the implementation stage, the preschool teachers began working according to their plans and aims. In the beginning, an extended period of time was spent reflect-

Fig. 7.1 Process of the study



ing on what values are and how to define the three values the preschool teachers chose to focus on, an important step toward creating a common understanding and professional language (Thornberg, 2016). At this stage, the preschool teachers reflected together on their actions, talking about their communication with the children and how they communicated values to the children. For example, the preschool teachers watched and reflected on video recordings from their practice, discussed notes from their own diaries, and discussed their beliefs about values education and how they changed during the project. They asked questions like: Was I showing the child respect by my response? and How can I encourage the children to be more disciplined in the circle time? The preschool teachers implemented changes in their practice and tested new ways of achieving their goals (Einarsdottir, 2013). The role of the preschool teacher in values education became their main topic. They discussed and reflected on how they could communicate these three values to the children so the children would learn the values and live according to them. The preschool teachers soon found out that they were important role models for the children and, therefore, focused on their own communication with the children and with colleagues. The preschool teachers also looked at the communication among the children and supported them, so as to make them socially stronger by learning and adopting the values of care, respect, and discipline.

Research material was gathered throughout the entire research process. The preschool teachers were invited and encouraged to keep diaries. At first, they found this a challenging proposition and were unsure as to what to write in the diaries. After encouragement and support from the external researcher, the preschool teachers became more comfortable with writing diary entries. In the end, four preschool

teachers gave their diaries to the external researcher as research material. Three preschool teachers wanted to keep their diaries for themselves and were uncertain about whether their writings were good enough to be considered research material. Other research materials were gathered by the external researcher, including audio recordings from meetings, seminars, and interviews, photos taken throughout the whole process, observations from the field, and video recordings from different situations in the practice.

Two seminars were held each term, with six in total during the process. The seminars were basically meetings where all participants reflected on the process and discussed issues of interest. There were three inspiration days in total or one each term. On inspiration days, participants from Hill Park and one other preschool met and were inspired by lectures from the university about issues related to the action research, such as values, action research, and professionalism.

The external researcher regularly spent time in the preschool during the project, gathering research material and supporting the preschool teachers during their participation and professional development. The visits lasted from 1–8 h each week during the 18-month period.

The participants reflected and evaluated at every stage of the action research. Reflection was seen as an important factor for professional development, a chance for them to observe their own beliefs and values, both personal and professional.

7.2.3 Participants

Seven preschool teachers participated in the action research at Hill Park. All were educated preschool teachers with B.Ed. degrees, in addition to one who had an M.Ed. degree. Six were female and one was male, but to maintain anonymity, all participants were given female pseudonyms. Further information regarding the participants is shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Participants in the action research

Name	Education	Position	Years of employment	Years working at Hill Park
Anna	B.Ed.	Preschool director	19½	10
Sara	B. Ed.	Pedagogical leader and assistant director	20	5½
Helga	B. Ed.	Preschool teacher	8	8
Elfn	M. Ed.	Preschool teacher	25	7
Karen	B. Ed.	Pedagogical leader	14	13
Íris	B. Ed.	Preschool teacher	15	5
Lísa	B. Ed.	Special teacher and preschool teacher	13	12

7.2.4 *The Research Material*

To shed light on the advantages and challenges of the project, the following research materials were chosen. First, recordings from three interviews conducted at the end of the project were used. The preschool director was interviewed individually and the other participants in two groups of three each. Second, recordings from all six seminars became part of the research material. Third, diary writings from the participants were used, but only three preschool teachers handed in their diaries as research material for the study. Finally, we used notes from group discussions on the final seminar, where the preschool teachers reflected on and evaluated the project.

Recordings from interviews and seminars were transcribed, and quotations from the participants were translated from Icelandic into English. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the research material and to find themes and patterns. The first step was to organize the research material to simplify further work, by classifying all the material chronologically, starting from the beginning of the project. Journals were analyzed separately, one at a time, since the dates were not always written for each log. The next step was to code the research material according to the research questions. The third step in the analysis was to examine the material for patterns and identify themes within each code. The final step was to display the findings according to the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; MacNaughton & Hughes, 2009).

7.2.5 *Ethical Issues*

Action research requires high moral awareness throughout the entire process. Given the personal nature of such studies, the participants reflect deeply on their own beliefs and actions, and the researcher is closely related to the participants while conducting the research in collaboration with them. Additionally, the focus of this action research, values education, is a personal issue where the participants dive into their personal background to reflect on their values. This means that specific ethical guidelines are needed for action research, since it differs in crucial ways from other forms of research (Zeni, 2009). Locke, Alcorn, and O'Neill (2013) developed principles to respond to some of the issues that collaborative action research may face. Their principles emphasize that all participants in the study should have the same right to let their voices be heard about all parts of the process, regardless of their role. They also emphasize that participants should respect each other and that it is important to be transparent when people contribute to the research, because not all participants might be used to or understand the same professional language. We followed these principles while conducting the action research at Hill Park, by working in close collaboration with all participants and giving everyone equal opportunity to influence all phases of the research process. Our focus was also to use language that everyone would understand, for example, when explaining the process of action research or reflecting on the practice. Furthermore, all participants,

other staff members, and parents signed informed consent forms, since they and their children were part of the setting in which the research was conducted.

7.3 Advantages of Collaborative Action Research

All participants at Hill Park preschool agreed, when they looked back, that the action research was a successful journey. Anna, the director of the preschool, mentioned that one factor concerning the success was that the preschool teachers were ready to make changes and were enthusiastic to participate in the research from the beginning. Helga wrote in her diary: “It has been healthy to observe yourself as a teacher so you can improve and learn.” Even though the preschool teachers saw the project as successful, they agreed that it was an up-and-down process, where the benefits were not always clear until they looked back. This is evidenced in Elín’s diary, where she wrote: “There are days when I think everything is going great but in between there are days when I ask myself if we have accomplished anything. I think the process can sometimes be two steps forward and one step back.” She continued: “I have to admit that even though I often feel that it is difficult to communicate values to the children successfully, there are more bright days.”

Many researchers write about the advantages of action research. The main demonstrated advantages of collaborative action research include professional development, improvement of practice, and benefit for students’ learning and well-being (Banegas, Pavese, Velázquez, & Vélez, 2013; Catelli et al., 2000; Gibbs et al., 2016; Gordon, 2008; Rönnerman & Salo, 2011; Walton, 2011). Our findings, concerning the advantages of the project at Hill Park, are in accordance with these and are discussed below.

7.3.1 Professional Development

The participants at Hill Park reflected on what they had learned from participating in the action research project, and their reflections show that they found the participation effective for their professional development in relation to values education. Sara wrote in her diary: “Wow, how much has changed and, wow, how much the project has done for me and for all of us.” She then mentioned that the project helped her to be better at documenting and reflecting and that it changed the way she saw her own “working theory.” Elín also wrote about her experience: “The participation was very educational and empowering for me.” When Anna was asked to look back, she said: “Even though I think the staff group was very good, I found it suddenly more professional again. We were like this once before.” She continued: “I felt that people were happy about themselves, were proud of themselves.” Overall, she found that the project was good for everyone, no matter what previous experience they had.

Our findings are in line with existing studies. In Iceland, action research has been a growing research method over the past decade in the field of education and in particular early education. Findings from action research projects in Icelandic and Finnish schools show that educators report developing themselves professionally (Einarsdóttir, 2013, 2016; Jónsson, 2008; Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Sigurdadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016; Þorgeirsdóttir, 2016). For example, preschool teachers who participated in a collaborative action research project called “On the same path [Á sömu leið]” found that their participation in the project gave them opportunities to develop their own professional ideas about play and learning, which was the main focus of the project (Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Einarsdóttir, 2014; Norðdahl & Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Sigurdadóttir, 2013). Likewise, preschool teachers in Araújo’s (2012) study, conducted in a Portuguese preschool, reported that they had strengthened their professional identity, their sense of professional competence, and their personal self-worth.

7.3.2 Improvement of Practice

When the preschool teachers looked back after participating in the action research project, they saw the methodology of action research as a beneficial process. The preschool teachers found they had learned new and good methods to work on their own professional development and saw themselves continuing to use these methods – for example, reflections and diary writings. Some participants even saw the method of action research as something that stood out when reflecting on the whole project and felt that they had learned a new way “to make the practice better,” as Sara put it. Some of the participants also mentioned that after they learned to work on their professional development through the process of action research, reflections within the staff group increased. The preschool teachers at Hill Park mentioned that their ways of thinking about values changed by participating in the action research project, resulting in changes in their own practices. They said they thought more about values, which was the issue of focus.

These findings are also in line with existing studies. For example, Araújo’s (2012) findings suggest that the method of action research proved effective in improving the practice. Also, the research project in Iceland, “On the same path,” affected the entire school’s practice, not just that of the participating educators (Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Einarsdóttir, 2014; Norðdahl & Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Sigurdadóttir, 2013).

7.3.3 Benefits for Children’s Learning and Well-Being

One advantage the preschool teachers at Hill Park mentioned in their reflections and evaluation at the end of the project was the benefits for the children’s learning and well-being. They believed they had changed their own thinking and practices, and by that they influenced how the children’s activities and communication developed

in a positive way. In this way, the preschool teachers saw that the children's learning and well-being benefited from the project. Elín said: "If we say, for example, something like, 'Now you were very caring', the children understand what it means." Sara also wrote in her diary: "I have been listening more to the children. I've given myself time to do that, and I have learned most from the mistakes I make." The participants also believed that this changed their thinking and influenced their practice with the children, which at the same time affected the children's learning and sense of well-being. Similarly, the existing research has also demonstrated a substantial development in the children's learning and well-being (Araújo, 2012; Einarsdottir, 2013, 2016; Jónsson, 2008; Þorgeirsdóttir, 2016).

7.4 Challenges of Collaborative Action Research

The participants at Hill Park Preschool faced challenges throughout the whole project. Their reflections and evaluation at the end of the project presented three themes concerning challenges that are discussed below: (1) finding time for the action research, (2) uncertainty, and (3) influencing the whole preschool.

7.4.1 *Finding Time for the Action Research*

Time seemed to be the most challenging factor at Hill Park. Throughout the process, the participants talked about how they needed more time to work on the action research project. They needed more time to document, and, most important, they needed more time for discussion and reflection with each other, since that was an important part of professional development. The problem with the documentation was easier to solve because the preschool teachers soon managed to make it a part of their daily routine. For example, they started to carry small logbooks and pens in their pocket, so they could write logs when they wanted to, instead of waiting until they had privacy or a break. A bigger challenge was to find time for discussion and reflection about their own professional development, because there were many other practical topics to discuss but not enough time to sit down and discuss values education deeply. Íris said: "We often talk on the run, because we don't have any time to sit down and really discuss matters." Anna, the director, said when evaluating the project: "More time would have been better. It would have given us the opportunity to deepen our understanding further and to discuss the issue further." Sara also said: "We need to be able to give each other feedback and so on."

Our findings seem to be in line with other studies, since finding time to conduct the action research and making it a part of daily practice seems to be the challenge most often mentioned in action research (Gillberg, 2011; Rönnerman & Salo, 2011). Educators in a study by Angelides et al. (2008) were even worried that the time the

research took would detract from their teaching time. Research findings have also demonstrated that it takes time for educators to internalize this method of working. Postholm (2009), for instance, noted that educators constantly have to ask themselves how they can improve their work if the action research is to be professionally useful. In the Icelandic study, “On the same path,” the educators discussed the difficulty of finding time for collaboration, both with educators inside the school and with educators or researchers outside the school (Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Einarsdóttir, 2014; Norðdahl & Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Sigurdadóttir, 2013).

7.4.2 *Uncertainty*

McNiff (2010, 2013) has pointed out that participants may feel uncertain about the process of action research since it is not linear. This concern was also felt by participants in the project at Hill Park. The preschool teachers, for example, mentioned that it took a long time to get the project started and they were sometimes confused about what to do and how to think, and in which direction they were going. This nonlinear process seemed to be especially confusing for the preschool teacher Íris. At a meeting, she said she would have preferred the project to be more planned, or linear, so everyone would be doing similar things. However, the other preschool teachers did not find it necessary for the process to be linear. After some months, the preschool teachers understood that it took time to get used to working in an action research like this and that they should make it part of a daily routine rather than extra work. For example, they said they needed to get used to always being reflective and writing in the diary. This is seen in the preschool teachers’ reflections at a seminar when they discussed lack of time:

Researcher: How do you think the project is going now?

Sara: I think it is going ok, but I always feel like I lack enough time. I try to make notes and then write it more detailed later, when I am home.

Researcher: Is it mainly lack of time for documentation or something else?

Sara: Yes, I think so. Maybe it is just me. I haven’t been able to make it a part of my daily routine.

Elín: Yes, I agree with Sara. But now I feel I am doing better at this. After our last meeting, I started carrying a notebook and pen in my pocket, even in my overalls when I have to be outside.

Anna: Yes, I borrowed your overalls the other day and I was wondering what was in the pocket (laughing).

Elín: I think this is good advice; then you can note more. But I have to admit that most of my preparation time is used to make it more clear and detailed, but I think it is fine.

This is congruent with earlier action research studies, where lack of research experience on the part of the participants was also a challenge (Bello, 2006). Similarly, in Einarsdóttir’s (2016) study, the participants’ education affected how they experienced their participation in the action research. Those who were not educated as preschool teachers were more negative than those who were trained as preschool teachers and saw the research as extra work rather than as part of their

practice. This factor can be complicated and results in the participants needing more support and extra time to be able to work on their professional development. For example, in Einarsdottir's (2016) study in Icelandic preschools, all participants, regardless of their education, found they needed considerable time and support from an outsider to be able to reflect on and develop their practice. All participants at Hill Park preschool were educated as preschool teachers; therefore, education was not a factor that we can look at here. But the fact that they did not have much research experience could have affected the length of time it took to start the project, as they mentioned.

The uncertainty can also be related to the theme of the study – values education – since it is very subjective by its very nature and people have different understandings and experience of values. Findings from a prior study, based on the same project, show that the preschool teachers at Hill Park found it difficult to define values in general and also to define the values they chose to work with in the project (Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016). The preschool teachers seemed to lack common professional language about values education (Thornberg, 2016).

The preschool teachers at Hill Park also found it challenging to continue the action research when the days were not going as planned. For example, when they were short on staff, or other stress factors interrupted their work, they felt as though they did not have time to focus and react as they wanted to but instead became more mechanical and controlling in their actions. Elfn said: "I feel it very well, everything needs to be OK to make everything work the way you want it to work."

7.4.3 Influencing the Whole Preschool

The preschool teachers at Hill Park found it challenging that not all staff members in the preschool were participating in the project. They discovered that they needed to communicate what they were doing to the others, so the action research would affect the whole preschool. They also found that they lacked time for the study and that nonparticipating staff members lacked an understanding of what they had done. This is in line with former studies because the third factor mentioned as a challenge in action research is how to make the project effective for the whole preschool community. This was evident in Þorgeirsdóttir's (2016) study, where the educators believed that the action research would have made more of an impact on the whole school if a presentation had been made for the nonparticipating educators, other staff members, and students.

The educators in Þorgeirsdóttir's (2016) study also mentioned that encouragement from school leaders would have been an important factor in making the action research impact the whole school community. This was not an issue at Hill Park. The preschool director was one of the participants and engaged in the project.

7.5 Experiencing Collaboration

During the project at Hill Park preschool, we emphasized building a good collaboration, both among the preschool teachers and between the external researcher and the preschool teachers. The aim was to create the so-called third space (Arhar et al., 2013), where both educators and researchers benefit from the collaboration. The participants reflected on this collaboration regularly, and overall they found it a very important part of making the project successful.

Often mentioned in the research material was that it was good to have an external researcher to keep track of the process and also take care of planned factors, such as meetings and seminars. This was important for the preschool teachers, so they could focus on their own professional development and not have to think too much about the practical aspects of the project. Regular meetings, seminars, or inspiration days were seen as “professional injection,” as Lísá called it, since these helped the preschool teachers focus on the project and made them reflect deeper and continue their development.

Support and encouragement from an external researcher were also an important source of support and encouragement for the preschool teachers when working on their professional development. At the end of the project, when looking back and evaluating it, Sara wrote in her diary that collaboration with the external researcher was very useful and a crucial factor leading to the project’s success. She felt that meetings and discussions with the external researcher were very important and that the external researcher effectively kept the project on track. Íris talked about how she felt that having the external researcher around was a reminder for her, so she would not forget to focus on the action research. Anna, the director, also mentioned this in her final interview: “It was important that you [the external researcher] were so visible in the setting; it made the preschool teachers more aware that the project was going on. Otherwise they could have forgotten it in the daily routine.” One of the challenges the preschool teachers faced was related to this, that is, how to find time for the project and make it become part of the daily routine in the setting.

The preschool teachers mentioned that it was effective having an outsider with whom to discuss the practice. That is why they found it beneficial that the external researcher spent time at the preschool. These findings are in line with existing studies, which have suggested that both parties in collaborative action research – educators in the schools and university researchers – benefit from the collaboration. Educators have reported that they appreciate the attention their work gets from the university as much as the advice about conducting the research. University researchers gain more insight into educators’ practices and the capacities of educators as researchers through collaborative action research compared to traditional educational research (Bruce et al., 2011).

Discussions and reflections about values education with colleagues were seen as an important factor in the action research. The preschool teachers found it particularly effective to reflect together on their practice, to give compliments to each other for what was good, and to find solutions for what they felt needed to be changed.

At the end of the project, when the preschool teachers looked back and evaluated it, they mentioned that discussions about values were a very valuable factor for their professional development in order to gain understanding and new knowledge. They found that common aims and common understanding of the issue of focus (values and values education) were crucial factors in making their collaboration in the action research work. This was seen in Sara's diary writing from the last phase of the action research:

It was really good to discuss values in the staff group and I found it unbelievable how alike our views were on the values that we chose, their importance, and not least how important it is to work with them in everyday practice and to see the children receive them and use them in their discussion.

Numerous studies have exhibited the importance of reflections and discussions with other educators and researchers. For example, the educators in Webb and Scoular's (2013) research reported that meetings and lively conversations sustained their collaboration, and over time their own reflections developed as their discussions became more complex (Ado, 2013; Ainscow et al., 2004; Gillberg, 2011; Goodnough, 2010; Walton, 2011). Similarly, the participants in Araújo's (2012) study agreed that teamwork was an important avenue for professional development. Furthermore, the preschool teachers, who participated in the "On the same path" project, also found that reflection on their own work in collaboration with each other and with external researchers proved to be valuable for their own professional development (Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Einarsdottir, 2014; Norðdahl & Eiðsdóttir, 2013; Sigurdadottir, 2013).

Learning with colleagues and from each other was an important advantage of the project. When Anna, the director, was asked at the end of the project what she believed the participants had learned, she answered: "I think, mostly that it is very healthy to observe yourself and it is good for us to go through these discussions or reflections based on your and your co-workers' practice." She added that one of the things that stood out was that the preschool teachers had learned how to reflect and use discussions to learn together and develop professionally. Others also mentioned that it was good to learn together. When you learn together, you do not have to mediate what you learn to your co-workers but can reflect on the learning in collaboration with them. The educators also mentioned that they supported and learned from each other and that collaboration built trust in the group, synchronized it and gave them the opportunity to use each preschool teacher's strengths. These findings are in line with what Kemmis et al. (2014) emphasized that the collaboration between participants can, in fact, increase the learning through the process. Indeed, educators have mentioned the phenomenon of learning from others with different strengths as one of the most effective factors in collaborative action research (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einardottir, 2016; Thornberg, 2016; Webb & Scoular, 2013).

Even though the preschool teachers at Hill Park saw collaboration as important and effective, Anna mentioned that it was also good that each participant could work individually on their own professional development. For example, they could use different forms of documentation; one educator would, for instance, mostly write in

her diary, while another would rather take photos. All seven preschool teachers participated with enthusiasm and were eager to make changes in their practice and improvements in their professional development.

7.6 Discussion and Summary

Our findings demonstrate that the seven preschool teachers who participated in the action research at Hill Park preschool found the project successful. They mentioned the following as advantages: professional development, improvement of the practice, and benefits for children's learning and well-being. These are in harmony with existing studies (Banegas et al., 2013; Catelli et al., 2000; Gibbs et al., 2016; Gordon, 2008; Rönnerman & Salo, 2011; Walton, 2011). In the project, we emphasized intensive collaboration between the participating preschool teachers and the external researcher. Our findings show that this was a valuable factor in the project, and we can assert that we managed to create a third space where both parties learned and worked together, creating new knowledge (Arhar et al., 2013). Our findings also recognize the two learning cycles that Sandberg and Wallo (2013) discuss in their research: the research system and the practice system, which together create a change process. The preschool teachers mentioned that the project would probably not have been as successful without the close collaboration between these two parties of practice and research. Our findings, therefore, support the importance of building a bridge between theory and practice, when the aim is to create new knowledge and improve practice, which, finally, can create the tools needed by the practitioners to create the changes themselves.

The biggest challenge facing the participating preschool teachers was finding time for the action research. They found it hard to find time for collaboration. They saw this challenge as a problem because they believed that more discussions and reflections would lead to deeper understanding of the issue with which they were working. Their concerns were in line with what Koshy (2010) mentioned that better understanding is one of the main reasons to conduct action research. Interestingly, the preschool teachers found that what they did individually was easier to involve in their daily routine, for example, documentation. These findings give reason to consider the preschool teachers' working environment and their opportunity for professional development and lifelong learning. What is the reason for a lack of time to focus on professional development in collaboration with colleagues? Is the context so scheduled and/or stressful that there is no space for professional conversations or deep reflection between preschool teachers? These questions are not answered in this study but are left for reflection and further research. The findings indicate that it is not enough to focus only on the work that preschool teachers do when they are with the children: the teachers also need time to prepare and develop, and doing this in collaborations seems to be more effective. Such work will benefit in the work with the children.

The preschool teachers at Hill Park also mentioned they sometimes found themselves insecure because the schedule was loose. Existing studies also reveal that little experience with action research is one factor that can hinder the process (Einarsdottir, 2016). All the participants at Hill Park were educated as preschool teachers and found it very supportive to have good collaboration with an external researcher. They found it helpful and supportive that she kept track of the project and was available when the preschool teachers needed her support. Collaborative action research is a proven and effective method for professional development (Einarsdottir, 2013; Gordon, 2008; Guðjónsdóttir, 2011; Guðjónsson, 2011; Koshy, 2010; McNiff, 2010). Nevertheless, the process of action research can be complicated to understand since it is not linear but rather follows a zigzag path, going back and forth (McNiff, 2010, 2013). That is why it is important for participants to begin the action research by trying to understand its features. This can help them understand that no two action research projects are the same and that each step can take a different amount of time. One person keeping track of the process seems to be a good technique, as we did in this project. This also made other participants feel comfortable, so they could focus on their own development rather than on whether or not the project was going as it should.

Action research is believed to be an effective way to make a change and improve the entire school community (Kemmis, 2010; Koshy, 2010). Nevertheless, since the whole preschool did not participate in the project, the preschool teachers at Hill Park mentioned that it was challenging to try to make the action research effective for the whole school community. Participants found that nonparticipants had problems understanding the process and the development that came with it. To make the project effective for the whole school, it is important to have transparency (Kemmis, 2010), by focusing, for example, more on presentation. The project lasted for 18 months, which is not a long time for such extensive work. If the project had lasted longer, there could have been more focus on presentations and making the project effective for the whole school. Furthermore, when a whole school participates in action research, it is more likely that the project will be part of the practice after it is formally finished. These findings can be valuable for further action research projects, where there should be more emphasis on this aspect from the very beginning of the process.

Our research material built upon the preschool teachers' own evaluations and experiences of the action research, which offers valuable insight into how and how well this method functions as a tool for professional development. The findings contribute to the knowledge of collaborative action research and will be useful for future action research projects. Values education is a neglected research field in early childhood education, especially in Iceland where we have no formal studies of values education in preschools. The field is not easy to study since values education is a subjective area and personal and professional values vary between individuals. It can even be hard to recognize one's own values at first, and the participants in this project needed to reflect deeply to understand precisely which values they live according to. All participants in the study were educated as preschool teachers, and they all were interested in developing their professionalism and focusing on the

issue of interest, on values education. These factors were important for making the project successful. The close collaboration with an external researcher, over a period of 18 months, is also a unique factor and should be mentioned as one of the strengths of this study. The external researcher is herself a former preschool teacher, which is a strength since she knows the field and the practice and was therefore easily taken into the preschool teachers' group at the very beginning of the process.

The research will also hopefully inspire other preschool teachers interested in further professional development. The study supports the idea of the methodology of action research as a successful way to improve practice and professional development. Furthermore, our study shows that the methodology of collaborative action research, where two parties work together and combine theory and practice, can be successful. Many factors should be considered when planning an action research project, but time is the factor that seems to be the most challenging. To make a project successful, it is crucial to give the participants time to make it part of their daily practice, rather than seen as additional work. Furthermore, good preparation seems to be a crucial factor, with the participants striving to recognize what characterizes the process of an action research project, even though each study has its own unique process. Finally, it is worth wondering about what happened at Hill Park preschool after the project was formally finished, once the external support was no longer present. Did the preschool teachers continue working on values education? Did they continue to reflect on their practice and focus on their professional development? These questions will not be answered at this stage but will be of interest for future studies.

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Chapter 8

“Sharing Horizons” Methodological and Ethical Reflections on Video Observations



Hrönn Pálmadóttir, Jaana Juutinen, and Elina Viljamaa

8.1 Introduction

“I close the preschool’s door after the five-day observation period. I feel that I have created more than enough video material; will I ever be able to interpret it? I will carry my experiences from the encounters with children, practitioners, and parents. I can still feel the hugs and hear children saying: ‘Could you film our play?’ Did I manage to make the right choices?”

The field note is a reflection a researcher made after investigating and participating in the daily life of a preschool. This chapter centers upon researcher experiences conducting video recordings to study the lived values of children and practitioners in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings in Finland and Iceland. Recent research (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Puroila et al., 2016; Thornberg & Oguz, 2013) has highlighted that values are often implicit and embedded in social interactions in educational settings. This study uses materials such as research reflections regarding video recordings, written field notes, and researcher diaries, as well as researchers’ embodied experiences during the research process. Although the researchers wrote down their experiences, the researchers also acted as recorders who experienced emotions and developed memories during the actual recording situations. Thus, retelling and reliving the lived experiences while we wrote this chapter and these narratives served as important research material.

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The aim of the study is to explore researcher experiences and share understandings about the methodological and ethical challenges of conducting video observations in ECEC settings. Video recordings are increasingly used to create knowledge in educational studies and provide opportunities to observe actions, during which the creation of meaning takes place and provides new understandings of interactions between people (Fleer, 2014; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010). In the past, conducting video recordings required researchers to be behind the camera; for example, Løkken (2012) described how she remained behind the camera in her studies of toddlers between 1994 and 1995. However, modern cameras are much smaller than before and allow researchers to interact with children face-to-face while recording. This has raised ethical questions for researchers regarding how and how much to participate in the life-worlds of children and practitioners in preschools.

In studies within ECEC, the role of the researcher is different from the pedagogical work of the practitioner. Abrahamsen (2004) described the role of the researcher as staying in the background, while Johansson (2011, p. 45) defined the role as one of an “interested observer” in children’s play; the researcher should be friendly but different from other adults in the preschool. Studies reveal that children try to understand and influence researchers when they arrive to conduct research in the preschool setting. A study by Pálmadóttir and Einarsdóttir (2015) of young preschool children showed that children use several different approaches to get close to the researcher. Children also appear to have various purposes for engaging with the researcher. Some children were interested in relating to the researcher, while others expressed interest in the video camera, and others did not show any obvious interest. Stephenson (2011) described her approach toward young children as a “generous” approach, meaning that she made herself available to the children and allowed them to decide when and how they interacted. Thus, the researcher used an open approach to listen to the children and allow them to lead the interactions. Degotardi’s (2011) study of infants focused on how children created relationships when starting preschool. The study found that the children began to initiate interactions with the researcher even when the researcher decided to be more distant when observing the children’s actions. Many researchers have noted that children’s attempts to understand a particular situation influenced the relationship created between the researcher and the children (Fleer, 2014; Johansson, 2011; Sørensen, 2014). In our studies (Jutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2015), the intention was to act as interested observers and participate in the life-worlds of children if they invited us to do so. However, this demanded various reflections regarding our values, responses, and relationships with the participants, which was as an ongoing issue throughout the research process.

Therefore, the research question of the current study is as follows: What methodological and ethical challenges did the researchers confront while studying values using video observations in preschools?

8.2 Embodied Experiences with Video Observations

The study is ontologically based on Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) and his ideas of the *life-world*, which suggests that the body is the basis of all human experiences. According to this theory, the researcher encounters children’s and practitioners’ life-worlds in the preschool through his/her bodily being. In the life-world theory, the intertwined, yet ambiguous, relationship between human beings and the world is described. Based on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, Løkken (2012, p. 77) emphasized the “lived attention” of the researcher using observations, in which the embodied researcher participates in the life-worlds of children. Hence, the researcher’s lived body is essential, and lived experiences appear in all situations. Through researchers’ actions in preschools, such as the direction of their bodies, interactions with the participants, and decisions made during the video recordings, the practitioners and children are provided with possibilities to interpret and respond to the living moment. The “lived attention” is, therefore, a part of the research process which involves being aware of the interpretations of oneself and others, as well as the interpretations of the beings of one another. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), *intersubjectivity* describes the fundamental capacity of the human being to participate in the world of others. From the beginning of life, people experience and give meaning to the world around them. Thus, the creation of meaning is considered a consequence of individuals suggesting their own interpretations of the world. As Bengtsson (2013, p. 50) stated, “Intersubjectivity lives in the tension between the otherness and the sameness of individual human beings.” All people feel both this sameness and otherness when interacting with others. Intersubjectivity and the feelings of both sameness and otherness influence research encounters in the study of life-worlds in ECEC settings. Childhood is something we all know because we “have once been there.” However, there is also a distance; adults “are not there” anymore and cannot return (Jones, 2003; Philo, 2003). Researchers and participants share an intersubjective space, which simultaneously encourages them to be aware of the shared spaces and differences in the life-worlds of others. When entering the worlds of others, we experience how that mutual recognition can take place or be rejected. Merleau-Ponty (1962) noted that all interactions allow the possibility of multiple meanings and interpretations, and there are always issues that can never be understood. The centrality of researcher bodies and the distance between the researchers and the participants’ life-worlds create premises in which intersubjective processes are involved. In studies of preschools that involve the use of video observations, researchers’ lived bodies, as well as the video cameras, are interconnected with the life-worlds of the children and practitioners and, as such, influence the researchers’ roles and construction of the research material.

Gadamer (2004) proposed the *horizon* as a metaphor to describe the perceptions that result from the body being in the world, and these perceptions involve everything that can be seen from a particular point. The concept of horizon includes various dimensions, such as narrow horizon and broad horizon. Hence, the concept of horizon is defined as the knowledge and notions that individuals have obtained

and take for granted (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; also, Johansson, 2011). In the current study, we, as researchers, have shared our experiences from two national studies, which provide possibilities for new horizons. The horizon is not static, but constantly changing in the processes of intersubjective human experiences, knowledge, and interpretations. As *ambiguity* is always involved when interpreting the perspectives of others, researchers can never be certain about what appears for the participants. In this study, we, as researchers, are “insiders” because we have knowledge and experience with early childhood education, but we are also “outsiders” in the preschools that participated in the project. The attempt to understand the communication of others includes various challenges involving interpreting bodily and verbal expressions. Researcher’s participation in the life-worlds of others includes various relationships and ethical challenges involving assent and dissent. After all, it is the ontological position of the researcher that determines the focus in the study and influences the construction of the research material, including whether and how children and practitioners appear in studies.

8.3 The Study

In the Icelandic study, video recordings were conducted in 2 units in 1 preschool for 5 months and involved 46 children (between 1 and 3 years old) and 8 practitioners. The study in Finland included 105 children (between 1 and 5 years old) and 15 practitioners from 4 different preschools. The aim of these national studies was to explore lived values and values education in the preschools. The research material in both studies was created by observations, including video recordings, field notes, and researcher diaries. Studying the values communicated between children and practitioners also required us to reflect on our own decisions in relation to values. Hence, in this joint study, we combined our experiences and reflections of the research process to explore the methodological and ethical challenges regarding using video observations. Few studies have focused on the methodological and ethical challenges that arise during the research process in the preschool context. Thus, the intention of the current study is to provide insights into important aspects of conducting interpretive ECEC research.

8.4 Ethical Sensitivity

Researchers have ethical obligations to the participants in a study, no matter their age. The main obligation is to respect the integrity of participants and treat them with respect (Alderson, 2014). Sørensen (2014) argued that researchers must continuously ensure that participants are giving their assent throughout the study. Thus, ethical questions are a part of the research from the very beginning and continue throughout the entire research process. Ethics also pivots on the standards and codes

included in Finnish and Icelandic proposals and laws regarding research with human subjects as well as regulations regarding good ethical conduct and personal protection ([Act on the Protection of Privacy as regards the Processing of Personal Data No 77/2000](#); National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, 2009).

According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004), procedural ethics ensures that procedures address informed consent, rights to privacy, confidentiality, and protecting human subjects from harm. In both the national studies, informed consent was obtained from the municipal authorities, preschool principals, practitioners, parents, and children. All the practitioners gave their consent and were willing to participate in the projects. A few parents did not want their child to participate, which was respected; however, this created challenges while conducting the recordings regarding how to encounter the ones whose parents did not provide consent.

An emphasis was also placed on obtaining the assent of the children themselves for participation throughout the study. In the Finnish study, the parents were asked to discuss the research with their children. The children were encouraged to talk about their feelings through drawings, and parents could also write down, on the consent form, what the child had expressed about being involved in the study. Harcourt and Conroy (2011) noted the importance of establishing trust and security when the intention is to share lived experiences with others. Children and adults occupy different positions of power, which can influence children in giving their real consent (Einarsdottir, 2007; Robson, 2011). Research with children, therefore, demands ethical awareness in which the researcher is responsible for interpreting the expressions of the children regarding their assent or dissent. For example, this may involve paying close attention to children’s bodily communication (Dockett, Einarsdottir, & Perry, 2012; Løkken, 2012; Pálmadóttir & Johansson, 2015). Although parents gave consent on behalf of their children, some of the children expressed that they did not assent to the presence of the researcher or being filmed. On such occasions, this was respected, and the researcher left the situation or moved away from the child. Furthermore, seeking assent from young children can be problematic, as it is possible to argue that the assent of young children to the presence of the researcher should not necessarily be understood as consent to have their research material reported. It also can be argued that young children are unable to provide informed consent, as they are likely to be unaware of the ways in which the research material will be used. Decisions about the presentation or publication of the videos must be based on ethical considerations to secure participant rights to privacy and confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality and privacy in the current study, the video recordings were only used during the analysis and were not reported with the research results.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) defined encounters in the field as “ethics of practice,” meaning that researchers face issues about ethical obligations to participants. Even though all the practitioners had given their consent, there were certain instances in which the researchers had to consider whether it was appropriate to film. When entering the life-worlds of the participants, researchers engage power relations, whether the participants are children or adults, that influence the actions and emotions of everyone (Lanas, 2016). Although we were conscious of this asymmetry of

power between us and the participants, this challenge was present during the entire research process.

8.4.1 *Video Recordings as a Method*

Using video in research with children is not only intended to create research material. Pink (2009, p. 105) argued that the camera is not only directed toward “images” in front of the camera but is also connected to the person behind it and his or her relations to the world. Building on the ideas expressed by Pink (2009, 2012), Johansson and Løkken (2013) claimed that important relationships appear between the viewer and the person who is being looked upon; therefore, the researcher must be sensitive to the lived experiences of children and create both proximity and analytic distance. As the video camera and the researcher are interwoven, using video recordings as a methodological tool creates challenges for analyzing and illustrating research findings. In the current study, videos and written notes were a source of inspiration to explore and reflect on the experiences the researchers underwent during the research process. We focused on reflecting on the process of filming, our relations toward the participants, decisions during the encounters, and our values when engaging with the life-worlds of others.

As an observation method, video recordings have certain limitations. The quality of the recording is crucial, as both sound and picture can influence the value of the research material (Heath et al., 2010). The video lens only captures a small part of the situation under study, and important parts of the context may be overlooked. Conducting video recordings in daily life with handheld cameras raises questions about what to record and how to direct the camera. The camera also captures sound beyond the image in the frame. Due to these limitations, studies that employ video recordings should supplement their findings with additional sources such as field notes and research diaries.

8.4.2 *The Analysis*

The point of departure in our analyses was moving our horizons toward the research process. We gathered the experiences of the encounters with the participants from the field notes, researcher diaries, videos, and written transcriptions of the video recordings from both national studies. We also included recollections of our own experiences and memories of the actual situations as well as the emotions they invoked; these firsthand accounts are more robust sources of data than what can be seen from the videos or read from the field notes. According to Lanas (2016), knowledge is always partly inside the researchers as well as in his/her research material.

Videos enable the repeated analysis of situations with different people involved, including practitioners, children, and researchers. For us, it became necessary to review the videos during the analysis to scrutinize the methodological and ethical aspects of the research process from a new perspective. Our analysis process was, thus, a holistic encounter, as the researchers shared the experiences by retelling and reliving them together during this writing process (see also Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). Downey and Clandinin (2010) emphasized that “stories are not just about experiences but experience itself; we live and learn in, and through the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of our stories” (p. 387). The theoretical framework also provided us new horizons toward our experiences as the researcher exists in the life-worlds of the children and practitioners. The examples used in this chapter were chosen to illustrate our key findings about the methodological and ethical challenges that researchers face when studying values using video observations.

8.5 Sharing the Intersubjective Space

The methodological and ethical challenges that the researchers confronted while participating in the life-worlds in the preschools are described in light of our shared reflections of the research material from the two studies. The interpretations of the lived encounters of the researchers are also inspired by the theoretical underpinning of the study. Hence, in the current study, we are sharing our intersubjective space with each other with an emphasis on embodied experiences while conducting video observations. Sharing our lived experiences with the research process provides possibilities for new horizons.

In the findings, we discuss intertwined methodological and ethical challenges that appeared while studying values in the preschools. Three themes were identified that were connected to researcher experiences during the process: *participation and reactions in the lived moment*, *reciprocity in co-constructions of roles*, and *respecting the perspectives of others*.

8.5.1 Participation and Reactions in the Lived Moment

An important challenge during the research process was how to participate and react in the lived moments while simultaneously conducting video observations. Despite preparation and prior reflections regarding our role as researchers, several occasions demanded decisions and responses in the lived moment that also called upon subsequent reflections. Thus, our participation and reciprocity created premises for building mutual relationships. The research process, therefore, became an emotional process involving researcher responsibilities and values (see also Lanas, 2016). For example, one researcher noted the following:

Anna, who is about one year old, wakes up after taking a nap. She sits alone curled up on the floor in the hall. I wonder why she is sitting like that and I wish that somebody would go and ask her what's wrong. I was not videoing her at first, but now she is in front of my camera. I don't know if I should continue recording. Practitioners are standing near me and chatting with each other. I feel the good atmosphere. They are not in a hurry to do anything. After a while, Anna's older sister comes, sits near her, and touches her kindly. She says something to Anna like she's trying to make her happy. Anna stands up, takes her sister's hand, and they go away together.

First, the researcher felt confused: Why did the practitioners not do anything, and was it appropriate to continue recording? This demanded the researcher to sense the situation in a holistic way. The practitioners were standing quite near the researcher; they were talking peacefully and seemed to be cognizant of Anna sitting on the floor. The researcher interpreted the good atmosphere, and she continued recording. Here, we understand that caring values were lived in relations between different actors: the researcher, the practitioners, Anna, and her sister. Moments like this, during which the researcher had to rapidly sense and make a decision while filming, were common in both national studies. Such situations occurred rapidly, and it was challenging to determine the right choice. The involvement of the researcher often led to the researcher needing to make decisions regarding the children's spontaneous actions and responses in certain situations. Such situations demanded continuous reflections on the participation in the both the children's and the practitioners' life-worlds. The participation in the life-worlds of others demanded the researchers to sense the current moment and to reflect on the experience afterward with practitioners and other members in the research group. There were also situations during the encounters that required immediate decisions about how to react to invitations presented by the children to join their play.

Each morning, I can see two-year-old Niilo coming to me and wanting me to play with him. His parents have not given consent, so this boy cannot be filmed. The practitioners recognize the situation and invite Niilo to play in another room. I am saved, but I don't feel pleased. Later, I put the camera away and played with Niilo.

These encounters with Niilo raised multiple emotions and ethical considerations within the researcher, who had previously worked at the preschool for 10 years. The researcher did not feel good about rejecting the invitation to play. However, Niilo's parents' will had to be respected. The researcher decided to set aside time to play with the boy later and meet him as an adult rather than as a researcher. As a sign of this, the researcher put the camera and the notebook away and told the practitioners that she would play with the boy without recording. Ellis (2007, p. 4) described that "relational ethics requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds." When reflecting on the encounters with Niilo afterward, the researcher based her decisions on values, especially the value of equality. Although the children had a different position in the study, they had the right to be respected as children and not simply be treated as research subjects. Moments like these required the researchers to rationalize their decisions and reflect on the emotions involved when encountering others.

The researchers often recorded children when they were playing together. Play demands that children create a mutual ground, which can be a complicated task for young children. During play, the children sometimes expressed that they needed adult involvement, which was at times challenging for the researcher. The example below describes a lived moment in a research situation when two 2-year-old boys were playing together, and one of the children seemed to experience a threat from his peer:

Ari and Baldur were playing together with cars on the floor. Elvar comes over and leans down to watch the boys. When Ari looks at him in a friendly way, Baldur hits Elvar on the head. Both Baldur and Elvar looked at me.

In this situation, the researcher did not respond despite being invited to participate in the life-worlds of the children through their gestures. The boys' expression can be interpreted as the children already knowing that it was not right to hit a peer and expecting adult involvement to help solve the conflict. Hence, the researcher's response raises questions regarding decisions that are made in the lived moment. In the moment, the “argument” for not responding to the child was connected to the researcher role. Because a practitioner was already in the playroom, the researcher considered responding would be an interference in the pedagogical work. Such situations are challenging for the researcher. Whether the decision to not respond to the children was ethically “right” is a debatable point. The decisions and acts executed by the researcher are also grounded in the horizon, including knowledge, experience, personality, and ideological stance. Regarding values education in preschools, scholars have noted that values are often implicit and embedded in social interactions (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Puroila et al., 2016; Thornberg & Oguz, 2013). In the example provided above, the values that are involved are both connected to ethical and moral concerns. If the researcher had responded, this could have disturbed the practitioner's views that children should handle their conflicts by themselves without adults interfering. Also, the intended role of the researcher is to stay on the sidelines and not interfere in children's play.

8.5.2 Reciprocity in Co-construction of Roles

A research project is an ongoing, intersubjective process demanding that the researcher is knowledgeable about and sensitive to the subjective experiences of the participants. During the research process, we faced how our roles as researchers were constantly influenced and shaped in relations to the participants. Thus, the roles were created and co-constructed in the encounters with others in diverse situations. It is important for researchers to create relationships built on trust and reciprocity but also to be aware of their role as researchers. Likewise, Johansson and Løkken (2013) emphasized that the researcher should be sensitive to lived experiences of children and create closeness but also maintain an analytic distance.

However, there is always a certain amount of uncertainty in the encounter between researcher and child. The children were actively curious about the researcher's presence and role in the preschool.

After the days of video recording, three-year-old Janne was looking at the photos of all the children and practitioners in that unit. He turned to me and asked: "Which group do you belong in? Where is your photo?" I was confused and I answered that maybe there should be a photo of me, and can I belong to each group? Janne agreed.

Janne seemed to be trying to make sense of the role of the researcher at the preschool, as the boy wondered who this adult was and to which group (blue, red, or green) the adult belonged. This resonates the value of belonging; the researcher felt included in the group, and Janne needed to find a place for the researcher. Also, Janne demonstrated his belonging in the green group and considered the researcher's participation in the group system by inviting the adult to join his life-world. The following example describes both the children's approach to creating a relationship with the researcher and the researcher's response to such encounters:

In the beginning of the research project, Anna and Kristin, both under two years old, seek frequent contact by offering me a book to read or a toy to play with. They also want to sit in my lap. Sometimes I put the camera aside and read a book and then try to draw the children's attention to other things or children in the group, and start to film again.

This interest the children expressed in building a relationship was challenging for the researcher. The researcher's role was comprised of handling the children with respect and responding to their initiatives while trying to keep a certain distance as a researcher. When participating in the life-world of the children, the researchers considered it important to create trust and security. The decision in the lived moment was, therefore, to stop observing and respond to the invitation to communicate and relate to the children. The girls seemed to be exploring the roles of a new adult in the unit as Janne did in the previous example. After a while, the girls' relational behavior changed; this could be because the girls gradually began to understand the roles of the researcher. Such encounters between researchers and participants influence participant's ideas about the possibilities of creating a relationship with the researcher. However, the value of trust and reciprocity is important in the research process, so the roles of the researcher are a co-construction.

There were multiple situations in which both the children and practitioners reflected on the role of the researcher. The practitioners knew the backgrounds of the researchers as teachers. One practitioner asked a researcher to comment on the behavior of a child, adding, "Answer as a teacher, not as a researcher." The researcher realized that the practitioners saw her in two roles: a researcher and a preschool teacher. For her, it was impossible to separate these two roles. This illuminates the tension between otherness and sameness (Bengtsson, 2013), as we shared the role of a teacher in ECEC but not the role of a researcher. There is always a certain level of ambiguity in the encounter, as there can be more than one possible meaning created in meetings of the social and physical worlds.

The role of the camera was also complex and created challenges for both the participants and the researchers. Many of the children seemed to ignore the camera

and preferred to create a relationship with the researcher. It can, therefore, be argued that the children experienced the researcher and the video camera as intertwined, as Pink (2009) explained. The practitioners in one preschool reflected that they were more comfortable when the researchers were recording than when researchers were writing notes because they knew what was in front of the camera and what would be filmed. On the other hand, when the researchers were writing notes, the practitioners started to wonder what the researchers were writing about regarding the situation and the practitioners themselves. In this way, the camera created something more visible for the participants. Therefore, according to some practitioners, the researchers were not so intertwined with the camera.

8.5.3 *Respecting the Perspectives of Others*

Being involved in the life-worlds of the participants over a period of time demanded various methodological and ethical choices regarding video recordings. An essential challenge involved how to come close, respect, and try to understand the perspectives of others. Reciprocity and the aspect of time seemed to be meaningful in this regard. A practitioner in one of the preschools said, “It’s like we are standing on your shoulders.” The practitioners in the unit had noticed that the researcher was physically close to the children with the camera when they were playing. Gradually, the practitioners began to try to assume the perspective of the researcher and started to focus more on the interactions of the children in the play areas. In this way, the practitioners learned new things, such as how the children had been developing their competence to play with each other since starting preschool. Thus, sharing the horizons of others provided the practitioners with new horizons about their everyday work that they tended to take for granted.

It was not only the practitioners but also the children who experienced this “sharing the horizons.” The children often wanted to look at what the researchers had filmed. In other cases, the children liked to be behind the camera, as the following example shows:

The group of children and one practitioner are in the hall. Now the children are taking their coats off and putting them onto the coat rack. I’m sitting in the corner of the room doing a video recording. Suddenly, a few girls come to me and ask if they can look at what I’m recording. I invite them to come, but I don’t stop recording. They are looking at the image through the lens with me. A few other children also come to watch. After a while, the whole group of children is sitting with me on the floor and we all are looking through the camera at the practitioner who is putting the clothes onto the coat rack.

In this example, the video camera inspired the children to take another perspective on the world. This was also their way of reacting to the filming and the camera. For the children, this was not the “right way” to be filmed or to film but was a form of play. Here, the children were curious to see the world from another horizon. From the point of view of the researcher, this was also connected to consent as well as values, such as respect, reciprocity, and trust. When entering the world of the

researcher, the children were respected and allowed to participate in the filming. Thus, the children became more aware of what researchers do, performed as co-recorders, and took part in constructing the research material.

In some situations, the researchers endeavored to assume the perspective of the practitioner regarding decisions about whether to continue recording. For example, when there was a conflict between a child and a practitioner, the trust between the researcher and the participants became important.

I am filming the dressing situation in the hall. There are four children dressing up and three practitioners assisting them. Matias is wandering in the hall and not getting dressed. The practitioner asks Matias many times to get dressed. Suddenly Matias pushes the practitioner hard. The practitioner says very clearly to Matias that he is not allowed to do so and he should apologize. Still Matias refuses to dress up. I'm wondering if I should continue filming or not. I decide to film. The conflict continues for 20 minutes.

In this situation, the identities of the practitioner and the child were significant. The researcher knew the practitioner and the child well and interpreted that they were not bothered being filmed. The researcher felt it was appropriate to continue recording. Even though the researchers had the consent from the practitioner and the parents of the child, it was important to be sensitive and try to take the participants' perspective into account. Afterward, the researcher talked about this situation with the practitioner with the intention of sharing emotions regarding the filming and the conflict situation. Based on our experiences, values of respect and trust between the participants and the researcher became relevant in relation to the content of our research material.

8.6 Conclusion

The aim of the study is to explore researcher experiences and share horizons to deepen understandings about the methodological and ethical challenges of conducting video observations in ECEC settings. The phenomenological approach in the study was explorative and connected to the lived encounters between the researchers and the participants. The process of sharing the horizons by telling and reliving experiences provided a space for these memories and the possibility of understanding the memories from new perspectives as others shared their experiences.

The centrality of the researchers' bodies in the life-worlds of the participants became an important issue in the research process, as researchers' bodies influenced the researchers' roles and the construction of the research material. The concept of horizon, presented by Gadamer (2004), is described as intertwined with the position from which we are looking and involves everything that can be observed from a certain perspective. Thus, the concept was used to think about, reflect on, and interpret our experiences as researchers in the preschools. The participants in this study challenged the roles and emotions of the researchers, which required the researchers to undergo a steady reformulation of what it means to be a researcher. Hence, sen-

sitivity to the life-worlds of the participants became an important aspect during the research process (Johansson & Løkken, 2013). The theory of the life-world created new horizons for everyone involved when analyzing the video observations, as even things that are taken for granted can be interpreted from various angles. As argued by Pink (2009, 2012), the camera is not only directed toward the subject but also influences the relationship of the observer with the world. However, video recordings often leave things out. Due to this limitation, video recordings can provide a narrow picture or a part of life, but they cannot reveal the whole truth (Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2015).

Researchers share an intersubjective space with the participants, and this relates to both methodological and ethical challenges in which relationality is lived between children, practitioners, researchers, and the camera, which encourages the researcher to be aware of the shared spaces and differences between the life-worlds. Ellis (2007, p. 4) noted that relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researchers and the community. Video technology is becoming a regular part of life, and cameras are becoming smaller. These changes provide opportunities and challenges that require reflection on the ethical aspects of the involvement of researchers in the life-worlds of others, such as interpretations of assent or dissent expressed by children and judgment about when to stop recordings. These aspects may have influenced some of the relationships with both children and practitioners. Thus, the research process is an ethical and relational process, wherein the lived experiences and the value of reciprocity of children and researchers, as well as researcher distance, all influence the children and their ideas regarding the possibilities of creating a relationship with the researcher. Hence, the research process influences the role of the researcher. Both van Manen (1990) and Sørensen (2014) emphasized that pedagogically oriented researchers must be aware of the effects of research on the participants in the settings. Each reaction of the researcher has an influence both on the lives of the participants and on the study. Therefore, we highlight the reflections of the researchers themselves regarding methodological and ethical choices when studying values.

The horizon demonstrates the methodological principles of interpretation. In this study, the researchers approach was to participate in the life-worlds of the participants. Conducting research in ECEC settings demands both openness and distance, in addition to an interpretation between the part and the whole. The way the perspectives of others are presented indicates a close connection between the perspectives of the participants. Merleau-Ponty (1962) noted that every interaction offers the possibility of multiple meanings and interpretations. Therefore, ambiguity is always a part of interpreting the perspectives of others. During the research process, the researchers faced several methodological and ethical challenges related to values of reciprocity, confidence, respect, belonging, care, trust, and security. Our study highlights that when exploring values education, we must consider our own values when we encounter the children and practitioners. The context of this study includes Finland and Iceland, but ethical and methodological considerations are relevant in educational settings everywhere.

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Chapter 9

Sharing, Retelling, and Performing Narratives: Challenging and Supporting Educators' Work with Values in Nordic Preschools



Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson

9.1 Introduction

We are brought up surrounded by stories; they flow through us and ratify us from birth, telling us who we are and where we belong, what is right and what is wrong. (Bolton, 2006, p. 205)

Educational research has widely documented the value-bound nature of education (Sutrop, 2015). Educators constantly face situations and make decisions that are connected with values, such as decisions on what is good for children and what constitutes good pedagogy. Values education is explicitly or implicitly embedded in curricula, which means that educators are responsible for introducing young people to values (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Thornberg, 2008). However, educators seem to be vaguely aware of the values that are communicated in education (Puroila et al., 2016; Thornberg, 2008). While the subject areas and academic learning are emphasized, there is a tendency to overlook values in educational practices (Sutrop, 2015).

How could research promote educators' recognition of values in preschools?¹ This question was crucial in the Nordic project, which this article is based on.² The project applied Jürgen Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action as a broad

¹In this chapter, the term preschool refers to educational settings where children's ages range between 0 and 7 years.

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theoretical and methodological framework. With the aim of supporting and challenging educators' work with values, participatory action research studies were carried out in Nordic preschools. Drawing on the Nordic project, this article addresses sub-studies conducted in Finland and Norway. In both countries, narratives were combined with participatory action research approaches. Action research approaches, which originate from Kurt Lewin's work, are frequently used methods when searching for change in working life (Somekh, 2006). Although there is variation among the action research approaches, a close relationship between theory and practice, a democratic relationship between researchers and educators, and a two-fold intention to generate knowledge and improve practices are considered characteristics of action research studies (Kemmis, 2009; Somekh, 2006).

Until recently, the connections between narrative and action research approaches have been largely ignored (Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007; Pushor & Clandinin, 2009). However, a growing body of research raises the potential of employing narratives in action research studies. Conle (2001) remarks that narratives can serve both as research methods and means of professional development. Moreover, she argues that narrative researchers can employ Habermas as "a travel companion" (p. 23) as it is worthwhile to consider narratives in terms of communicative action. There is also evidence that narratives promote reflection (Stuart, 2012) and provide potential when dealing with values in education (Johansson & Röhle, 2018; Rabin & Smith, 2013). This chapter aims to contribute knowledge about the potential of employing narratives in participatory action research studies, especially when exploring values in preschool education.

9.2 Values: A Challenge of Broadening the Concept

This chapter is informed by theoretical ideas that highlight the inherent connection between values and education (Hansen, 2004; Sutrop, 2015; Thornberg, 2016). Sutrop (2015), among others, criticizes that contemporary educational discourses focus narrowly on knowledge acquisition and largely ignore values. She notes that many scholars tend to support assumptions regarding value-free education in increasingly pluralistic societies. Sutrop (2015), however, argues that values are present throughout education. For instance, the purposes of education are value-laden; the selection of teaching areas, methods, and assessments are based on value judgments; and values are evident in the organization, curriculum, and disciplinary procedures of educational settings.

Though important, the concept of values has remained an undifferentiated one (Sutrop, 2015). In psychological research, values are often defined in terms of relatively static *mental structures*, i.e., schemes, beliefs, conceptions, or principles about what is desirable and what guides human lives (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) note that approaching values as static mental structures does not place much emphasis to values in *human action*. They remark that the term "value" is both a noun and a verb and that sociological

research, especially pragmatist theorizing, has been interested in the active nature of valuing.

Drawing on John Dewey's (1939) theory, pragmatists state that values need to be considered as concrete actions and practices. Accordingly, the term value does not refer to something one *is* but something one *does*. In education, this means broadening the focus from the contents of values (which values?) to *doing values* as a process through which people realize those values (which values and how?). Moreover, pragmatists maintain that doing values does not take place in a vacuum but rather in spatially and temporally marked situations (where?). (Dewey, 1939; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004.)

In this study, we are interested in doing values as a situation-specific process in preschools. Doing values refers to two levels: first, how educators communicate and embody values in everyday life situations, and second, how they reflect on values in the narratives drawn from those situations. In line with Hansen, Burdick-Shepherd, Cammarano, and Obelleiro (2009), we assume that educators have a capacity to stand back while still remaining close to lived educational practices – a capacity to reflect on lived life. In the Finnish and Norwegian action research studies, narratives were employed as a means for educators and researchers to reflect on how values were done in educational practice (Johansson et al. 2015; Puroila & Haho, 2017).

The focus of this chapter is methodological. In line with the twofold function of action research methodology, the research question is twofold: How do narratives promote researchers and educators to generate knowledge about values? How do narratives promote improving educators' work with values? Starting from an assumption raised by several scholars (e.g., Spector-Mersel, 2010), we assume that methodology in educational research is intertwined with philosophical questions concerning the nature of human reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). In what follows, three examples of employing narratives in the Finnish and Norwegian action research studies are discussed in the light of the ontological and epistemological premises of narrative research.

9.3 The Study

9.3.1 Context and Participants

Eighty-five educators from 4 Finnish preschools and 180 educators from 7 Norwegian preschools participated in the studies. In both countries, researchers and educators worked collaboratively in order to generate knowledge about values education and improve educators' work with values. The researchers' role was to initiate, challenge, and encourage the practitioners to reflect upon values. The educators' role was to identify issues that need to be developed and to contribute to the developmental process in preschools.

In Finland and Norway, two types of forums were organized to enable the action research process: reflection seminars and inspiration days. While the reflection

seminars involved educators from one preschool, educators from all participating preschools attended the inspiration days in each country. In both countries, narratives were employed to inspire reflection, contribute to new knowledge, and enable educators to share their experiences about their work with values. The initiatives of sharing narratives came from both the educators and the researchers.

9.3.2 Examples of Employing Narratives

The following three examples provide insights into the lived and narrated situations in preschools. The reason for choosing these particular examples was twofold: On the one hand, the examples show glimpses of different daily events in which a variety of values are done in preschools. On the other hand, the examples illustrate different ways about how narratives were employed in the Finnish and Norwegian action research studies.

Example 1: A Brave Girl in a Bobsleigh Hill

I have chosen a 6-year-old girl. The reason for choosing her is that she, like many girls, are involved in makeup, clothes, fancy playing, and family games.

I have an episode from the bobsleigh hill.

The group of 5-year-olds is on tour on “the tammen” (a Norwegian nickname). The numbers of boys and girls are quite equal.

The hillside for sleighing is quite hard and icy. This girl climbs up to the top of the hillside and then dashes happily off on the sleigh down the hill. I experience this as rather frightful, but I can see that she has control. This girl continues to slide from the very top, many times, and she receives positive attention from the adults. We say things like ‘Fun’, ‘Very good’ and ‘You are really tough’! I myself am making such comments to another adult, saying that she and another girl are tougher when it comes to bobsleighing than the boys. The other girl, who also dashes off from the top, again and again, follows what is happening. I believe that many of the other children see what is going on.

I feel that it is irritating to acknowledge myself thinking that the boys should be the bravest in going down the hillside on a sleigh. I do not want to be like that! I also find it a little bit strange that I think like that. This is because when I was a child I always wanted to jump as far as the boys on the “jumping hill” and I never gave up easily. I thought I should show them that girls are as tough as boys.

This narrative was written down by a female educator in a Norwegian preschool. Values for gender were part of the action research study in this preschool. Therefore, the educators wanted to look at their practices with this in mind.

The initiative to use narratives as a tool for discussing values in Norwegian preschools came to a large extent from the preschool leaders and the educators (Johansson et al., 2015). The educators were encouraged to choose an event from their practice which was meaningful for them and that they wanted to share with their colleagues. The narratives ended up differently; the length of the stories ranged between five and six lines and one page. The narratives were used slightly differently across the preschools, but the main idea was to choose events from educators’

everyday practice, write them into a narrative form, and discuss the narratives together with the colleagues at the staff meetings. Working with narratives became a widespread method throughout the project and occurred beyond the researchers' initiative and control. The tool grew out of practice as a need for addressing the doing of values in practice and to take an analytic step backward to be able to see values at stake in different interactions.

The educators referred in interviews and seminars to how valuable they found the narratives. They enthusiastically described the different dimensions of mentally and emotionally turning back to an event, writing it down, and reflecting individually and collectively on the event. The narratives thereby became a tool for individual and collective reflection in everyday practice, creating a collective space for knowledge (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). With the educators' permission, the narratives also became analytic data, which were used by researchers with the aim to study the educators' reflection on values and possibilities for change (Johansson et al., 2015; Johansson & Röthle, 2018). In this way, the research tool developed from the bottom up.

Example 2: Wilma and the Swine Influenza Vaccination

It is a free-play situation in a group consisting of children between the ages of 3 and 6-years-old. The children are engaged in different activities. Iida and Oona are playing. None of the adults are near the girls. Wilma comes to Oona.

Wilma (whispering): I watched TV yesterday and saw that all children will be vaccinated against swine flu. I saw white blood.

Oona pays no attention to Wilma's news. Wilma comes to Elmeri.

Wilma (whispering): I have bad news. Yesterday I saw on TV that all children will be vaccinated against swine flu.

Elmeri: That's not so bad. It doesn't hurt or it nips a little.

Wilma goes away.

A couple of weeks later, the children are participating in a morning circle time. Just as the teacher notices Wilma's absence, Wilma and her mother enter the room.

Teacher: Wilma is coming, good! Good morning, Wilma!

Mother: We were at the child health clinic.

Teacher: Okay, you had to go to the health clinic.

Wilma sits down at her own place and her mother leaves.

Teacher: Do you know that Wilma is holding her arm? Have you been vaccinated, Wilma? (Wilma nods). How was it? You are a brave girl!

On the same day, another circle time is beginning. The other children go to their places, while Wilma is hiding behind the piano.

Teacher: Wilma, you should also come and sit.

Wilma stays behind the piano.

Teacher: Wilma, come here!

Wilma is still hiding behind the piano.

Teacher: Wilma, do you think that you can act this way next year when you are at school? (Firmly) Wilma, do you think that you can act up like this at school? You'll begin your school quite soon.

Wilma stays behind the piano. The teacher gives up and pays no attention to her.

The origin of this narrative was in a previous study on children's narrated well-being in Finnish day care centers (Puroila, Estola, & Syrjälä, 2012). The narrative

was based on a researcher's observations from three events in which a 6-year-old girl, Wilma, participated. These observations were written into the form of a narrative. In the present study, this narrative was used to inspire reflection on values among educators in Finnish preschools.

In the first inspiration day, researchers were typecast into the roles of Wilma, other children, the mother, and the teacher. The researchers' team performed the narrative as a drama for the educators. The intention of the performance was to provoke critical reflection on doing values in educational practice. The performance was videotaped. After the performance, the educators shared their interpretations of the drama in small groups. They also received a written version of the narrative to be read before the next reflection seminar.

In the reflection seminars, the educators watched the video of the performance. After that, the educators were asked to form small groups, take roles, and perform the narrative. They were encouraged to enact the drama several times and take different roles in order to experience the narrative from different viewpoints. They were also tasked with creating and performing a counter-narrative, an alternative version of how the narrative would proceed and end. In this way, the educators were challenged to reflect on what they viewed as good, appropriate, bad, and inappropriate aspects of the narrative. The educators were then asked to discuss their experiences of being in different roles. After working in small groups, the groups shared their versions of the narrative.

Example 3: In a Cloakroom

This kindergarten is based in a residential building with a lot of small rooms. The group consists of 15 children aged 1–4 years. Four adults work with them. One is a trained preschool teacher, while the others are assistants. The children are just on their way outside.

Five children are in the cloakroom, which is long, narrow and a bit short of space. A smaller room joins the cloakroom. The children's outdoor clothes hang from some hooks in the smaller room. The teacher talks with Johan (3:1³) about the pictures hanging on the wall. They are hung there so that Johan can understand what is happening during the day. The adult asks what the pictures are showing and where they are now in relation to this time schedule, but it appears that Johan does not understand. The teacher encourages one of the older children to put their outdoor clothes on themselves. Edit (3) sits on the floor and tries to get her outside clothes on. Bella (2:6) gets her coat from the adult and starts to put it on. Nisse (3) sits on the floor with his back to the door and his legs stretched out in front of him. He is ready. Johan sits down right beside him and Nisse shouts loudly. Amalie (1:2), who is near the adult, gets upset. 'No, Johan!' says the teacher decisively. 'Now Amelia is upset. Look!' urges the teacher. Johan leans forward and gives Amelia a hug. Amelia immediately moves away, complaining.

When the children are ready, they stand in a queue by the door. Johan is angry: he wants to be in front of Nisse. 'No, Johan. Wrong!' says the teacher, who holds her arm between them like a barrier. Johan complains. 'No, now Nisse stands in front of Johan', continues the adult. She sounds friendly but decided. 'Now it's Nisse who goes out first. Off you go!' the teacher says. Nisse goes out. An adult is already outside. Now there are seven children in the narrow cloakroom. Silva (1:4) cries and looks for her coat. She cannot find it. 'Look

³The numbers refer to children's ages, in this case 3 years and 1 month.

Silva, there!’ says the teacher pointing to the other room, but Silva does not hear. She cries. ‘Silva, listen! There is your coat’, the adult says while also helping the other children. Mehmet (2:9) lies on the floor with his legs stretched out in front of him. His snowsuit is on the floor. ‘How’s it going with your snowsuit? Is it OK, Mehmet?’ asks the teacher squatting down. Bella (2:6) cries and the adult goes over to her and asks what she wants. Bella gets her comfort blanket. Tina (3:7), who is wearing a thin dress, gets help from the teacher to put on her other clothes. ‘Well, you can’t go out in just a dress, can you?’ she says in a friendly voice. (. . .)

This narrative was drawn from Johansson’s (2003) study on the Swedish preschool context. The narrative is the researcher’s description of an observed event taking place when children and educators were gathered in the cloakroom in the morning. In the present study, the narrative was used at the beginning and the end of the action research studies to inspire discussions about values in the participating preschools.

Group interviews were organized for the educators to discuss the narrative about the dressing episode in both countries. The educators were asked to read through the narrative in advance and reflect on their first impressions about it. In the group interviews, the educators were encouraged to freely discuss their interpretations of the narrative. The researchers attempted to be flexible to follow the educators’ reasoning. Moreover, the researchers asked the educators to exemplify their interpretations and to reflect on both the dressing episode and their own experiences of working with values.

9.4 Exploring Lived Values: The Ontology of Narratives

We first explore the three examples from the perspective of *the contents of the narratives*. Our analytical question in this subchapter is: What kinds of insights do narratives provide regarding the doing of values in preschools? This question challenges us to focus on the ontological premises of narratives. Several narrative scholars highlight the crucial place and multiplicity of narratives in human existence (Bochner & Riggs, 2014; Conle & deBeyer, 2009; Spector-Mersel, 2010). The central ontological premise of narrative research is that human beings are able to understand, make meanings, and relate to experiences through narratives⁴ (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013). Based on the notion that there is no direct, unmediated access to human experiences, many researchers assume that narratives provide a potential window into the participants’ lived life, including lived and done values (see Bochner & Riggs, 2014).

⁴In this article, we use the terms “narrative” and “story” as interchangeable ones.

9.4.1 *The Mutual Relationship Between Life and Narratives*

At the core of the narratives, there are events from different everyday situations in preschools: free play, circle time, getting dressed, and outdoor situations. Although the narratives are rooted in the lived events, we need to acknowledge that no complete correspondence exists between life and narrative (Bochner & Riggs, 2014; Spector-Mersel, 2010). The interpretive nature of narratives was already highlighted by Aristotle who argued that narratives mirror the world rather than copy it accurately. This is because social reality is so multifaceted that narratives are always partial; they are among the many versions of reality selected by a narrator for the audience in a particular situation (Bruner, 1991; Spector-Mersel, 2010).

Moreover, the narratives cannot be considered as neutral reporting on the lived events. Bruner (1991) argues for viewing narrative as a two-way affair: narratives do not only represent but also constitute reality. It is widely documented how people make sense of themselves and the world around them, construct their identities, and create and maintain connections between each other through narratives (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). González Monteagudo (2011), among others, draws attention to the transformative power of narratives, how narratives involve potential to promote social change by constructing possible realities. This assumption was of great importance in the present study. The purpose of utilizing narratives was not to entertain; rather, the aim was to contribute both researchers' and educators' knowledge of values and to improve educators' work with values. Caine et al. (2013) point out that when attending to the lived, relived, told, and retold narratives, "possibilities arise to discover new ways of knowing and understanding, and also for profound change" (p. 589).

9.4.2 *Constructing Identities Through Narratives*

Our narratives are inhabited by a diversity of people: there are individuals with different ages, genders, and social positions. In the first narrative, the educator and the brave girl emerge as protagonists. The other people are not identified as individual persons, but rather as members of social groups, for instance, *another adult* and the *other children*. In the second narrative, Wilma is in the forefront although the other children, the mother, and the teacher play a part in the narrative. The third narrative tells about encounters between a group of children and adults. The children are narrated both as a group of persons (*the older children*) and as individuals (Johan, Edit, Nisse, Amelia, Mechmet, Silva, and Bella). *The teacher* and *the adult* are also in the narrative, but it is not clear whether they refer to one or more individuals.

In our examples, the individuals are narrated in a certain light. The narratives contain cues about what kinds of individuals they are. For instance, the girl in the first narrative is presented as a brave one, as she ventures to slide down a challenging hill. In the second narrative, Wilma presents herself as a person who has inter-

esting news, who is afraid of being vaccinated, and who resists participating in the circle time. On the other hand, she is narrated by the teacher as a brave girl, a becoming schoolgirl, and a naughty child. Similarly, the adults are represented in a particular light in the narratives – as educators who are interacting with children both in empathetic and disciplinary ways.

Our examples reveal how narratives are connected with people's identities. During the daily situations, people constantly face value-bound accounts about who they are, who they will become, and what kind of humans they are expected to be. In narrative research, identity construction is often understood as a process that begins in the early years and continues throughout one's life (Ahn, 2011). This life-long process is described with the concept narrative identity as a continuously told narrative that contains a moral orientation about what is valuable for individuals in different contexts (Farquhar, 2012).

9.4.3 *Narrative: An Integrative Prism for Doing Values in Educational Practices*

Even though the narratives of our study were based on short incidents, they enabled exploring how doing values was interwoven in the multiple aspects of educational practices: actions, interactions, emotions, and consciousness. As Hammack (2011) remarks, narratives provide an integrative prism through which it is possible to interpret lives in their social and political complexities.

First of all, the three narratives are full of *action*. The children climb to and slide down the hill; they play, draw, sit down, and stand in a queue; they move, give a hug, and follow adults' instructions – or resist and oppose like Wilma. The adult educators, in turn, observe, supervise, and control the children. The adults and children engage in diverse *interactions*. The adults talk with children, which includes giving feedback, commenting, praising, encouraging, asking questions, forbidding, urging, and ordering children. The children share news, converse, shout, and complain. The narratives are awash with different voices. The people are present as sensing bodily beings in the narratives, and their bodies appear as sites of agency for varied values (Skattebol, 2006).

A variety of *emotions* emerge from the narratives. In the first narrative, the educator feels irritated when acknowledging that she thinks about gender roles in a traditional way. Wilma's fear against being vaccinated penetrates the second narrative. The perspective of *consciousness* is evident in the first narrative, where the educator reflects on her ideas about boys' and girls' appropriate behavior. In the second narrative, Wilma has become conscious of a vaccination process. The third narrative contains Johan, who does not understand the daily schedule. These examples are in line with Bruner (2004), who maintains that the landscapes of action and consciousness are essential ingredients of narratives.

All three narratives pose questions about *doing values*. In the first narrative, the educator balances between the values of safety and discipline: Is there any risk in allowing children to slide down a hill? She also struggles with gender values: Is it right to expect boys to be the bravest ones while bobsleighbing? The second and the third narrative similarly draw attention to doing values: What is expected from a child's appropriate behavior in a preschool? How should an educator treat children who show pain, resist adults, need help, jump in the queue, or cry? In line with previous studies, the narratives show that these questions arise throughout the fleeting events (Puroila & Haho, 2017; Puroila et al., 2016). Thus, doing values is not a separate area of education but rather is intertwined in the complexities of educational practices.

9.4.4 Narratives in Context

The narratives do not take place in a vacuum but are created in a specific societal and cultural context (Heikkinen et al., 2007). Tuval-Mashiach (2014) argues that all narratives echo three kinds of contexts: the intersubjective relationships in which a narrative is produced, the collective social field where the narrative emerges, and the cultural meaning systems that give sense to the narrative. Accordingly, our examples do not solely tell about the events in preschools; rather, they also tell about the social, cultural, temporal, and research context.

First of all, the narratives open perspectives on the pedagogical culture of preschools where different everyday situations provide dissimilar conditions for doing values. On the one hand, the narratives contain situations echoing democratic values: in the outdoor and free play situations, the children have a high degree of freedom to take the initiative, choose their activities, move, and contribute to conversation. On the other hand, the disciplinary values are in the forefront in the circle time and dressing situations: the educators maintain order and control and discipline the children. These notions are in line with previous studies that show how teacher-directed structured activities and child-directed unstructured activities characterize early childhood pedagogy in many countries (Emilson & Johansson, 2013; Zaghlawan & Ostrosky, 2011).

Moreover, the narratives contain *temporal and global connotations*. In the first narrative, the educator moves between her past and present. She goes back to the memories from her childhood as a young girl who wanted to be as brave as boys when sliding down hills. These memories come alive when she narrates about the brave girl in the outdoor situation. The second narrative also provides cues regarding the context. The narrative is rooted in the circumstances when the swine influenza was a globally topical issue. The narrative shows how the outside world is available for children through media and how these global matters intervene in the lived life in preschools.

Another important context is present in our examples, namely, the *academic context of educational research*. The first narrative was told by an educator who partici-

pated in the present study. The other two narratives were drawn from researchers' observations in previous studies. In the action research studies, these two narratives were retold with the intention to challenge the educators to reflect on doing values in preschools. Hence, there were different ways to employ narratives in the studies and the educators' and researchers' participation varied accordingly. While the initiative to narrate came from the educators' side in the first example, the researchers brought the second and third narrative to the fore. This is often the case in narrative research: narratives are composed in various ways in the relational space between participants and researchers (Caine et al., 2013).

9.5 Generating Knowledge of Values: Knowing Through Narrating

In this subchapter, the analytical position moves from the contents of the narratives to how the narratives were retold and relived in the action research studies. Our analytical question is: How do narratives promote educators' and researchers' recognition of values? While the previous subchapter focused on the ontological questions of narratives, this subchapter will focus on epistemological questions concerning knowing through narratives.⁵

Narrative researchers often refer to Bruner's (1986) ideas about two modes of cognitive functioning, each providing distinctive ways of ordering human experience: logical-scientific and narrative knowing (Spector-Mersel, 2010). These modes offer different, though not exclusionary ways of working with educators in action research studies. While the logical-scientific mode applies theories, abstract concepts, and universal categories expressed in formal language, the narrative mode appreciates stories represented through informal language and in artistic forms, such as personal memories, expressive writing, poems, drama, and visual representations (Bolton, 2006; Stuart, 2012). This is how the borders between science and art become blurred when combining narratives with an action research approach (Heikkinen et al., 2007; Hendry, 2010).

9.5.1 Co-constructing Knowledge

In the Finnish and Norwegian action research studies, narratives were told, listened to, shared, and performed. The three narratives provide examples of how narratives served as meeting places for researchers and educators to co-construct knowledge. Narrative research challenges positivist and post-positivist epistemological assumptions that emphasize a distance between researchers as "knowers" and participants as

⁵The concept *narrative* is derived from the term *gno*, "to know" (Hendry, 2010).

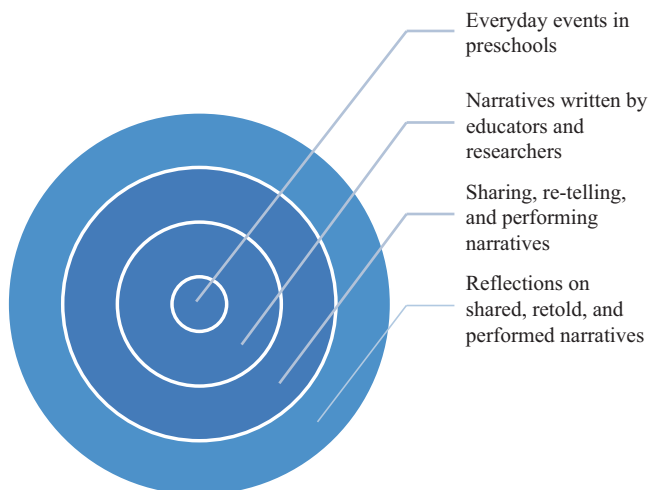


Fig. 9.1 The multiple layers of knowledge construction through narrative

“known.” Instead, narrative research endorses relational epistemologies, highlighting the construction of knowledge when both researchers and participants communicate their necessarily partial views (Gunzenhauser, 2006; Spector-Mersel, 2010).

During the research processes, both the researchers and the educators participated in the co-constructing of knowledge (Fig. 9.1). For instance, the Finnish research team retold the second narrative about Wilma by performing the narrative as a drama. After that, the educators were provided space to take different roles and perform the narrative. Stuart (2012) suggests that the double construction of events – proceeding from initial events to interpreted and narrated events – deepens understanding and adds new layers of meanings to the narrative. Performing the narratives is considered a tool for experiencing the narrative personally (Hamington, 2010; Rabin & Smith, 2013).

The Norwegian educators participated in a collective process of analyzing narratives together in order to identify and conceptualize lived values. This resulted in educators creating a space for community (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) in which questions, various interpretations, and understandings of doing values were outspoken and reconsidered.

9.5.2 Familiarity and Strangeness of Narratives Promoting Knowledge Construction

The narratives offered a common space for the educators and researchers, as the narratives contained elements recognizable to both parties. The preschool context was familiar to the researchers from their previous studies on early childhood

education. For the educators, the narratives represented glimpses of their own work. When discussing the third narrative, the Finnish and Norwegian educators experienced that the dressing situation contained something familiar, even though the origin of the narrative was in a Swedish preschool context (Puroila et al., 2016).

Anna-Maija: Does this feel familiar in anyway?

Educator: Yeah... This dressing situation, with the dungarees and all, is pure chaos. (Group discussion in a Finnish preschool)

I recognize myself in this situation [laughter], but this is everyday life in a kindergarten. (A Norwegian educator)

Besides familiarity, the educators noted some differences. For instance, the Finnish educators wondered about the staff structure that differed from the regulations of their own country. A Finnish educator shares the following: ‘I said, please, read that, isn’t it quite a different preschool than ours? That straight away it kind of hit with the realities, that one qualified kindergarten teacher, and the rest are assistants’.

Narrative scholars refer to the familiarity involved in narratives with the terms *lifelikeness* (Bruner, 1986) and *resonance* (Conle & deBeyer, 2009). These terms mean that narratives remind the listeners about something that they have faced, heard, or experienced in their real life or imagination. The lifelikeness or resonance, however, is not a matter of agreeing with the point of the narrative. Actually, people often engage in narration when they think that something ordinary is violated. According to Bruner (1996), narrative serves as a means to find the balance again, i.e., to create an explanation regarding how to understand what has happened.

In the Finnish study, the narrative about Wilma was purposely chosen because it involved the potential to break the balance – to provoke critical questions about the educators’ values. As the following excerpt shows, the narrative stimulated critical discussion not just about Wilma’s case but also about the educators’ own pedagogical practices (cf., Stuart, 2012):

The next day after seeing the researchers’ performance about Wilma, I faced a similar case in the yard of our preschool. One mother brought her child to the preschool after the child had been vaccinated. I was just greeting and asking the child to begin the daily activities when I remembered Wilma’s case. I didn’t want to act similarly with the teacher in that case. (A Finnish educator)

The first narrative also reflects a critical incident (Halquist & Musanti, 2010), which led the educator to a new discovery. When reliving and describing the event, the narrator realized her own gender prejudices and expectations. A conflict between ideals and lived values became apparent. The same phenomenon appeared when reflecting on the third narrative in the Finnish and Norwegian preschools. The narrative about a concrete pedagogical situation contained a combination of familiarity and strangeness that inspired the educators to engage in lively discussions about the dressing episode and about their own work (Puroila et al., 2016). These examples reveal that both familiarity and strangeness had functions in the knowledge construction. The familiarity helped educators to identify the events in the narrative.

The strangeness provoked critical questions and promoted the educator's recognition of the values done in educational practices.

9.5.3 *Knowledge Construction as a Holistic Process*

Narrative scholars often refer to knowledge construction as a holistic process that goes beyond rational-cognitive thinking. From this perspective, knowledge is not only connected with people's minds but also with senses, embodiment, emotions, and imagination (Hendry, 2010; Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013). In our action research studies, narratives became a site for the holistic process of knowledge construction as they contained a variety of different aspects of educational practices.

The first narrative about a brave girl grew from the educator's *emotions*: she acknowledged with irritation her own ways of addressing stereotypic gender attitudes. Working with the narrative on the dressing episode also provoked the educators' emotions. As the following excerpt reveals, reflecting on the narrative increased the educators' empathy for the children that they interpreted as being mistreated:

I'm concerned about Silva, who's only one year and four months old, who's crying and searching for her cloths. That little girl is not very big. My sense is that she can experience this as unsafe and I don't know whether the adult expects that she should be able to manage by herself. (...) So I felt empathy for her. (A Norwegian educator)

The *embodied* nature of knowledge construction is most evident in performing the second narrative in the Finnish preschools. Taking roles, imagining oneself into children's and adults' positions, moving, and acting involved the participants holistically; their bodies and senses became active parts of the knowledge construction. As noted in previous studies, performing narratives promotes empathy, i.e., perceiving the world through another's eyes (Hamington, 2010; Rabin & Smith, 2013).

After the educators had performed Wilma's narrative and alternative versions, many educators told how they experienced being in Wilma's role. One educator said that she still feels anxious, because neither adults nor the other children listened to Wilma's concerns. Passing the child, diminishing her sorrows, maintaining order, daily routines, and the role of a scapegoat were topics that were discussed. (Anna-Maija's research diary 17.9.2013)

As noted earlier, the narratives are not neutral reporting of events; instead, they pose questions connected with *values* (Conle, 2007). Johnson (1993) argues that when encountering a narrative, the listeners become imaginatively engaged in ethical questions: they enter into the lives of the characters and find themselves judging their actions. This also happened in our study.

When narrating about the outdoor situation the educator implied values related to equality and competence without directly referring to these concepts. Her story reflects the values of (in)equality in describing how she addressed the girl differently than the boys. She also described her taken-for-granted gendered expectations for being a girl, indicating that girls lack the competence that boys possess. These

values are both implied in practice and later reflected on when the educator is looking back at the incident.

The narrative about Wilma similarly evoked questions about doing values through educational practices. When reflecting on the narrative, the educators raised issues connected with disciplinary and caring values. They criticized the adult's controlling behavior and called for caring, which includes encountering, listening, showing empathy, and meeting the needs of individual children. One Finnish educator noted as follows: "The educator didn't discuss the issue [vaccination], though she noticed that it was occupying her mind. She left Wilma alone and didn't care about her when the other children participated in the circle time." The narrative about the dressing situation also inspired the educators to engage in discussions about doing values. Even though the educators rarely mentioned values explicitly, the researchers could identify a variety of aspects connected to caring, discipline, competence, and democratic values (Puroila et al., 2016):

From my perspective, they [the children] weren't seen or cared for. I consider it a very bad situation for the children. (A Norwegian educator)

I think myself that it [the dressing situation] is a learning situation, to learn how to dress. (A Finnish educator)

The narratives provided means for educators to discuss values with an experience-near language that was familiar to them. As van Manen (2000) suggests, the field of education needs a moral vocabulary and language that is sensitive to how pedagogical relations are lived and experienced.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the aim was to contribute knowledge about the potential of employing narratives in action research studies, especially when exploring values in preschool education. Based on the notion of the twofold function of action research methodology, we set out to explore two research questions: How do narratives promote researchers and educators to *generate knowledge about values*? How do narratives promote *improving educators' work with values*? We analyzed three examples in the light of the ontological and epistemological assumptions of narrative research. The chapter contributes to methodological discussions of early childhood education research by providing theoretically and philosophically based reasoning about the potential of combining narratives with an action research methodology. Moreover, the chapter offers different concrete examples regarding how to employ narratives in action research studies. In the examples, there was variation in many respects: who initiated the narratives, in which mode the narratives were presented, and how the narratives were shared and retold in the action research studies. To conclude, we make two points that support utilizing the potential of narratives in action research studies and when exploring values in education.

First, narratives promote the collaborative relationship through which researchers and educators co-construct knowledge. The common idea of action research methodology is to reduce the sharp division between researchers' theoretical expertise and educators' practical knowledge (Kemmis, 2009). Rather than being based on hierarchical top-down designs, action research methodology advocates more equal relationships between researchers and educators. This is easier said than done, as educators often tend to view researchers as someone with expertise that they themselves lack (Madsen, 2013). Nor can we bypass the condition that researchers are often the initiators of action research projects and, to a certain extent, have control over the research design and reporting the study. Within these limitations, we suggest that narratives offer a shared meeting space for researchers and educators to develop collaboration and co-construct knowledge. Narratives are deeply rooted in educational practice and are thus close to educators' everyday life. Approaching educational practices through narratives challenges the traditional privileged position of logical-scientific modes of knowing and gives space to the narrative modes of knowing, which are mastered by everybody regardless of age, position, or educational background. Whereas abstract concepts and theories appeal to educators' cognitive-rational thinking, narratives involve the potential to touch them in a more holistic way by evoking emotions and memories. Narratives thus may increase educators' ownership regarding the research process and the knowledge produced during the study.

Second, narratives offer a fruitful ground for exploring values as components of educational practices. The action research methodology in educational research is closely connected with educational practices. Kemmis (2009) points out that action research is a practice-based methodology that aims to transform practices at three levels: practitioners' practices (*doing*), their understandings of their practices (*thinking and saying*), and the conditions in which they practice (*relating to others, things, and circumstances*). In this view, the focus of an action research methodology is broad; it covers educators' acting, thinking, and communicating as well as the contexts where educators' work takes place. This study reveals that working with narratives enables educators and researchers to explore how values are integrated into the whole texture of the educational practices. We propose that exploring educational practices through narratives may benefit both researchers and educators. For researchers, narratives offer fruitful means of exploring how values are interwoven in educational practices in different situations and contexts. For educators, narratives offer a tool for discussing educational practices from different angles and from different persons' perspectives. These holistic experiences involve the potential to force educators toward critical reflection of their practices. Creating a common space open for reflection on lived events offers potentials for new insights. At their best, narratives may contribute to the improvement of educators' pedagogical practices (Madsen, 2013).

Though arguing for the potential of employing narratives in action research studies, our purpose is not to deny the significance of moral theorizing. Rather, we consider that narratives may make the conceptualizations and theories on values personally meaningful for educators. Furthermore, we highlight the need to avoid

naive assumptions according to which single narratives directly lead to the improvement of educational practices. In accordance with Hansen (2004), we view reflecting on and articulating values as an ongoing task in education. Since education takes place in continuously changing and sometimes contradictory situations, ongoing conversation on values is necessary.

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Chapter 10

Toward the Fusion of Different Horizons: Methodological Potentials and Challenges when Exploring Values Education in Nordic Preschools



Anna-Maija Puroila and Eva Johansson

10.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses methodological questions in interpretive cross-cultural research. In a time of increasingly multicultural research designs, there is a challenge to critically explore the qualitative methodologies where the aim is to develop a shared understanding in cross-cultural studies. Rubenstein-Ávila (2013), among others, calls for contextual and methodological reflexivity and methodological transparency in studies where meaning-making occurs across linguistic, cultural, or social borders. The chapter draws upon a research project on values education in preschools in five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden (Johansson, Puroila, & Emilson, 2016). From the early stages of the project, we acknowledged the methodological challenges of cross-cultural research that predominantly rested on large-scale quantitative methodologies and direct comparisons between countries (see McNess, Arthur, & Crossley, 2015; Osborn, 2004). Therefore, our aim was to develop interpretive methodologies in which knowledge is co-constructed with educators and within a cross-national research team rather than drawn from direct comparisons between the countries.

In this chapter, we explore the methodological challenges and potentials we faced in three sub-studies within the project. These sub-studies utilize research material from all Nordic countries and are published as scientific articles (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015; Johansson et al.,

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2016; Puroila et al., 2016). We seek an answer to the question: How is it possible to achieve understanding across professional, linguistic, and national borders in early childhood education research? Applying ideas from Hans-Georg Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutic philosophy, interpretation and understanding within cross-cultural research will be approached in terms of a *fusion of horizons*. The potential of Gadamer's hermeneutics in cross-cultural research has been noted by several scholars (McNess et al., 2015; Pillay, 2002; Pouliot, 2007; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013). Even though the chapter focuses on Nordic studies, it is most probable that researchers in different contexts encounter similar questions, such as how to work with partners who do not have the same mother tongue, what the effects are of employing translated research material, or how to interpret research material and achieve understanding across countries (Osborn, 2004; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013; Waisbord, 2016). Thus, this chapter contributes to methodological discussions of early childhood education research beyond the context of Nordic countries.

10.2 Nordic Early Childhood Education (ECEC): Historical and Linguistic Perspectives

In Gadamer's (2004, 2006) conceptions of interpretation and understanding, the role of language as well as its connectedness to context, history, and tradition is highlighted (Austgard, 2012; Kinsella, 2006; Regan, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to look to the Nordic context of the sub-studies that are reflected on in this chapter.

Previous research literature maintains that Nordic countries form a homogenous region both geographically and through their common history and shared values (Tjeldvoll, 1998; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). Historically, Denmark has covered the areas of Norway (until 1814) and Iceland (until 1918), while Sweden has formed a union with Finland (until 1814) and later with Norway (1814–1905) (Tjeldvoll, 1998). Due to the common history, Swedish is still one of the official languages in Finland.

Most of the languages that are spoken in the Nordic countries belong either to the Nordic branch of Indo-European languages or to the Finno-Ugric languages. Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian, and Swedish originate from the same Nordic branch even though these languages have diverged over the last thousand years. However, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish people can still speak and read each other's languages. Finnish and various Sami languages, belong to the Finno-Ugric language family. Sami languages are spoken in the northern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden. In addition, there are other minority languages to be found in the Nordic countries, such as Kven, Torne Valley Finnish, Karelian, Roma, and sign languages (Norden, 2016; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). Moreover, increasing immigration makes the languages spoken in the Nordic countries even more diverse. Thus, it is

obvious that the Nordic countries are multilingual and that the linguistic borders do not entirely follow the borders between the countries.

Two important concepts have framed the Nordic ECEC over the years: the Nordic welfare model and the idea of child-centeredness (Kristjansson, 2006). High priority has been given to inclusion and the idea that every citizen should have equal access to the welfare and educational systems. The Nordic societies are acknowledged as the worlds' most equal, both from economic and gender perspectives (Moss, 2007). At the same time, ECEC has functioned to support children's learning and development through warm and inclusive social relationships and a play-based and child-centered pedagogy. Democracy, caring, and competence values are to be found in all the Nordic curricula even though they are differently emphasized (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). In sum, one can say that traditionally there has been a strong dedication to social pedagogy rather than academic subjects in the Nordic ECEC, even though these ideas are thought to be challenged in today's societies (Johansson, 2010).

10.3 Toward Understanding Meanings: The Concept of Horizon

In this article, we draw on Gadamer's¹ (2004, 2006) hermeneutic philosophy to conceptualize the interpretation and understanding of meanings in cross-cultural research. The hermeneutic philosophy has underpinned a big body of qualitative studies where language and the interpretation of texts are in the forefront (Kinsella, 2006). Gadamer also views language as crucial for sharing human experiences and establishing a common ground for understanding. Gadamer (2004, 2006) highlights that both the world and the human experience of the world are verbal by nature. Even though Gadamer discusses widely verbal language in terms of speech and conversation, he argues that similar assumptions are applicable to interpreting and understanding texts (Gadamer, 2004). Gadamer (2004) considers that written texts are alienated speech by character and that the hermeneutical task is to transform text back into speech and meaning. Furthermore, Gadamer (2004) argues that interpretation is verbal in such cases when what is to be interpreted is not in linguistic form, for example, musical compositions, visual arts, or dramatic performances.

Gadamer (2004) clearly rejects an instrumental approach to language, where signs, words, and concepts are considered merely tools for communication. Rather, he emphasizes that language is connected to history, culture, and tradition as well as to the situation where language is used (Austgard, 2012; Pillay, 2002). Gadamer (2004) maintains that understanding another is not possible by getting inside the

¹ Gadamer developed his philosophical perspective in his main publication *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* in 1960. In this study, we use the second, revised version where the English translation has been revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Gadamer, 2004).

person or reliving his/her experiences; rather, he views conversation as a process of coming to an understanding. For Gadamer (2004), the process of understanding is not conveying information from one to another; understanding *is* interpretation that takes place in an ongoing dialogue with one another and oneself. Respectively, understanding text is a dialectical process that takes place between the text and the interpreter.

Gadamer's (2004) conception of horizon is one potential way to approach the dialectical process of interpretation and the understanding of meanings (Puroila et al., 2016; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013). Gadamer (2004, p. 301) defines a horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point." For Gadamer, a person who has a narrow horizon tends to overvalue the matters that are nearest to her/him. Respectively, expanding one's horizon means that one learns to look beyond the nearest matters (Gadamer, 2004).

In Gadamer's philosophy, the horizon has a twofold function for interpreting and understanding meanings. On one hand, human beings' capacity to understand meanings is *delimited by their horizons*. When trying to understand other people or texts, we do not approach them objectively; rather, we are tied to our prior experiences and presuppositions. On the other hand, the horizon is not a stable and rigid boundary; we are invited to *expand the horizon* by going beyond and advancing further. As Gadamer puts it, the horizon is "something into which we move and that moves with us" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 303). Gadamer thus challenges us to become conscious about our prejudices and the history that influences our horizons. This requires being open to questions that arise when we meet something that does not accord with our expectations (Austgard, 2012; Kinsella, 2006; Regan, 2012).

Encountering another human being provides an opportunity to meet new horizons and expand one's own horizons. Understanding occurs as *a fusion of horizons*: interlocutors achieve a common understanding about a subject matter in conversations (Gadamer, 2004, p. 370). This transforms the views of both parties (Gadamer, 2006). Similarly, the fusion of horizons may occur when interpreting texts: the horizons of the text and the interpreter meet in a dialogue (Siljander, 2011). However, this does not mean that any single interpretation would be correct or that the horizons of the interpreter and the object of interpretation were identical (Gadamer, 2004; also McNess et al., 2015; Siljander, 2011). Understanding is a dialectical process that takes place as an interpretational movement between the interpreter's prior understandings and the new horizons (Austgard, 2012). In what follows, three sub-studies will be reflected on in the light of Gadamer's philosophy.

10.4 Deepening Understanding of Values Education in Nordic Preschools: Three Sub-studies in the Nordic Project

The methodology of the Nordic research project was based on combining the participatory action research methodology of national studies with a cross-cultural orientation at the Nordic level. This methodology enabled working at several levels: individual educators, preschool communities, societies, and the Nordic countries. In this chapter, we reflect on three sub-studies conducted within the project (Einarsdottir et al., 2015; Johansson, et al., 2016; Puroila, et al., 2016). These sub-studies approached values education in Nordic preschools from different angles: educational policies, the communication of values between educators and children in preschools, and educators' interpretations on educational practices from the perspective of values. As the Table 10.1 shows, there were differences in generating, analyzing, and interpreting the research material as well as reporting the findings.

10.4.1 Study 1: A Study About Democracy, Caring, and Competence Values in Nordic ECEC Curricula

The study 1 focused on values in ECEC policies in the Nordic countries (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). A closer look was taken at three value fields within the policy documents: the values of democracy, caring, and competence. The research material consisted of national curricula for early childhood education that were translated into English. The researchers were able to familiarize themselves with the curricula of the other Nordic countries.

In terms of cross-cultural research methodology, a significant strategy was that researchers from all countries were involved in the analysis process. In practice, researchers were responsible for analyzing the material of their own country. First, the core curricula were analyzed qualitatively basing on the ideas of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition, a quantitative, language-based analysis was applied to the study (Laugharne & Baird, 2009). The researchers decided together the keywords related with democratic, caring, and competence values to be analyzed in the curricula. The researchers from each country identified both the frequencies of the keywords and the proportion of the words in relation to the total number of words in the curricula. Researchers wrote the preliminary findings from their own country.

After the nation-level analyses, two researchers (Einarsdottir and Puroila) drew the national summaries and findings together with the aim to reflect on the findings within a Nordic framework. They provided the preliminary research findings at the Nordic level for the manuscript of the article. The manuscript, including the interpretations on findings, was discussed within the Nordic research group. Researchers had an opportunity to comment and revise the interpretations drawn from their own

Table 10.1 Three sub-studies from the Nordic project

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Aim of the study	To gain an understanding about values education in preschools as constructed in central policy documents in the Nordic countries	To explore how rights were argued for and communicated between educators and children and how gender was related to rights in the participating Nordic preschools	To deepen cross-cultural understanding regarding how educators interpret early childhood practices from the perspective of values in Nordic preschools
Research material	Policy documents: national curricula from each Nordic country	Video observations from conflict situations in preschools 25 conflict situations, 5 from each Nordic country	Group discussions 10 group discussions, 2 from each Nordic country
Educators' role	Educators did not participate in this sub-study	Educators participated in situations that were video recorded and used as a research material	Educators read a description about a dressing episode in a Swedish preschool and talked about it in group discussions In some countries, educators commented interpretations made by researchers
Translation	The English translations were used	The transcriptions about the conflict situations were translated into English	Multiple translations The dressing episode was translated into educators' mother language Group discussion in educators' mother tongue Transcriptions from the group discussions were translated into English
Analysis methods	Thematic qualitative analysis Language-based quantitative analysis	Hermeneutic analysis	Inductive, data-driven hermeneutic analysis

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Analysis and interpretation	Nation-level analysis: researchers analyzed and interpreted data from their own countries	(1) Initial analysis: identifying, transcribing, and interpreting 1 conflict situation from each country (national)	(1) Researchers analyzed data from their own country (nation-level analysis)
		(2) Discussing four different conflict situations in groups (cross-national)	(2) Researchers analyzed data from another country (cross-national analysis)
		(3) Identifying and transcribing 5 conflict situations (national)	
		(4) Three responsible researchers analyzed the whole material (cross-national analyses)	
Reporting the findings	Researchers wrote the preliminary findings from their own country	Three researchers wrote preliminary findings (cross-national)	One researcher drew national and cross-national analyses together and wrote preliminary findings
	Two researchers drew the findings together	The preliminary findings were elaborated within the Nordic research group	The preliminary findings were elaborated within the Nordic research group

country. Finally, two researchers (Johansson and Emilson) reflected on the findings and drew conclusions with the help of other researchers from the Nordic countries.

The researchers concluded that the study offered some insights into the similarities and differences of values in the ECEC curricula in the Nordic countries. The researchers addressed also the methodological limitations of the study. Referring to the quantitative analysis, they noted that the meanings of the texts are not only constructed through the choice of words but also how the words are used in different contexts. The quantitative analysis that was based on counting selected words did not enable achieving such context-specific meanings. The researchers also drew attention to the use of translated texts and the challenges in the conceptual and linguistic equivalence when crossing the borders between languages. Therefore, the researchers viewed the findings of the study suggestive and called for further research.

10.4.2 Study 2: A Study About Rights Communicated Between Educators and Children

The study 2 explored the communication of values in preschools with a special focus on rights and gender in interactions between educators and children (Johansson et al., 2016). Three main authors (Johansson, Emilson, and Röthle) took responsibility for guiding the research process and involving researchers from all Nordic countries in various phases of the study. When planning the study, the researchers in the Nordic group agreed to employ video observations from conflict situations as research material, as such situations provide opportunities for different opinions and involve power and emotions (Johansson & Emilson, 2016). Conflict situations were defined in a broad sense, as events in which some kind of confrontation, or encounter, between ideas, values, or acts, may take place in the interactions between educators and children. The interpretations of the research material were conducted through different phases and employing both insider and outsider perspectives (Osborn, 2004).

First, each national research team reviewed their observational data (between 20 and 70 h of video observations) to identify and transcribe one conflict situation. The researchers discussed their reflections on the chosen situations and wrote down their interpretations. This initial part of the analysis focused on the insider perspectives and served as a preparation for next step in the analytical process. *The second step* was to discuss five conflict situations, one from each Nordic country, in cross-national groups in a Nordic workshop. The intention was to create cross-cultural encounters between horizons (Gadamer, 2004) and to employ insider and outsider perspectives when interpreting the research material. These workshops served to create joint knowledge formation and shared understandings of methodological and interpretative issues. It appeared that there were many similarities in the interpretations within the cross-national groups and between the groups as well. *Third*, each national research team identified, transcribed, and translated into English five conflict situations for the further analyses. The researchers responsible for the study continued the analyses. The research material was treated as a whole, being analyzed in a hermeneutic process (Ricoeur, 1988). In this part of the analyses, requests from the responsible authors were addressed to the national teams asking for more information on how to interpret single situations. Researchers from all Nordic countries were invited to read and comment on the draft paper, and some further changes were made.

In sum, the various encounters between the teams of researchers in the analytic process considered *the phase of data collection* and how to produce trustful and rich data. The researchers experienced the importance of clarifying *translation* of meaning, as well as discussing the relevance of *interpretations of concepts* (e.g., conflict, rights) in the transcription phase. In the further analyses, the interpretation process allowing for insider and outsider perspectives was important to reach both variations and similarities in the understanding of rights across the participating preschools. The dialectical process between national and cross-national data and

insider and outsider perspectives gave rise both to new thoughts and familiarity. This analytic process can be described as a collective space for the construction of knowledge (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) inviting researcher to cross-national encounters, clarification, and collective creation of meaning.

10.4.3 Study 3: A Study About Educators' Interpretations of Values in Nordic Preschools

The study 3 explored educators' interpretations on early childhood practices from the perspective of values (Puroila, et al., 2016). The study employed two-level textual material. At the core of the study, there was a dressing episode observed in a Swedish preschool and transcribed into text (Johansson, 2003). This episode was used to inspire discussions about values in the participating preschools in all Nordic countries. In Iceland, Norway, and Finland, the episode was translated into practitioners' mother tongue, while in Denmark and Sweden, the Swedish text was used.

The educators read through the text concerning the dressing episode. Group discussions were organized in each participating preschool for the educators to talk about the dressing episode with their colleagues and the researchers. The main research material of the study consisted of tape-recorded and transcribed group discussions. Material from ten group discussions, two from each Nordic country, was used in the study.

A significant strategy for the cross-cultural research methodology was that the research material was analyzed both nationally and cross-nationally. The analysis was implemented as an inductive, data-driven process (Pouliot, 2007) that proceeded from national analysis to cross-national analysis and finally to drawing findings together at the Nordic level. *First*, researchers analyzed the group discussion material produced in their own country. *Second*, researchers analyzed material from another Nordic country. *Third*, the responsible researcher (Puroila) drew together the findings by going back and forth between the research material and the national and cross-national interpretations. She also wrote preliminary findings to the manuscript of an article. Finally, the preliminary findings were discussed and elaborated within the Nordic research team. The researchers had an opportunity to comment and revise the interpretations drawn from their own country.

The researchers discussed the potentials and challenges of cross-cultural methodology employed in the study. They found that organizing group discussions around the dressing episode created a shared space for the educators and researchers to co-construct knowledge about values. Using the same text in different Nordic countries provided a means of exploring the similarities and differences in interpretations. The researchers raised the use of translated texts as a methodological challenge of the study. The researchers suggested that the double analysis strategy provided a means to diminish the risks of misinterpretations and misunderstandings that are attached with using translated texts.

10.5 Potentials and Challenges in Cross-Cultural Studies

10.5.1 *Crossing Linguistic Borders: Working with Foreign Language and Translations*

The Nordic research group consisted of researchers from five Nordic countries. In each country, most of the researchers were born in their respective countries and had the same mother language. However, there were some researchers who had lived in different countries, they knew well the early childhood systems of many countries, and they managed to use different languages. To paraphrase Gadamer (2004), they had lived within two or more languages. Regardless of the researchers' different backgrounds, the national research teams were able to communicate in the main language of the country. At the Nordic level, the fact was that we did not have a common mother tongue, yet the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish researchers were able to communicate by using their own languages. Due to the lack of common mother language, we decided to use English in the research collaboration. All of the researchers were in the same situation, i.e., we were challenged to create a common understanding through using English, which was not our mother language. Working with a foreign language meant some limitations in the research work, as we could not manage all the nuances and connotations of the English language. We would surely be able to express ourselves in a richer way in our mother language.

Another significant matter connected with language was that we used translated texts as research material. This was also the case in the sub-studies described above. Using translated texts appeared both as a potential and a challenge. On one hand, using translated texts allowed the researchers to share research material – to read and analyze texts that were produced in all Nordic countries. Reading and interpreting material from another country was sometimes thought-provoking. A good example is what happened when analyzing the curricula from the Nordic countries (study 1). When reading the first sentence of the Swedish core curriculum, “Democracy forms the foundation of the preschool” (Curriculum for preschool, 2011 [1998], p. 3), a Finnish researcher got a feeling of strangeness. She began to question how the concept and value field of democracy appears in the Finnish core curriculum. The analysis revealed that the term “democracy” was not at all mentioned in the Finnish core curriculum (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). This is how encountering a new horizon provided opportunities to expand one's own horizon and deepen understanding about one's own context (Gadamer, 2004). It is notable that meeting a new horizon was possible even though the text that was read and interpreted was a translated one.

On the other hand, the linguistic equivalence formed a methodological challenge when working with translated texts. In the light of Gadamer's philosophy, translating speech or text from one language to another is much more than a technical matter. This is because language conveys culturally loaded meanings and the translator's task is to translate these meanings to be understood in the other language context. Gadamer (2004) argues that there remains a gap between the original language and

the translated language – a gap that cannot be completely closed. Therefore, translations need to be understood as interpretations: “it is necessarily a re-creation of the text guided by the way the translator understands what it says” (Gadamer, 2004). This is one of the crucial challenges faced by researchers who have been engaged in cross-cultural studies (see Osborn, 2004; Puroila et al., 2016; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013).

We used different strategies to meet the challenges of using translated texts. *In the first sub-study*, the researchers analyzed texts of the curricula and provided preliminary findings from their own country. Even though they were working with translated texts, they had the chance to go back to the original texts and cross-check how well the translated texts captured the meanings of the original texts. *In the second sub-study*, the analysis and interpretation were based on combining insider and outsider perspectives in the initial phase of the analysis. In practice, a sample of the research material was interpreted first by mixed groups of Nordic researchers and then by national research teams. As these initial analyses illuminated congruent interpretations, the entirety of the research material was treated as a whole and analyzed by three researchers from two countries (also Alasuutari & Markström, 2011). *In the third sub-study*, a double analysis strategy was used, which meant that all of the material consisting of translated texts was analyzed twice. This strategy allowed the researchers to analyze the material both from inside and outside the national and linguistic contexts. *In all of the sub-studies*, crucial for cross-cultural methodologies and the credibility of the interpretations was the collaboration among the Nordic research group. In all of these studies, the researchers had the chance to examine the relevance of the interpretations made from their own country. To sum up, the interpretation occurred as a dialectical process through moving between different horizons: between the original texts and translated texts, between researchers and texts, and in conversations between researchers from different Nordic countries (also Austgard, 2012).

10.5.2 Crossing Professional Borders: Researchers’ and Educators’ Role in Knowledge Construction

In the entire Nordic project, most of the sub-studies were based on the participatory action research processes that were conducted in the participating preschools. The study on the Nordic core curricula (study 1) was the only sub-study in which the educators did not participate. Thus, the collaboration between educators and researchers formed a crucial part of the methodology of the project. In the light of Gadamer’s philosophy, the crucial methodological questions include: How can understanding between researchers and educators be achieved? What is the role of educators and researchers in generating knowledge?

Gunzenhauser (2006) addresses the limitations of positivist and post-positivist approaches that highlight researchers as “knowers” and participants as objects to be

“known.” He calls for viewing knowledge generation as a co-constructive process where both parties have a role. This means a challenge to enhance participants’ role and ownership in the research process (Madsen, 2013). Participatory methods have been seen as a potential means to enhance participants’ ownership in the research process (McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016). In the Nordic project, the national sub-projects were methodologically based on a participatory action research model, which aims to both create knowledge and contribute to change (Greenwood and Lewin, 2007). Change in the Nordic project referred to the educators’ growing recognition of values and their developmental work toward values education in preschools.

Within the action research processes, the researchers and educators collaborated over approximately 2 years. The researchers’ role was to challenge, encourage, and support the educators in reflecting upon values and values education. The educators’ role was to identify issues that needed to be developed and to work toward the developmental process in their settings. Most probably, the level of the educators’ participation in generating knowledge varied between the countries. In all of the Nordic countries, the educators participated in producing the research material. In Finland, for instance, the educators’ participation went beyond producing research material as they were invited to analyze and interpret material and comment on the interpretations made by researchers.

It is obvious that there were both shared aspects and differences in the educators’ and researchers’ horizons concerning the research topic. On one hand, the researchers collaborated with the educators in their own country, which means that they shared the linguistic and societal context. More importantly, both researchers and educators worked in the field of ECEC even though they had different tasks and responsibilities. Most of the researchers had long explored early childhood matters in their own country and internationally. They had had opportunities to increase their understandings and broaden their horizons about daily life in preschools. Moreover, some researchers had worked as kindergarten teachers, which helped them put themselves into the educators’ place. Thus, it is arguable that the educators and researchers shared to some extent the educational realities in their national contexts, a condition which involves potential for developing shared understanding (also Milligan, 2016).

On the other hand, the educators and researchers had different vantage points (Ellström, 2008) even though they worked in the same field. In the educators’ horizons, educational practices and encounters with children and parents were the nearest matters. The researchers, in turn, lived in the midst of academic tasks, such as applying for funding, collecting and analyzing research material, writing publications, and giving presentations at scientific conferences. These matters were more or less far from educators’ daily experiences. Doubtless, this had consequences for how researchers were positioned in the researcher–educator relationships, as the participants tended to regard the researchers as authorities who have expertise and knowledge that they themselves lack (Madsen, 2013; Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2015).

The aim of deepening understanding – fusing the different horizons – was inherently embedded in the action research process. Therefore, much space for conversation was created among the educators and between the educators and researchers (cf. Gadamer 2004). Group discussions (study 3) provide an example of a forum where educators and researchers engaged in conversation, the purpose of which was to interpret and understand early childhood practices from the perspective of values. Arranging the group discussions around a concrete pedagogical situation implies the researchers' attempt to promote equality between researchers and educators – to meet the educators on a ground that was familiar to them. After the group discussion situations, the tape-recorded discussions were transcribed into texts. The study continued as a dialectical process, where the researchers attempted to interpret and understand the text, i.e., fuse the horizons of the text and their own horizons (see Siljander, 2011). As the researchers could develop their understanding about how values were embedded in the group discussions, it is reasonable to argue that some kind of fusion of horizons had occurred.

However, we cannot claim that the educators' and researchers' interpretations were identical (Gadamer, 2004; also Siljander, 2011). The new understanding was a result of a process where both educators and researchers had a crucial role; without either of the parties, the study would not be possible. Nor can we argue that the action research process led the researchers to an insider's position in the preschool communities. Despite our honest willingness to encounter the educators on an equal base, we cannot escape the fact that we as researchers were responsible for many important decisions in the research process (see also Madsen, 2013; Puroila & Johansson, Chap. 9 of this book). For instance, we chose the research field to be explored, set the schedule for the entire research process, decided what to bring from the national sub-studies to the Nordic level analyses, and mostly wrote the research articles.

10.5.3 Crossing National Borders: Working In-Between National Cultures

The design of the Nordic project required working both at the national and the cross-national levels. At the national level, the action research studies were based on cooperation between educators and researchers and among the research team within the same country. Working at the Nordic level, both demanded and enabled crossing the national borders between countries.

Previous literature on cross-cultural methodologies challenges us to consider whether a researcher has an insider's or an outsider's role in the cultural context under study (McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013; Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2015). Sharp criticism has been addressed to the hegemony of universal models and methodologies developed in western academic communities and applied to studies all over the world (Pillay, 2002). Rubenstein-Ávila

(2013) refers to a growing body of studies where researchers, who are native to the communities they explore, question researchers' rights and authority to study "the other" (p. 1041). Suwankhong and Liamputtong (2015) suggest that an insider status enables researchers to get closer to the participants and create a deeper understanding of the sociocultural context of the research setting.

In the sub-studies reflected on in this chapter, the researchers and educators collaborated within each country. The researchers thus had an insider status when it comes to the sociocultural context of the national sub-studies. Crossing the national borders occurred when the researchers analyzed and interpreted the research material that was produced in the other Nordic countries. In sub-studies 2 and 3, the insider's and outsider's perspectives were purposely employed during the analysis process. On one hand, the aim was to utilize the potential of situations where researchers meet new horizons. As Suwankhong and Liamputtong (2015) remark, an outsider position might enable researchers to see perspectives that the insiders fail to see. On the other hand, we attempted to minimize the potential risks of misinterpretations and misunderstandings if the research material was analyzed solely without understanding the tradition and the culture where the material was produced. In interpreting and understanding meanings across cultures, we were challenged not only to understand what was said in a literal sense "but also the underlying meaning of historically and culturally embedded discourse" (McNess et al., 2015, p. 306).

Considering the researchers' insiderness and outsiderhood in the context of the Nordic project requires questioning the similarities and differences between the Nordic countries. As noted earlier, the Nordic countries are often understood as a homogenous region due to their common history, common geographic location, and the common values of equality, democracy, and solidarity (e.g., Tjeldvoll, 1998; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). On a global scale, all Nordic countries belong to western, democratic societies and to wealthy, developed worlds. From the perspective of Nordicness, all of the researchers and educators participating in the project can be understood as insiders. Karila (2012), however, calls for taking into account the differences between the Nordic countries, arguing that each country has its own political, geographic, and economic history. Also the research findings and experiences from the Nordic project challenge us to go beyond the simplistic views of Nordic sameness. It is obvious that there are both similarities and differences between the countries. Moreover, there is increasing variation within each country, as the Nordic societies are becoming more pluralistic and multicultural due to the globalization and increasing immigration. Thus, the basis for being an insider or outsider in relation to national cultures is becoming more complex and needs to be critically reconsidered.

10.6 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this chapter has been to critically reflect on methodological questions involved in interpretive cross-cultural research. Drawing on three sub-studies from the research project on values education in Nordic preschools, the chapter has discussed the potentials and challenges when working across linguistic, professional, and national borders (Johansson et al., 2016). In accordance with recent research literature on cross-cultural methodologies (e.g., McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016; Rubenstein-Ávila, 2013), we have attempted to create reflexivity and transparency in the methodological choices that often have remained unproblematic, such as working with foreign languages, employing translated texts, creating collaborative relationships between participants and researchers, and interpreting research material across countries. These questions have been explored in connection with Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy and examples from the sub-studies of the Nordic project. In doing so, the chapter both adheres to contemporary discussions on cross-cultural methodologies and raises challenges that have rarely been addressed in the field of early childhood education research.

First, the chapter draws attention to *the significance of language* when conducting interpretive cross-cultural studies. In the light of Gadamer's hermeneutics, interpreting and understanding are essentially language events. When aiming to achieve understanding across linguistic borders, the obvious challenge is the lack of a common language. In the current academic community, the English language has become the lingua franca of educational researchers, i.e., a common tongue for people who speak various languages. This was also the case in the Nordic project. Creating a common language is a prerequisite for communication between researchers from different countries, and it enables researchers to explore material that is produced in another country. The promise of academic globalization and employing translations is to "expand intellectual horizons and enrich knowledge" (Waisbord, 2016, p. 870). Another side of the coin is that translations entail epistemological and cultural issues that go beyond mere linguistic matters. This chapter calls for further exploration upon the following questions: How can understanding about nuanced cultural meanings be achieved when researchers operate with foreign languages? What is missed when the research material is translated into another language?

Second, our reflections on the three sub-studies *challenge us to go beyond the juxtaposing between insider/outsider positions when crossing professional and national borders*. Traditionally, the question of researchers' insider/outsider positions has been addressed in two different ways. There is a long scientific tradition drawn from positivism and post-positivism, where researchers' distance, neutrality, and objectivity – outsidership – in relation to the participants are considered requirements for the validity of the study (Denzin, 2009). On the contrary, there are discussions where researchers' outsider position has been questioned especially in cross-cultural studies. Researchers who explore and interpret people across cultures are criticized as being guilty of colonialism and "othering" participants (Pillay, 2002). In the sub-studies that were reflected on, the educators and researchers had

both shared different aspects in their horizons – they had both insiders’ and outsiders’ positions depending on the situation. All the educators and researchers worked in the field of early childhood education and shared the Nordic context, even though their professional tasks and national contexts varied. We noted that employing participatory methods and working in a multinational research team and research context provided fruitful opportunities for moving between different positions and learning from each other. This meant a condition of working in a space in and between different professional and national cultures. The notions drawn from this study support Milligan’s (2016) idea of the potential of an *inbetweeners*’ position in cross-cultural research. This requires twofold vantage points: both being immersed in and taking reflective distance from the phenomenon and context under study (McNess et al., 2015; Milligan, 2016). Thus, we suggest that looking at the phenomenon under study both from near and far promotes the generation of knowledge and a deepening of understanding across professional and national borders.

Third, our reflections on the three sub-studies *challenge us to reconsider the implicitly maintained idea of homogenous cultures that are enclosed by national borders*. In the era of ongoing globalization, migration, and social media, people with different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds have been brought into a closer contact with each other than ever before in the history of humankind. The borders between countries and nations have become lower and sometimes even blurred. This chapter shows that the question concerning the similarities and differences between the Nordic countries is also a complex one. Without any doubt, the Nordic countries are part of the increasingly multicultural, multi-linguistic, and pluralistic world. This situation challenges us to scrutinize to what extent the idea of the shared Nordicness is still relevant. Keeping in mind the growing diversity within the Nordic societies, it is astonishing that in our sub-studies, the educators and educational researchers from different Nordic countries ended up with very similar interpretations when looking at daily situations in ECEC settings (Puroila et al., 2016; Johansson et al., 2016). This notion requires critically rethinking the conception of culture that has traditionally been understood as shared beliefs, norms, and patterns of behavior framed by people’s belonging to a nation (Anderson-Lewitt, 2012). In accordance with some recent scholars, we suggest that a more complicated understanding of culture is needed – that is, how a variety of factors influence and shape people’s interpretations and understandings of their lives (Amelina, Faist, Glick Schiller, & Nergiz, 2012; Anderson-Lewitt, 2012). In addition to nationality or ethnicity, several other aspects are meaningful for how people interpret human life, such as age, gender, and generation. In the sub-studies that were reflected on in this chapter, professionalism in early childhood education appeared as significant for educators’ and researchers’ opportunities to achieve shared understandings – to fuse their horizons.

To conclude, when searching for deeper understanding across linguistic, professional, and national borders, we encounter several fundamental questions that are rooted to our assumptions about human beings, language, and culture. Understanding across borders is possible, but it requires empathy, openness to others, and welcoming differences rather than rejecting them.

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Part III
Empirical Perspectives

Chapter 11

Reciprocal Caring in ECEC Settings



Kristin Fugelsnes

11.1 Introduction

Early childhood educators in Nordic countries base their work on caring (Broström & Hansen, 2010; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Gannerud, 2003). Educators are expected to create a caring, affirming and nurturing ethos (Gannerud & Rönnerman, 2006), and caring assumes a high priority among early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators (Johansson, Fugelsnes, Mørkeseth, Röhle, Tofteland & Zachrisen, 2014, 2015). Researchers have also pointed to the necessary relationship between care and education (e.g. Broström, 2006; Johansson, 2013; Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2001).

Caring is subject to the educational direction, with the result that it also has a power aspect. Power over the other can be used in various ways (Løgstrup, 1997). In adult–child relations, giving care will place the adult in a position where the child becomes dependent, and this dependency may easily be reinforced in an already asymmetric relationship. These processes can be subtle, and they are not always conscious. According to the Nordic curriculum guidelines, educators are obliged to provide care to children, and the children must experience care (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström & Emilson, 2015). In Norway, ECEC is provided to children aged 0–5 years, and it is integrated into the national educational system under the Ministry of Education and Research. The ministry is responsible for ECEC, primary and secondary schools, upper secondary and tertiary vocational education and higher education sectors, as well as cultural schools. Children in Norway begin compulsory school in August of the year of their sixth birthday (Education Act, 1998).

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This study aims to contribute to the knowledge about caring as a reciprocal and contextual value, as well as to provide a broad understanding of caring in ECEC that includes children's perspectives. Children's experiences of caring represent an important part of care. The research question is as follows: How is caring communicated and received in educator–child interactions in ECEC settings?

11.2 Theoretical Background

A database search revealed that few studies have been conducted on the caring approach in ECEC from the perspective of children, although caring is strongly emphasised in Norwegian ECEC (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Researchers have noted that ECEC represents a place for both building and developing deep, lasting, and emotionally loaded relationships (Gannerud, 2003; Greve, 2006; Halldén, 2007; Johansson, 2013). According to several researchers, women constitute the majority of those working in educational activities with young children, and they base their work on caring as an ideal (Broström & Hansen, 2010; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005; Gannerud, 2003; Löfdahl, 2014). Emilson and Johansson (2009) assume an empirically oriented understanding of caring as being mainly about the way in which others are taken care of and others' well-being. Caring values obligate the children to not hurt others, to understand and show compassion, to help each other, and to get on well with others. In a Norwegian study of values, Johansson et al. (2014, 2015) found that caring is the main value prioritised by educators in their interactions with children in ECEC settings.

On the one hand, caring in ECEC comprises different actions performed by educators as part of their daily work with children, as in nursing. On the other, caring can also concern how educators do their work and how they approach others. According to Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2001), care in this latter sense has an ethical dimension and cannot be limited to specific situations.

The theorists Knud E. Løgstrup and Nell Noddings are important contributors to the notion of caring from both educators' and children's perspectives. Both view caring as a reciprocal relation. Løgstrup's (1997) theory lies at an ontological level as a way of understanding reciprocity and trust in human relations as a necessary condition of human life. Such an understanding is the basis of Noddings' (2003) definition of caring, where both the caregiver and care receiver must contribute to a caring relation. Noddings' assumption that caring is a reciprocal relation allows for an analysis of caring from both the educator's and children's points of view. In line with Noddings, the term *caring* is the preferred term in the main part of this text.

Løgstrup (1997) focusses on the bond between humans, noting that people are interdependent. For him, trust is another important factor, as we become interdependent through trust. In Løgstrup's view, our lives can only be lived by laying ourselves open in trust and more or less 'deliver ourselves over into the hand of another' (p. 14). Therefore, there will always be a bond with the other, and people will always

and inevitably affect each other. Løgstrup maintains that the trust shown by others presents us with an appeal to take care of the other, and when we lay ourselves open, the recipient of our openness has power over us. Løgstrup focusses on power as a component in any interpersonal connection and contends that power can be lived out as care or destruction, safeguarding or exploitation. He maintains that humans have an ethical responsibility to each other, and this responsibility is usually something absolute and unconditional. Noddings (2003) also focusses on relations. She defines caring as something that occurs and is maintained in caretaking. Both the caregiver, the *one-caring*, and the care recipient, the *cared-for*, contribute to the caring relation. The contribution of the one-caring is seeing the cared-for's need for caring and being there for him/her: 'When I receive the other, I am totally with the other' (p. 32). Thus, according to Noddings, caring is characterised by a movement away from oneself. The one-caring sees the cared-for's need for caring as an opportunity to provide caring. As a result, the one-caring and cared-for are in a mutual relation. Noddings maintains that the one-caring cannot expect or demand retribution and appreciation from the cared-for. The mutuality in Noddings' understanding of caring is that the cared-for must respond to the caring; this means that he or she must experience and acknowledge the caring *as* caring and respond to the one-caring in a manner that shows that the caring is received and recognised as such. Thus, Noddings (2003) asserts that the care receiver is responsible for determining whether caring is truly being provided for him or her. Jacobi (1991) defines caring as taking care of children's well-being, communications and development with the aim of improving their situation. Jacobi's definition opens a wide understanding of caring, and combined with Noddings' (2003) understanding of caring as a reciprocal relation, children's responses become crucial.

11.3 Method

This study consists of video observations of interactions between educators and children in seven ECEC settings from the Norwegian segment of the Nordic NordForsk-funded project, 'Values education in Nordic preschools: Basis of education for tomorrow' (2013–2015). Approximately 230 educators and 650 children aged 1–4 years participated in the Norwegian part of the study. The collection of the research material took place between 2010 and 2012. There were between three and six educators and 10–22 children in each of the seven research groups. The educators were persons working in ECEC with various backgrounds, including preschool teachers, childminders and assistants; most were women, and approximately 33% of the educators in the study were preschool teachers. The study can be described as field-based.

Interactions between educators and children were filmed with a handheld camera seven times in each of the seven groups, and the video observations ran for a total of approximately 75 h. Video observations provide opportunities to review the interactions several times and make it possible to become aware of communicative

patterns and details that can be difficult to observe in direct observational coding. The video observations included both spontaneous activities and activities that were preplanned by the educators.

The Norwegian part of the ValuEd project reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD), and this organisation's recommended guidelines have been followed. Ethical considerations were addressed according to the Norwegian *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology* (2016), and care was taken to uphold ethical standards during the project. All participants gave free and informed consent. The educators and the children's parents signed written consent forms and were informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any time. Ethical considerations regarding research with children were considered throughout the process. As it was important to clarify the children's opportunities to make independent decisions about participating in the research, they were conscientiously observed to ascertain whether their consent to be video recorded was continuous. The children were given pseudonyms in the transcriptions of observations, but their sex and age were accurately reported.

11.4 The Analyses

The video observations were analysed according to the educators' communication regarding caring and the children's responses to the communicated caring. Thus, the focus was on communication in educator–child interactions.

The first phase of the analysis revealed two main patterns of communication between the educators and children. One pattern consisted of educators who primarily interacted with one child at a time, in dyads, while the other comprised educators interacting with many children most of the time in group interactions. In the second phase of the analysis, 40 video observations (366 min) from all seven Norwegian ECEC settings, representing the two different communication patterns, were selected for further analyses. This analysis focussed on how educators communicate caring and how children receive the communicated caring. The observations were repeatedly investigated to obtain an overview of the research material. In seeking to interpret whether the communication could be understood as one of caring, the focus was on the educators' actions, what they were saying in their interaction with the children, the tone of their voice, eye contact, physical closeness and body contact with the children. In the third phase of the analysis, 13 of the 40 video observations were selected for more in-depth analysis. In these observations, the children's responses regarding the communicated caring were quite explicit in terms of body language, gestures and/or gaze. These observations were transcribed and shown to and discussed with the other researchers involved in the project. The observations lasted between 3.5 and 37 min, starting from when the educator entered the room or when he or she began the activity and ending when the children left the room or the activity. The analysis was not a linear process, since the analyses and interpretations

took a format of moving back and forth between the selected research material and individual video observations.

Looking at caring from the educators' and children's perspectives was important in the analyses of the video observations. Interpretations of the children's responses involved observing their actions, what they were saying and how they were saying it, as well as watching their body language, gestures and gaze. How the children received caring was a major focus of the analysis of the observations, comparable to the educators' communication of caring in their interactions with the children. Since it is not possible to know how other people think, feel and perceive communication, all assumptions are based on interpretations of appearances.

11.5 Findings

This study investigates how caring is communicated and received in educator–child interactions in ECEC settings, as both the communication of caring and how it is received are important aspects of caring. The main findings are presented below.

11.5.1 *Communicated Caring*

11.5.1.1 'A Fine Balance'

An educator and six children enter a room with large gym blocks in various geometric shapes. In the room, there is a staircase block leading to a cylinder block, and children can balance on it and slide down on a triangular block. The educator sits on her knees, leaning towards the wall next to the staircase block, and faces the cylinder. The children are forming a line and starting to balance on the cylinder, holding one hand on the wall while crossing over. More children are arriving, while some are leaving, and at most, ten children aged 1–2 years are present. Most children are balancing on the cylinder and sliding down. Some are sitting under the cylinder, and some are jumping down from the blocks. The educator looks at the children and comments on their activities using the children's names.

Two children are arguing about the order in the queue, and the educator crawls toward them. One child, Mia (2.5 years), starts to cry. The educator asks her what she is thinking and whether she is afraid; she then lifts Mia down from the stairs. The educator puts her arms around Mia, places her in her lap and asks her once more whether she was afraid, as she gently rocks her, sitting stomach to stomach. Paul (2.2 years) looks at them, moves toward them and strokes Mia gently on the back. Paul then looks at the educator. The educator returns his gaze and says, 'Hello, Paul. Mia is a bit sad'. Paul points to Mia's back. The educator looks at Paul without saying anything. Mia is still crying and puts her thumb in her mouth. The educator strokes Mia's back, speaking softly to her as she looks in turn at Mia and the other children playing on the cylinder. [...]

The educator is communicating caring as she sits on her knees at the children's height, facing them. She is communicating caring for Mia by talking calmly to her, holding her arms around Mia, stroking her back and trying to help her put into words what she has experienced. The educator makes eye contact with Mia as she talks to her and tries to comfort her by holding her, asking whether she was afraid and stroking her; Mia's need for care seems to be the educator's focus.

Mia's actions can be interpreted as a sign that she needs the educator's care in terms of comfort and closeness. The educator comments briefly on Paul's stroking of Mia's back by saying that Mia is sad, but Paul's action is not directly acknowledged as caring for Mia. The educator does not respond to Paul's pointing to Mia's back. According to my interpretation, the educator does, to some degree, support Paul's caring for Mia by making available the space and possibility for him to act. However, she does not further encourage Paul or any of the other children to join in in comforting Mia. If educators have a strong sense of their role as caregivers for children, there may be a risk that children's potential as caregivers for each other will be reduced. If educators always comfort, help and support independently, children may not assume high levels of responsibility or caring for one another or for others.

The educator has children on her lap and holds her arms around them, gently rocking them, and she strokes the back of the children who are crying. She seems to give the children what she thinks they need to feel well and supports them in seeking the challenges they wish to seek. The children are playing in different ways, and not all of them would have managed their play without the support of the educator. Balancing and jumping are quite risky for some of the children. The educator seems to be sensitive to all the children. She responds promptly to their needs and seems willing to change the situation to appease them. She appears to be aware of and responsive towards each child's communicative expressions, and her communication indicates that she is there for the children, comforting them and helping them feel good. The educator seems to recognise and understand the children's communicative expressions. She also puts into words what is happening and uses the children's names when she talks to and about them. She seems to understand the children's need to experience a sense of belonging to a community and be met with acceptance, respect and recognition; however, this is done mainly within a dyadic relation with her and, to a lesser extent, with the other children (see, e.g. Johansson et al., 2014, 2015; Zachrisen, 2016). However, the situation is quite complex and demanding, and the educator must constantly prioritise what she should do and emphasise.

Caring can also be communicated through play by making the communication of caring playful. This finding is in line with Emilson (2008).

Suddenly, the cylinder falls to the floor. The educator quickly crawls forward and picks it up. She says, 'Toot-toot' (like a horn), and repeats, 'Toot-toot' (with laughter in her voice), so that John (2.5 years), who is sitting where the cylinder needs to be, can move away. She repeats the sound, smiling. John looks at her, whistles and throws himself smilingly on his stomach, headfirst down the slide, away from the cylinder. The other children in the room are watching closely as the educator laughs and gently 'beats' the cylinder, which she is still holding, against John's behind. John smiles and laughs. [...]

The care for John is communicated through playfulness, smiling, laughing and being physically close, but educators can be physically close to children without communicating caring, as their gaze can show emotional presence or distance, thereby communicating different values. If, through their gaze, educators show emotional closeness to children, it can provide favourable conditions for caring. To sum up, the educator in the observation 'A fine balance' communicates caring to the children by being present and close, sitting on the floor, making eye contact, talking to them, being playful, smiling and holding and stroking them.

11.5.2 Received Caring

This section focusses on the children's response to the caring communicated by the educators. What can we look for when we want to ascertain whether our effort and desire to provide caring is recognised and received as caring by children? All children are unique, and no two situations are identical. However, this study shows that children's responses to caring are mainly communicated via their body language, gaze and gestures.

The example below shows how the form of communication can affect the values being communicated. Spoken words can be interpreted as discipline, but the way they are spoken can be interpreted as caring:

Paul (2.2 years) has been standing by the stairs for quite some time with his fingers in his mouth. He is letting the other children pass him in the queue. He looks at the educator and moves a bit farther away from the stairs. After a while, Paul sits on the cylinder, looking at the educator. She asks him whether he wants to give it a try. Paul remains seated a bit longer, but eventually slides over the cylinder. The educator says: 'Awesome. Good job! Very good, Paul!' Once on the other side, Paul continues to sit for a long time and places a finger in his mouth. John (2.5 years), who is waiting behind him, stretches his hand toward Paul. The educator tells Paul (in a calm, gentle voice) to slide down, as John is waiting behind him. Paul looks at the educator. The educator says, with a bit of laughter in her voice, 'Come on'. Paul smiles. The educator laughs and repeats, 'Come on!'; Paul smiles again. 'You little monkey', the educator says, laughing as she gently touches Paul's behind and repeats twice (in a calm voice), 'Come on, slide down'. Paul smiles. John pushes Paul, and the educator tells John to wait without pushing. 'Are you ready?' she asks Paul. 'Come on!' Paul nods, looking at the educator. 'One, two, one, two and three', the educator counts in a clear voice, and Paul slides smilingly down with his hands stretched out in front of him. 'There you went Paul. Very good!', the educator says smilingly to Paul. Paul smiles at the educator and runs quickly toward the stairs up to the cylinder. [...]

The educator repeatedly tells Paul to 'come on' and 'slide down'. Both these expressions and the fact that they are repeated can be interpreted as a command to Paul to hurry up to avoid obstructing the play, as the other children have been waiting for a long time. The educator's voice is calm, and she communicates with laughter when she asks Paul to slide down. The communication between the educator and Paul is characterised by reciprocity and mutual understanding in encouraging Paul to slide down. Although the educator tells Paul to slide down, Paul is allowed the

time he needs. Paul seeks eye contact with the educator several times, which can be interpreted as a need for the educator's encouragement. For both the educator and Paul, Paul's desire to be able to slide down seems to be more important than avoiding a line of impatient children waiting to do the same.

How does Paul receive the caring being communicated? At first, he does not want to balance on the cylinder, not even while seated. He seems to need the educator's support in terms of looking at him, noticing him and cheering him on. Løgstrup (1997) highlights trust as essential in interactions; Paul's seeking eye contact with the educator can be interpreted as a need for the educator's trust in his ability to slide over the cylinder and down to the floor. Paul seems to trust the educator being there for him in this challenging situation. He seems to receive the educator's communication of caring *as* caring, as he turns his face towards her, looks at her, smiles at her and stretches out his arms in front of him when he slides down. Arm stretching in this way can be interpreted as a sign of feeling happy, safe and well looked after.

11.5.3 'Watch Me!'

Children do not always receive educators' communication of caring as caring. Another observation takes place in a large room with many large gym blocks lying on the floor. There are four girls aged 2–3 and one educator. Some blocks are hollow, and there are round blocks that fit perfectly into the holes. The children are playing with the blocks by sitting in the hole or putting the round blocks half way into the hole and then sitting or jumping on them. A funny sound can be heard as the blocks slide down the hole. The educator comments on the children's play. She shows the children how far down the round block must be to get the desired sound when they sit on it. When two children disagree about who should play this game, the educator mediates by saying that it is best if they take turns. Tina (2.10 years) begins to cry when the educator says that she cannot be the first to play. The educator comforts Tina by pulling her down onto her lap, talking quietly to her about the disagreement and how it can be solved. The educator calmly tells Tina that she is good at making the sound and lifts her down from her lap.

Tina takes another hollow block, sits in the hole with her face away from the camera and asks the educator to look at her. The educator, sitting next to her, looks very briefly at Tina a couple of times, without saying anything or making any gestures, before she looks at two of the other children and comments on their play. Tina asks the educator to watch her by saying: 'Look I' and 'see'. Tina's voice eventually becomes a bit more powerful, then tearful, until it becomes very low the last couple of times she asks the educator to watch her. She then raises her arms up in the air. Tina asks the educator to watch her 21 times in just under a minute, before she leaves the hole, turns toward the camera and remarks to the person filming that she was sitting in the hole by saying: 'I am not jumping, but doing this'; she then shows how she sits in the hollow block. Tina then leaves her block and tries to take the round block that two of the other children are playing with. One of the children protests, almost crying, and the educator pulls Tina away from the blocks, saying calmly, 'No, don't do that. No, no, no'. The educator places Tina on her lap and holds her arms around her. She

tells Tina that the other children probably feel there would be too many people playing with the block if Tina joins in as well. Tina remains seated on the educator's lap, looking at the other children, and the educator asks whether she is warm. Tina nods; they take off her jacket and talk about her outfit. [...].

The educator seems aware of Tina's desire to be seen, as she briefly looks at Tina a couple of times. However, the educator's refusal to respond to Tina when she repeatedly says, 'watch me', may indicate that she wants Tina to learn to interact with the other children. Still, this may not be likely since, just after Tina has asked her to watch, the educator explains that the other children might think that there would be too many children if Tina is joining in. The educator may not be responding to Tina because of a desire to maintain the other children's play and avoid further disagreement. The educator interacts with Tina both before and after she is asked to watch Tina sitting in the hollow block. When, at the end of the observation, Tina is close to tears, the educator again takes her onto her lap, holds her, removes her jacket and talks to her. The educator may have intended to provide caring throughout the whole situation, but according to my interpretation, Tina does not receive the communication as caring. The educator does not watch Tina, and Tina does not receive acknowledgement from the educator, whether through eye contact, gestures or words, despite repeated requests.

Perhaps children's perspectives can broaden our understanding of caring. Løvlie (1990) encourages us to look at what caring may be in a specific context. He thinks that caring is context sensitive and, therefore, should be defined relatively widely. Johansson and Pramling Samuelsson (2001) support the idea of caring in ECEC as an ethical dimension beyond nutrition, safety, comfort and rest. They think that caring has to do with dedication. Thus, caring may also have an ethical component, and it is not confined to specific situations. This could imply that caring can be related to how educators in ECEC perform their work and how they encounter children. The observation below is an example of a child perhaps receiving the educator's communication as caring when the educator could have other intentions.

11.5.4 'Not Without My Buddy'

Tim (1.7 years) is running from the front door through the cloakroom and into the classroom. An educator sits by the wall in the cloakroom. Tim runs back and forth, and every time he passes the educator, he looks at her, lies down on the floor or sits down and claps his hands on his thighs. The educator is mimicking Tim, and they are both laughing. She looks at Tim and holds her hand up, counting on her fingers, 'one, two, three', every time Tim starts to run.

After a while, another boy, David (1.5 years), joins Tim. David gives Tim a hug. Tim smiles, and the educator says that they are good to each other. Tim looks at David and allows him to run first. They both run past the educator for a while before David goes to another room, leaving Tim alone in the cloakroom. The educator looks at Tim, counts again using her

fingers, but Tim, now standing in front of the door alone, does not run. The educator counts twice this time, but Tim remains still. Suddenly, David returns, and Tim smiles broadly, stretching his hands out in front of him. David places himself beside Tim. The educator again counts using her fingers. Tim turns his face toward David's and runs forward when he sees David running. Tim stops beside the educator, playing a mimicry game with her. Both children then run back to the front door, and Tim squeals. The educator counts again; Tim turns toward David to check whether David is running, and they both run past the educator. They run several times before David leaves. Tim then plays a mimicry game with the educator before he starts playing with some toys. [...]

This episode can be about toddler play being monitored by an educator; it can also be understood as an instance of caring. The educator facilitates the play, joins in and keeps it playful. Tim is having a good time and probably feels that the educator is caring for him by playing the mimicry game with him, being responsive to him waiting for his friend and responding to his communication both verbally and non-verbally. The educator is taking care of Tim's well-being, communication and development, which is in line with Jacobi's (1991) definition of caring. The educator's communication can be understood as caring, contributing to a wide understanding of caring in which children's perspectives are included.

Johansson (2003) notes the difficulty involved in educators' attempts to take children's perspectives. This study shows that different situations in ECEC provide various opportunities to come close to such a perspective. Noddings (2003) emphasises the importance of the educator's focus on the care receivers – the children. It can be difficult to determine the extent to which children regard communication as caring, but knowledge of children in general, and especially knowledge of the children they are working with, can be helpful to educators (Backe-Hansen, 2009).

11.6 Concluding Remarks

In this study, caring was explored from the perspectives of both educators and children. The study focussed on how caring is communicated and received in educator–child interactions in ECEC settings. The main finding was that, to a large extent, educators do communicate caring in their interactions with children in ECEC settings. Caring is communicated via action, eye contact, physical closeness, body contact, smiling, laughing, words and tone of voice. It is also communicated through play and being playful. Another finding was that educators emphasise their role as caregivers and see themselves as 'key persons', with most of the communicated caring taking place through them. Importantly, however, educators' acknowledgement of children's communication of caring for each other is often wanting. The children's 'responses' to educators' communicated caring differed; however, the findings showed that caring is received as caring through body language, gaze and gestures. The findings also showed that educators overlook some children's need for care, and children do not always receive an educator's communication of caring as

caring. According to Noddings (2003) and Løgstrup (1997), caring is reciprocal, and adults and children are of equal worth; however, adults have a special responsibility for the caring being communicated in their interactions with children. In conducting value educational work, it is important to understand the balance between adults taking responsibility for the communication of caring and refraining from taking responsibility for caring away from children.

This study had some limitations. The issue of trust could have been examined in a more in-depth manner. According to Løgstrup (1997), trust is essential in interactions, as all humans are interdependent through trust. Furthermore, the research material in this study was based on a Norwegian context, comprising a small number of ECEC settings, which could have affected the findings. However, the findings can contribute to values education in ECEC by providing empirical research material on the caring communicated in educator–child interactions. Moreover, the children’s perspective has broadened the concept of caring.

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Chapter 12

Educare: Practitioners' Views on Care, Upbringing and Teaching



Anders Skriver Jensen

12.1 Introduction

This study investigates how professionals in the Danish preschool field view care, upbringing and teaching. The objective is to contribute to an empirical base for the further development of the educare concept. As noted by Bennett (2008), traditional divisions between “care” and “education” services have not always been in children’s best interests; Bennett suggests that combining education and care into “educare” might signal a shift towards integrated services. Sommer (2015) likewise points to the importance of an integrated whole-child approach, where learning does not come at the expense of attention to the importance of play and the child’s comprehensive, personal development.

Different views on the purpose of preschool are visible in present-day discourse. Political and economic problems drive a political agenda of efficiency, school readiness and measurable quality: an agenda that might compromise fundamental values linked to play, creativity and aesthetics (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; OMEP, 2010). In this context, values are principles that guide human action and judgements of whether actions are good or bad (Halstead & Taylor, 1996).

In the chapter, I report an empirical study of preschool practitioners’ views on educare, beginning with the theoretical and methodological frameworks. Next, I present the results of the analysis, structured around the concepts of care, upbringing and teaching. I conclude with a discussion of the results as seen from a values-oriented perspective and comment on possible changes in the Danish preschool field’s perception of the learning concept. As pointed out in several chapters in this book (e.g. Chaps. 3, 7 and 12), research shows how values related to care,

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discipline, democracy and competence development are intertwined in everyday preschool practice. As such, it seems relevant to pursue the *educare* concept, which holds similar holistic potential, to guide practical pedagogical work with values education. This paper is an empirical contribution to bringing the *educare* concept closer to values education, demonstrated here by exploring how Danish preschool practitioners relate to the *educare* sub-concepts of care, upbringing and teaching.

12.2 Theoretical Approach

This study applies Stig Broström's (2006a) ideas about the possibility that care, upbringing and teaching can work as a unified process in preschool practice. He bases his ideas on the bridges between postmodern and critical (Continental) pedagogical thinking, in which both the subject's liberation through comprehensive, personal development and the socially constructed self are fundamental pillars of pedagogical reflections (Broström, 2006b, 2011). The child's education is both an active and a subjective process, where individual mental and bodily development results from interactions with subjects and objects in a real world. Drawing on the Continental philosophical tradition, the individual can acquire knowledge, skills and values in order to participate in an ongoing, international project of democracy, equality and enlightenment: the ultimate, overarching objective of all education, starting in preschool. According to Klafki (1996, 2005), this objective is expressed in the ideal of *Bildung* (a concept that roughly translates into comprehensive personal development or liberal education). Teaching for *Bildung* means striving towards the student's development of competences and values related to self-determination, co-determination and solidarity. Drawing on the postmodern tradition, pedagogical thinking must continually contest and discuss these core ideas of democracy and individuality, in order for practice to remain free of dogma and open to development. Compared to the Continental tradition, postmodern educational perspectives are more likely to view self-determination, co-determination and solidarity as contextual and emerging values, rather than individual competences and universal values to be developed (Jensen, 2013, 2015). The fundamental idea, according to Broström, is that the preschool can integrate dimensions of care, upbringing and teaching in order to create joyful and educational learning environments that are both meaningful on a situation-to-situation basis and to the overarching agenda about education for democracy. Preschool teachers should embrace teaching and learning, but they should do so without sacrificing the strong tradition of caring. Broström (2006a) conceptualises these processes as the unity of care, upbringing and teaching, and he argues for the integration of education and care into an *educare* concept, by which preschool teachers reflect on both the form and content of pedagogical practice.

To interpret and understand views of *educare* as expressed in the data, I use Broström's argument that *educare* is composed of care, upbringing and teaching. Care is the preschool teacher's attempt to take the child's perspective, to meet the

child as a person and to strive to fulfil his or her needs. Broström draws on the work of Noddings (1984, 1992), among others, to emphasise how the preschool teacher as a caregiver must establish an emotional relation to the child that is the recipient of care: “When I care, I can really hear, see or feel what the other is trying to convey” (Noddings, 1992, p. 16). Upbringing is about the preschool teacher’s reflections on what is desirable and what is not, including the practical implementations of these reflections. Broström explicitly links the question of values to the concept of upbringing, even though care and teaching are also imbued with values in practice. The difference is that when the preschool teacher engages in upbringing, values are often explicitly in focus and may be part of the educational objectives. In care and teaching, values are more likely to be implicit. Teaching covers the preschool teacher’s attempts to orchestrate learning experiences through reflections on educational objectives and content that facilitate the child’s acquisition of new knowledge and skills. According to Broström, content can be specific themes, subjects and problems described in the curriculum or otherwise planned for, or it could be questions, interactions and activities which arise spontaneously. Thus, I try to identify views on care, upbringing and teaching in order to find out how participants from the Danish preschool field understand educare in relation to practice and thus shed light on how the processes of care, upbringing and teaching intertwine, at least from the perspectives of the participating preschool teachers.

12.3 Method

The study draws on data collected from nine interviews, conducted in different municipalities, with participants in the Danish early childhood field. Some interviews have a single informant, while others were group interviews with up to five informants participating. In sum, 14 preschool teachers, 2 leaders, 2 day-care consultants¹ and 1 pedagogical consultant² participated. All participants worked with children from 0 to 2 years, which is termed “preschool” in Denmark. In Denmark, children can attend full-day preschool services, typically from the age of 9 months to 5 years. The year a child turns 6 years old, he or she makes the transition to school.

The duration of each interview was 60–90 min. Because my purpose here is not to compare or contrast the different professions and roles but to explore perspectives on educare in the early childhood field, I consider the data as a whole. Ethical considerations included written informed consent for the informants’ participation and guaranteed anonymity (State Council on Societal Research, 2002).

¹A day-care consultant is employed by the municipality and oversees the private daycarers. In Denmark, children between 0 and 2 can be enrolled in a preschool or attend a private daycare.

²A pedagogical consultant is employed by the municipality and oversees the educational institutions, working with quality assurance, etc.

Together with a research assistant, I conducted the interviews as part of a larger project about examining and developing practices, perspectives and values in the first years of preschool (Broström, Hansen, Jensen, & Svinth, 2015). The interviews were semi-structured (Kvale, 1997). One theme in the interview guide addressed views on different aspects of practice, including the concepts of care, upbringing and teaching. For example, one question was “How is care expressed in your practice?” The interviews were transcribed, archived and eventually included as supplementary data in the Nordic ValuEd project.³

To find the parts concerning educare, I searched for the words care, upbringing and teaching in the transcriptions. I marked the passages containing educare talk, which turned out to be not only related to the specific questions but also to reflections on planning, among others. The passages worked as analysis units in a qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) that I carried out in two phases. The first phase was an inductive approach, where units were compared to units in order to identify emerging themes. The second phase was a more deductive approach, where the revealed themes were interpreted in relation to Broström’s theory. The following section discusses the results of this analytical work, together with examples of how passages of educare talk were interpreted in relation to the theoretical concepts.

12.4 Findings

In this section, I present the perspectives on care, upbringing and teaching that were found in the research material. I deal with each concept in turn and present units that consist of selected excerpts of the participants’ utterances together with interpretations. I chose this way of structuring the analysis and presenting the results because my intention for this study is to contribute empirical perspectives on each of the educare sub-concepts in turn.

12.4.1 Care

The care concept, which regards striving for the child’s perspective and responding to children’s needs, was found to involve pedagogical reflections about teaching children to care for each other. In addition, this concept addresses care as having both a physical and a verbal dimension. I will explore and deepen these findings below.

³NordForsk project number 53581

12.4.1.1 Children Should Care for Each Other

Some participants seem to believe that a central tenet of care in practice is to encourage children to care for each other:

- P1 Every single day, when a child makes another child sad, we care for both of the children. We help one child to comfort the other child. And we finish by asking: "Are you okay?"
- P2 Yes, and we put some words on what has happened, like why the child chose to pick up the spoon and hit the other child in the head, or whatever it is. If we can – since it is not always possible to know the intentions behind the actions.

As seen in the excerpt, the participants emphasise how they play a key role in facilitating the children's emerging caring attentiveness to each other. Not only adults are caregivers; the preschool teachers use situations in everyday life to teach the children how to care for each other.

Everyday life in preschool contains much raw material for this aspect of educare. Sometimes the preschool teachers respond to situations emerging from children's play and everyday routines, while at other times, they arrange planned activities in smaller groups where the teacher can pay attention to each child:

- P I will say that those days where we divide them [the children] into groups and reflect on what we should do together, are days where there is room for closeness, and it is possible to see their needs... This way I think you come closer to them, and get better at caring for them. They are also more attentive to each other when we are together like this.

In the data, perspectives on care are often linked to the morning session of welcome/goodbye to the parents, to the organised activities, and to the situations that arise during the day. The teachers seem to express an awareness of the importance of organising for closeness in relation to care. I explore this emphasis on closeness as a physical quality of care below.

12.4.1.2 Care Has a Physical Dimension

One belief, expressed in the research material, is that care has a physical dimension, involving hugs and other forms of close, bodily contact. Care is not defined solely by this physical dimension, but the research material indicates that it plays an important role for the participants. This is exemplified when talking about vulnerable children:

- P1 It is about comforting. Some children need to be up [in the teacher's arms] a lot, and then we are providing care... we have had some children, who had a difficult start in life, right?, and we have... it has been 'up-children'; we simply had to ... [carry them around], even though it is not good for your back.
- P2 You get long arms from it.
- P1 Yes, you do, but you can also feel that they feel safer from it – you can feel that it helps.
- P2 And later it pays off.

Above, we see an emphasis on bodily contact. Some children need to be in the teacher's arms to feel safe. The teachers carry them around, even though this might have some consequences for their own health in the end. The theme of self-sacrifice or, more broadly, personal investment in the children connects with bodily contact and empathy in the following excerpt from two other preschool teachers:

- P If we are talking pure care – it is of course to change their diapers, wipe their mouth, but it is also about hugging. It is about empathy in a sense that we care so much for these children that, if they for some reason did not get picked up by their parents in the afternoon, it would not matter because then we would just take them home with us. In this way, care is also about giving something of yourself.

In the above, we see care as a practical, physical approach and an attitude. Likewise, a preschool leader put emphasis on physical closeness, as we see below:

- P In the first years of preschool we have the close, intimate care. It is about picking up the children, touching them, hugging them and having bodily contact.

Some participants explicitly state that, even though care has this physical dimension, they work deliberately on expanding their own understanding of the concept to include more than just hugs and nose/mouth wiping. On a more general level, the participants link care to responding to children's needs, and sometimes (as in the example with the "up-children" above), close bodily contact—like a hug—is the way to respond. At other times, care is expressed through attentive listening and/or verbal expressions of recognition, which is explored below.

12.4.1.3 Care Has a Verbal Dimension

Here, the term "verbal dimension" conveys how care extends beyond the physical dimension into the realm of words and utterances. The physical and verbal dimensions of care overlap, which is visible in the examples below. The participants express how care relates to the concept of recognition, which seems to be about verbally praising and supporting others. The way in which recognition is expressed varies across the settings represented in the data. A pedagogical consultant, who oversees and inspects the preschools, frames it like this:

- P Care is about handling the inspection along the lines of recognition. The inspection is one of those tasks that you, as a consultant, can handle very strictly, and come out to the preschools and harshly criticise everything, then walk away, and leave a mess behind. Instead, I think that the inspection should be a space for development, not a space for termination.

It is part of the consultant's job to perform inspections of the municipality's preschools several times a year. She emphasises how this quality assurance practice can be carried out in a more caring and empathetic way, by engaging in dialogue and striving to understand what is working in a given preschool, and use this as a basis for further development.

Two preschool teachers express it in this way:

- P1 Empathy means a great deal. It is expressed through the closeness.
- P2 An attentive adult that listens, right?
- P1 Yes, it is about being seen and heard.

Here, the (bodily) closeness is combined with the teacher's will to see the child and listen to his or her utterances in order to respond to the child's needs. Recognition and paying attention reaches beyond the verbal dimension but, in the data, this dimension is strong. This is visible in the following excerpt that shows how teachers emphasise how they work with the children to make this verbal expression of empathy a habit in everyday life:

- P One of our children, 2½ years old, was out walking when he accidentally stepped on a snail. Then he bowed down towards the snail and asked: "Are you okay?"

12.4.2 Upbringing

Upbringing was found to concern the child's acquisition of the norms and values of the community. Where the care concept was mostly linked to subject-subject relations (teacher-to-child or child-to-child), upbringing was clearly concerned with norms regulating the subject-in-group. As we see in the examples, the concepts of upbringing and teaching are related; the research material shows how preschool teachers sometimes use the word "teach" to express how they strive to facilitate the child's acquisition (learning) of the norms and values.

12.4.2.1 Upbringing Is About Acquiring the Norms and Values of the Community

The teachers point to the formation of everyday habits and behaviours as the primary object of upbringing. Across the data, the mealtime comes up as a central place for upbringing in practice:

- P We work [with upbringing] during the mealtime. We strive towards making the children self-supported, and they learn how to make the table, clean the table, etc. And then there is also everything related to how to relate to others. You should treat each other in a good way, also the adults. We speak respectfully with each other, and with the children, and expect them to behave like that.

The theme of working to facilitate children's abilities to be self-supported is expressed more than once in the data. Two child-care pedagogues (functioning as consultants for the home daycarers in their area) explain how the home daycarers take special pride in providing the preschools with self-supporting children. Self-supported can mean different things, but it seems to be related to skills like pouring your own milk and zipping your own jacket, which again is linked to the individual child's performance as part of the group. In this regard, the concept of upbringing,

as found in the research material, is similar to the discussion of competence values mentioned by Johansson in Chap. 3 of this book.

A teacher from another preschool likewise illuminates the connection between collective everyday routines and a set of underlying behavioural norms and values to be acquired as part of the individual child's participation:

- P For me, it is about teaching the children how to behave as part of a group. Help them 'find out how we do it in here'. When we are sitting and eating, and doing all the other things we do together during the day. It is stuff like that you just learn. And that can easily be called upbringing.

Upbringing thus seems to be connected to the preschool teachers' attempts to teach children how to be part of a group. In this way, it might be viewed as a different kind of upbringing than the parents provide. The participants mention the different tasks and roles of preschool teachers and parents. Sharing a collective space (and the available resources, such as toys) means that the children must develop a sense of what behaviour is desirable in different collective situations. Two teachers address this issue:

- P1 Upbringing is, for example, when we take the group for a bus ride. The oldest children [around 2 years old] will know that now we are entering a bus with other people, and then we are using the 'small voices'. That is upbringing...
- P2 Yes, and when we eat, we also use the small voices, because no one can stand being here, if everyone yells.

Upbringing reaches beyond mealtime and other everyday routines of the preschool group, as I discuss below.

12.4.2.2 Upbringing Has a Critical Societal Core

There is a critical and societal dimension to upbringing, as expressed by the participants. Below is an excerpt in which a preschool leader reflects on an episode with a teacher who was undertaking a trash/recycling project with the children:

- P [The teacher] was getting tired of watching all the children bringing tinfoil wrapped sandwiches. She said: That simply cannot happen! It pollutes the environment, and we are having a project on trash! So, they [the teacher and children] collected tinfoil and other trash from the area, took it to the municipal recycling station, and learned what actually happens with the stuff we throw out; it turns out that tinfoil needs a special combustion process if it is to be re-included in the environmental cycle.

As the leader highlights this episode as an example of upbringing in practice, she points to upbringing's critical, societal core. Viewed as a whole, the participants in the study seem to understand and practise upbringing on a full scale from small communities in the preschool (groups of children and adults) to the larger societal communities outside the gates of the preschool, where a diversity of cultures and values both coexist and collide:

- P1 I think that it [upbringing] lies within the culture. Why are we having circle-time? We do it because, in this country, we want democracy, so we, as humans, must develop the ability to listen to each other. That starts in the first years of preschool with the circle-time sessions
- P2 The unwritten rules. And we help the children by asking them: "Will you be so kind as to help Sofie get up?"
- P3 The solidarity.
- P1 What kind of society do we really want?

As the three teachers in the excerpt above point out, they believe there is a link between the values and habits developed in preschool and the requirements for active citizenship in a democratic society. Right and wrong are complex questions in the society outside preschool, and this awareness of values being embedded in different perspectives is also visible in the data:

- P If we can avoid it, we do not scold the children. Surely not in the first years of preschool, anyway! We tell them what we think are right and wrong. Because someone else may have other ideas, right?

Even though upbringing, as shown in the data, is primarily about facilitating children's acquisition of norms that regulate the community, these societal perspectives on upbringing also hint at it being a complex, value-laden process that reaches beyond merely a one-way transfer of values from adult to child. To be clear, the critical dimension is hinted at when teachers practice upbringing while keeping notions of solidarity, listening and openness to different ideas intact.

12.4.3 Teaching

Teaching, which regards the preschool teachers' attempts to facilitate the child's appropriation of new knowledge and skills, was found to involve organisation of the children's learning, with content reflections that take the children's needs and interests into account.

12.4.3.1 Preschool Teachers Do Not Teach: They Organise for Children's Learning

Even though some of the participants embrace the concept of teaching, most are hesitant to use it to describe what they do, when they work objective-oriented with one or more children's learning. Analysis of the research material revealed a general belief that learning is going on all the time and that the preschool teacher from time to time can organise learning spaces and/or opportunities to enhance this learning. Upbringing seems to target the children's acquisition of norms and values, while teaching seems to target the children's acquisition of cognitive and motor skills, consistent with Broström's (2006a, 2006b) concepts used for interpretation:

- P We are more concerned with creating some learning spaces, where these children have the opportunity to learn something. We are not thinking along the lines of lifting off the lid and pouring knowledge into the child.

The participants describe physical rooms and niches in the preschool building where toys and tools are organised in advance, in order to support different learning opportunities:

- P And then it is about creating some environments for them [the children], where you can really cater to their developmental needs. For example, the four rooms at our department, they should hopefully cater to different age groups. As an adult, you are present and sit down in this room; you are physically present in the room of learning. And then it is about setting up an agenda regarding what we want these children to experience, so opportunities for learning will be created.

This emphasis on the teacher playing an indirect role as an organiser might be linked to the idea that the child is competent and active, and should be allowed to explore the learning opportunities at his or her own pace. One participating preschool teacher does not think of herself as a teacher but as more of a trainer, because she believes it connotes a more active child:

- P I like the concept of training a lot. I do not view it like school teaching or something like that, because you can see, when children are learning something, then they train... When you help the child to train motor skills or language skills, then it becomes a kind of teaching. But the concept of teaching – well, I think “put your behind to the bench”, and that is of course not how we practice.

The participants seem to share a belief that preschool children should be active and exploring as a main part of their learning; they should not passively sit and listen to the teacher explain and/or show something. Because the concept of teaching often connotes an active and exploring child, some teachers are willing to use it to describe their practice related to children’s learning. Most teachers are hesitant to use it, though, and tend to emphasise their (indirect) role as organisers:

- P No, we do not teach. We introduce, support, offer, and set up activities in order to support [the child]. We do not have one word for it. We are not schoolteachers.

Another preschool teacher:

- P I think it is very important to avoid teaching, especially with the youngest children. It [the learning] should be played into the child... I think it is very important that we play with the children instead of teaching them.

We see that, for these preschool teachers, teaching as a concept is connected to an old-fashioned learning-as-transmission theory of teaching. This theory is criticised by Freire (2000) as the “banking model” of teaching, where the teacher “deposits” knowledge into the children, who are empty vessels waiting to be filled by the teaching process.

12.4.3.2 Teachers Create Pedagogical Content Based on the Child's Needs and Perspectives

As described earlier, the preschool teachers engage in thematic work and projects with the children (i.e. the tinfoil project). This project work is to some degree influenced by the season and its traditions, but the data suggests that the participants rely heavily on informal assessments of individual children's needs when reflecting on pedagogical (teaching) content:

- P I think that what we do is look at the child and ask, "What is this child interested in?" And then we try to follow up on this interest.

Below is an excerpt from two other teachers, which similarly positions the child as the point of departure regarding pedagogical content:

- P I think, something about looking at where precisely is this child in his/her development, what kind of resources and challenges are present... This is what we are looking for during the day, when we look over our flock of children, and it is also something we have in focus on group meetings and all staff meetings. Then we look at if some children are in need of something extra.

The whole group of children seems to be a reference point for the teachers' situational analyses and reflections on content and activities. The teachers assess individual needs with the whole group as a backdrop and strive to devise reasonable and desirable objectives from these reflections. They then create or organise pedagogical content in order to reach these objectives. This pedagogical content can take the form of planned activities intended to benefit the children in question; it does not have to include the whole group of children.

This child-centred approach does not seem to lead to a fragmented situation-by-situation teaching practice. Sometimes the teachers will take up the children's interests and make a project out of it. The data contains an example with a group of children going through their "water phase", as the teacher calls it. Together, children and adults experiment with water for several days and even submerge various items in water and put them outside in the freezing cold. The children then explore how water turns into ice, and a science theme emerges from the children's everyday interests:

- P Then again, it is something about you "going in" and looking at where the individual child is right now. Some might call it the zone of proximal development. Then we depart from this [zone]. And then it gets objective-oriented practice.

Even though the child's interests and needs seem to be a firm point of departure, one participant notes that the activity gets better when the adult is also interested in the educational content.

12.5 Concluding Discussion

I will conclude by discussing two themes of particular importance to the analyses: (1) how the values of care, democracy and discipline are related to the perspectives on care, upbringing and teaching and (2) how the data reveals a change in practitioners' views on learning when compared to the environment in which Broström created the theoretical educare framework in 2006.

12.5.1 *The Values Expressed in Care, Upbringing and Teaching*

The results of this study resonate well with previous research on values communicated in preschool practice. A study by Emilson and Johansson (2009) found three general value fields: caring, democratic values, and disciplinary values. The dimension of caring values includes obligations for the child to not hurt others, understand and help each other and show compassion towards others. As I have discussed above, a similar emphasis on the children being able and willing to care for each other is apparent in the analysis of the perspectives regarding care.

Democratic values are about the child's participation in the activities, play, and routines of the day. To some extent, there is a link between the collectively oriented democratic value of participation and the perspectives on upbringing in the present study, where the emphasis is on the child learning to be a part of the group. The critical, societal core of the upbringing concept, established from the data, also connects with Klafki's (1996, 2005) normative educational approach, where education to democracy requires real-world problems and dilemmas to inspire and challenge the teachers' curriculum reflections and ultimately the children's learning. However, some of this study's participants' views on upbringing also touch the dimension of disciplinary values; even though there is no direct talk about showing obedience, there is a clear focus on the individual child acquiring the established social norms. We can also see the disciplinary value that children should be independent in the discussion of upbringing about teachers working to make the children self-supported.

The perspectives on teaching which emerge from the data seem to be linked to the disciplinary value that children should perform according to present norms. When this value is communicated, it is based on the interests of the adult (Emilson & Johansson, 2009). The present study underscores how teachers strive to take the children's perspectives into account in content reflections and how teachers embrace a more indirect role as organisers when it comes to facilitating the children's learning. The teachers clearly distance themselves from the strategic and objectifying communication inherent in this dimension of values, which can also explain why they distance themselves from the teaching concept. As shown, the participants

connect care to organising children into groups and running planned activities, in which they are able to see and respond to the needs of each child.

As I discuss below, the learning concept is not seen as equally problematic, which hints at the participants' orientation towards the values of competencies. These values regard what and how a child should learn (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilsson, 2015).

12.5.2 Practitioners Embrace Children's Learning—but Refrain from Using the Teaching Concept

Research indicates that Danish preschool practice has made progress towards realizing a dual care and education practice. When Broström (2006a) conceived the educare concept of care, upbringing, and teaching, he targeted the emerging discourses of curricula and learning in Nordic preschools (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006), especially within the Danish context. In August 2004, the Act on Educational Curricula was passed, which obligated Danish preschools to plan and practise in accordance with six broadly defined themes: personal competences, social competences, language, body and movement, nature and natural phenomena, and cultural values and ways of expression. The preschool teachers were (and still are) to document how they work with the six themes in order to facilitate children's learning. This educational paradigm, with its focus on concepts such as learning, planning, and content, was a major challenge to the existing, dominant emphasis on a more psychological approach with an underlying belief that the child's development will come more or less naturally from a child-centred practice.

As Broström (2006a) notes, it was common for preschool teachers to link the concept of learning to a somewhat authoritarian approach to teaching, or formal schooling. Thus, the Danish preschool field had some reservations about learning as a concept. More than ten years after Broström developed the educare model, this study reveals that participants from the preschool field have no particular reservations regarding learning. They organise learning spaces and reflect on children's learning, and they plan and document as an integral part of practice. However, they still have reservations; as shown in the analysis, these reservations concern teaching — not learning. Broström (2006a, p. 406) points out:

The theoretical construction of the unity of care, upbringing, and teaching is a tool that, hopefully, can be used to release early childhood education in Denmark from being bound to only developmental psychology and the child's unbalanced self-governing activity. This should be the first step towards a new paradigm in which both the children and the child-care worker have an active role to play.

The findings from the present study indicate that the link between learning and formal (authoritarian) schooling has been broken over the years; still, practitioners hesitate to highlight and label their own direct goal-oriented, planned involvement with the children's learning processes. A Danish/Swedish survey-based study

reached a similar conclusion (Broström, Johansson, Sandberg, & Frøkjær, 2012). A recent Danish survey of preschool teachers' view on curricula found that even though most preschool teachers believe the curriculum plays an important role in everyday practice, more research is needed in order to uncover just how this practice of teaching comes about (Belling, Kirkegaard, Broström, Jensen, & Rasmussen, 2016).

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Chapter 13

Democracy and Care: Values Education in Nordic Preschools



Ole Henrik Hansen, Anders Skriver Jensen, and Stig Broström

13.1 Introduction

Gannerud and Rönnerman, (2006) argues that the prevalence of values is self-evident and is simply regarded as “normal.” As such, values are not often subject to reflection and are communicated almost unknowingly. This presents a problematic paradox given that, in preschool, values are constantly communicated in the interactions between practitioners and children.

We define *values* as principles that guide human action and judgements of whether actions are desirable or not (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). The communicated values are multifarious. While preschool education (particularly in the Nordic countries) is based on an ideal of a caring and democratic attitude, one can argue that trust is one of the most fundamental values. Trust is prioritized in the new Danish preschool curriculum (Ministry of Children, Education and Equality, 2016), as well as in the *Danmarkskanon* [Denmark Canon], which is a list of ten recommended values for the future, published by the Danish government (Ministry of Culture, 2017). Everyday life in preschool, and human life in general, cannot be lived without showing and demanding trust from one another (Løgstrup, 1997). However, a whole range of values find expression during everyday life in preschool, including

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love, equality, freedom, justice, happiness, security, peace of mind, and truth (Halstead & Taylor, 2000).

Drawing on previous studies by Emilson and Johansson (2009), the Nordic study upon which this chapter is based investigates three categories of values: democratic, caring, and disciplinary. Although all three categories are fundamental in Nordic preschools, we have chosen to focus particularly on caring and democratic values in this chapter, not least due to the Nordic countries' position at the forefront of both care and democracy within the field of early childhood education and care (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015; Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006; OECD, 2001). Of course, all three values often present in a single situation; as such, we also present reflections on disciplinary values when relevant.

13.2 Method

According to a jointly agreed research methodology, research teams in each of the Nordic countries conducted an investigation of the communicated values in child-practitioner interactions, working in close collaboration with practitioners at a total of 25 preschools. During a 2-year period, the researchers videotaped lunchtime sessions, circle time sessions, and a number of both planned and free play activities. In addition, dialogues between practitioners in the workplace and in organized reflection seminars were recorded. Among the group of practitioners, the majority were qualified preschool teachers with a 3½-year bachelor's degree; some assistants who had no specific training were also included. During reflection seminars and meetings, the researchers and practitioners analyzed and interpreted selected video fragments, raised critical questions, and reflected on their practice during lengthy discussions. Such close-knit collaboration between practice and research has been described by Clark (1972) as a simultaneous change in the organization and study of the process. As such, our approach has much in common with action research as defined by Kurt Lewin (1997), as a democratic, bottom-up strategy for change that can furnish problems in democratic nations with democratic solutions. Through this close collaboration with researchers, the practitioners gained ownership of the research findings and were thus motivated to make educational changes.

13.3 Theoretical Approach to Democracy and Care

Democratic and caring values are not generally separate or isolated phenomena within the everyday life of preschools; on the contrary, they are tightly interwoven. However, for analytical purposes, we will first outline and discuss them separately before considering the combined role of democratic and caring values in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings in the final part of this chapter.

13.3.1 *Democracy As a Value Field in Preschool*

As mentioned above, the Nordic countries are considered to be at the forefront in regard to democracy in early childhood education and care (OECD, 2001). Children are viewed as competent, fully vested human beings (Broström, 2006a), and there is an emphasis on children's participation and their perspectives.

A number of Nordic researchers have shown how democracy is conditional upon the teacher's attitudes, rules, and power (e.g., Broström, 2006a; Eide, Os, & Pramling Samuelsson, 2012; Emilson, 2008; Puroila, Estola, & Syrjälä, 2012). However, it has also been observed how democratic values are given space when the teacher loosens control over the communicative processes (Emilson, 2007; Emilson & Folkesson, 2006). This means that democratic values cannot be communicated arbitrarily; specific qualities, such as proximity to children's perspectives, emotional presence, and playfulness, are necessary (Bae, 2009; Emilson, 2008).

Democracy in ECEC settings is usually associated with children's opportunities to participate in and influence their everyday lives in preschool. This, in turn, is often interpreted as children's opportunities to take the initiative and make their own choices, due to an underlying ideal regarding children's right to self-determination and individual freedom, rooted in an individually oriented concept of democracy (i.e., Bae, 2010; Kjörholt, 2005; Westlund, 2011). It has been shown that routines emphasizing individual choice may give children a false sense of what democratic processes in everyday life entail (Bae, 2009; Kjörholt, 2005). Puroila et al. (2012) revealed that children's opportunities for participation and influence are framed by tensions: the individual child versus the group of children, children's free choice versus institutional practices, children's autonomy versus adults' authority, children's learning versus adults' teaching, and being here and now versus becoming in the future.

In a recent study by Emilson and Johansson (2017), it is shown how the focus on democracy in Nordic ECEC research has changed over time. Early research seemed primarily concerned with notions of democracy, children's rights, and children's perspectives, often from an ideological and theoretical point of view. Later, there appeared to be a shift toward more empirically grounded research, focused on how to implement these democratic ideals in ECEC. Alongside these approaches, one also finds a more critical approach.

13.3.1.1 **The Concept of Democracy**

The term "democracy" originates from the fifth-century BCE Greek word *dēmokratía*, meaning "rule of the people" (*dēmos* (people) and *kratos* (power)), which referred to the political systems of the city-states of ancient Greece (Hardt & Negri, 2006). During the Enlightenment movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some important cultural developments linked democracy to liberalism. Locke argued, as a liberal thinker, that every man has a natural right to life,

liberty, and property (Locke, 1689). In this perspective, liberty and equality are seen as fundamental values of modern democracy.

With regard to *democratic values*, this study has applied Biesta's (2009) ideas concerning democracy, democratization, and inclusion. Referring to Rancière (1999), Biesta has voiced his skepticism toward what he calls "a colonial conception" of democratization, in which privileged subjects within a democratic sphere endeavor to include others in that sphere. Extending this line of thinking, the ultimate objective of democracy is the inclusion of everyone—the entire *dēmos*—into the ruling class (*kratein*) of society: a formation of democratic subjects that upholds a stable democratic norm.

To identify and interpret democratic values as expressed in the actions of children and practitioners, we have drawn upon Biesta's (2009) argument that democratization is portrayed as normal democracy in some situations and as sporadic democracy in others. In this understanding, *normal democracy* derives from the idea that a stable foundation of values, competencies, and skills is necessary for democratic action. Normal democracy describes democratization as a process in which people who possess these requirements—people who live by the democratic norm—strive to include other people who do not. By contrast, *sporadic democracy* refers to temporary emancipatory processes in which established norms are challenged and redefined by making new positions and identities available that collectively destabilize the norm.

To clarify, normal democracy is communicated through an emphasis on the children learning how to conduct themselves as democratic subjects through predefined skills and competences: e.g., to wait for their turn, to participate, and to speak up during circle time sessions. Sporadic democracy is communicated as potential to be fulfilled in situations where the children's participation challenges the established norms in ways that do not lead to correction and discipline, but to new possibilities and opportunities for the child and group. Thus, sporadic democracy is linked to resistance and contestation.

By extending this schema, we have sought to identify expressions of both normal and sporadic democracy in the present study, primarily to examine how democratic values are communicated in patterns of interaction found in everyday preschool practice. In the analysis presented later, we see how the potential for sporadic democracy sometimes emerges through resistance-related patterns of interaction, where children explicitly resist adults' expectations and/or agendas. We also see how children's participation in a circle time setting is regulated by the practitioner's perspective, even though it appears to be a democratic forum for sharing thoughts and experiences.

13.3.2 Care As a Value Field in Preschool

Early childhood education is characterized by a particular emotional and caring relationship between the educator and child, which, in theoretical terms, is reflected in the concept of care. Katz and Goffin (1990) and Diderichsen and Thyssen (2005) investigated life in preschool and described some typical characteristics for pedagogues in early childhood education, finding that care and responsibility for the child's needs and well-being, with special attention to areas of vulnerability, play an extensive part in the role of ECEC practitioners.

Care is seen as an emotional activity where the preschool teacher protects the child and meets the child's needs and demands for food, rest, and human interaction with close and secure attachment in order to contribute to children's well-being, learning, and development (Broström, 2006b).

Although care is commonly understood internationally as the most fundamental activity in early childhood education, there is a more significant and predominant focus on care in the Nordic countries. Nordic researchers have stated that pedagogues in early childhood education are predominantly women who implement a practice based on care (Broström & Hansen, 2010; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Thus, in general, practitioners create a caring, appreciative, and nurturing ethos (Gannerud & Rönnerman, 2006). In addition, research has shown that a general caring atmosphere also has an impact on children's forms of interaction. In such an environment, the children care for each other, show compassion to others, share their feelings, and comfort one another (Broström, 2006a; Emilson, 2008; Hansen, 2013; Johansson, 2007; Thornton & Goldstein, 2006).

Nevertheless, influenced by the Lisbon Strategy from 2000¹ and OECD's report *Starting Strong* (OECD, 2001), a more explicit learning dimension has entered the field of early childhood education in the Nordic countries, as the educational practice in Nordic preschools moves toward an approach that combines care, education, and the introduction of the concept of *educare* (Broström, 2006b; Caldwell, 1989; Johansson & Pramling Samuelsson, 2001).

13.3.2.1 The Concept of Care

Care is a type of existence where two (or more) persons relate to each other. Noddings (1992) emphasizes the caring relation, i.e., the relation between a caregiver and a recipient of care. In early childhood education, practitioners strive to relate to the child in a caring way. Their ambition is to express an empathic relation toward the child in order to achieve shared intentionality (Baron-Cohen, 2012).

Heidegger (1962) understood care as the very being of human life: an ultimate reality and final demand of life. The pedagogue expresses an existential striving to

¹<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201107/20110718ATT24270/20110718ATT24270EN.pdf>

ease the child's burden. According to Løgstrup (1997), the pedagogue meets a weaker, more dependent person who needs care from a person with more power. Since the relation is not equal, the practitioner must be aware of her power, and Løgstrup (1997) used the concept of an ethical demand to describe the unequal relation between humans; therefore, the practitioner must be aware of her power.

Noddings offers a similar definition, emphasizing the caring relation as an interaction where both parties contribute (Noddings, 1992). The pedagogue expresses a caring attitude, and the child on the receiving end accepts the care. In order to obtain a subject–subject relation, or an “I–You” relation (Buber, 1958), the pedagogue has to express a specific emotional attitude, which Noddings (1984) describes as sensitivity, openness, responsibility, susceptibility, and an empathic attitude.

Care and caring values are a central part of professional pedagogical work. For Noddings (1986), *caring* in educational environments implies a specific way of interacting with children: namely, being able to create zones of joint attention and thus make it possible to expand learning environments (Sheridan, Pramling Samuelsson, & Johansson, 2009). Thyssen (1995) and Diderichsen and Thyssen (2005) further specify that caring is characterized by actions aimed at children's existence, development, and well-being.

According to Hansen (2013), sharing intentionality requires an open-minded, attentive pedagogue who also reflects on what is happening in the relationship with the child. The pedagogue thereby learns new things about him or herself as well as about the children. In this way, caring relationships construct the child as well as the educator.

13.3.3 *Disciplinary Values*

While we want to highlight democratic and caring values in this chapter, our study shows that, for the most part, disciplinary values are also embedded in the communication between practitioners and children in order to maintain social order. Through daily socialization, children acquire cultural skills and behaviors and thus learn the ability to function adequately in society (Clausen, 1968). According to Thomas Hobbes (2010), this is in agreement with the principle that certain norms regulate a community governed by a social pact. Through disciplinary values, children develop shared norms, values, and codes of conduct which form a more or less common base of shared morality (Durkheim, 1973). This common morality is also communicated through education, defined as teaching, upbringing, and care, or what is called *educare* (Broström, 2006b).

Observations and analysis of research material from practice provided a rich basis for identifying disciplinary values communicated in preschools. In general, three disciplinary forms were identified. Sometimes practitioners communicated disciplinary norms and values in a gentle and indirect way, through interaction and negotiations with the children. This way of communicating values is consistent with Peters' (1965, 1966) concept of *initiation*, which seeks to strike a balance between

a conservative understanding of education as cultural transmission and more progressive understandings of education, where the child has influence and is seen as a co-constructor. At other times, disciplinary values were not negotiated with the children but were still communicated gently, without the children realizing the educator's intention as described by Ehn (1983), Henckel (1990), and Nordin-Hultman (2004). The third disciplinary approach used by practitioners in our study was usually reserved for situations where a child or group of children clearly transgressed recognized rules or boundaries. In such cases, the practitioners make use of an isolated, authoritarian, and direct discipline.

Below, we describe how democratic and caring values are communicated while also pointing out, where relevant, the simultaneous existence of disciplinary values.

13.3.4 How Are Democratic and Caring Values Communicated in Interactions Between Children and Practitioners?

In the section below, we present the results of the study regarding democratic and caring values in response to the research question: How are caring and democratic values communicated in interactions between children and practitioners?

13.3.4.1 Forms of Communicated Democratic Values

Democratic values are expressed both in the planning of collective activities and when individual children or groups of children are actively engaged in interactions. Based on the research material, we have identified variations in democratic interaction that demonstrate democracy-related patterns of interaction involving both resistance and mutuality. Specific ways of expressing these patterns are exemplified below in vignettes and interpretations.

13.3.4.2 Resistance-Related Interactions

Resistance-related patterns of interaction regarding children's explicit resistance to adults' expectations and/or agendas were found to be related to children's participation during circle time, as well as their ambitions in terms of influencing the common agenda.

Children in the preschools clearly resisted expectations of participation during circle time. Circle time sessions involved a process in which the practitioner leading the session called on children, who took turns in answering questions and contributing perspectives. The children seemed able to destabilize these norms by refusing to participate, thereby opening up space for sporadic democracy:

During circle time for a group of three-year-old children, the practitioner asks each child about what he or she experienced during the previous weekend. One girl relates a family trip on a ferry. The practitioner turns towards the next girl and asks, "Have you also been on a ferry?" The girl looks the practitioner in the eyes and firmly answers "No" while shaking her head. The practitioner pauses to give the girl an opportunity to say something, which she does not. After some silence, the practitioner asks, "Is there something else you want to tell us?" Still looking directly at the practitioner, the girl shakes her head. The girl remains silent and turns her head towards the window. "Did you do something exciting over the weekend?" the practitioner asks one more time. She then turns to the next child.

Although this interaction appears to go almost unnoticed in the video clip, it conveys a strong message of resistance from the girl to the practitioner, which should prompt the practitioner to reflect upon why the girl does not want to say anything. Since the circle time session continues, the norm governing children's and practitioners' behavior during circle time prevails, yet it is momentarily affected by this moment of resistance that the practitioner tolerates. One must ask if the process of striving to include all children in a round robin of weekend stories is really a democratic process.

At other times, resistance is more overt, as some children verbally interrupt sessions to push for changes to the shared agenda:

A group of three-year-old children are having a circle time session in which each child is invited to tell a short story. The practitioner leading the session starts by saying that they will all sing at the end of the session. One girl, who sits on another practitioner's lap, wants to proceed directly to the singing. 'Singing! Singing!', she chants. Though repeatedly told to be quiet, the girl continually states her desire to move on to the singing part of circle time during small breaks and pauses in the session. The practitioner keeps close bodily contact with the girl throughout the session.

Even though the girl is silenced by the teacher, there is important sporadic democratic potential in the girl's desire for change and her willingness to overtly criticize the prevailing order. The girl does not succeed in changing this order but, on the other hand, neither does the practitioner fully succeed in including the girl within the prevailing order. The girl's body is still in the circle, but she refuses to participate in the expected ways (silently waiting for the agenda to progress). Viewed from a democratic perspective, it could be argued that the girl must keep and develop this appetite for sporadic democracy; it is important that the potential seen here is realized in possible later situations, and here the practitioners can play an important role.

In addition, disciplinary values are also expressed in the interaction. The practitioner asked the girl to be quiet, and she also stopped the girl from physically disturbing the activity.

13.3.4.3 Mutuality-Related Interactions

Mutuality-related interactions, in which children seek to engage with each other and/or adults, were found to pose challenges for practitioners in accurately understanding and appreciating children's perspectives. Furthermore, they exhibit

children's ability to demonstrate caring relations, even in more formal, regulated contexts such as circle time.

Regardless of good intentions in seeking to appreciate how children see their world, practitioners could not fully relate to children's perspectives. Practitioners did not always succeed in engaging children in rich dialogues about their interests, which thereby limited the potential for sporadic democracy:

During a circle time session for a group of three-year-old children, the practitioner asks a boy whether he wants to say something. The boy mumbles a little and says, "I have a Wii U (i.e., a gaming console) at home". The practitioner clearly does not understand. "You have what? A Weeluu? What is that?" The boy looks firmly at the practitioner and repeatedly says "Wii U" to the best of his ability, but to no avail. The practitioner turns to a colleague also sitting in the circle: "Help me—I don't understand". At first, the other practitioner is confused, too: "Is it something outside in the playground?" she asks. "No, it is at my home", the boy answers assuredly, while pointing at himself. A third practitioner joins the conversation and guesses that it is some kind of game. The boy's face lights up and he starts to explain further: "You can turn into a snake on the Wii U". However, the practitioners do not understand what he means and they instead agree with each other that he is talking about a Wii (i.e., an older gaming console) and that they must ask his mother for clarification when she comes to fetch him from preschool.

What children can learn during circle time, including which identities and perspectives are possible during circle time sessions, is implicitly governed by processes based on the practitioners' values and perspectives. These processes evince a stable core of knowledge and values through which the practitioners, by means of caring and disciplining initiatives, strive to include the children.

Another mutuality-related interaction showcased the children's ability to spontaneously form a caring microcommunity at the periphery of the larger group of peers and practitioners governed by disciplining values:

It is a circle time session in a classroom of three-year-old children. The session has proceeded for nearly 15 minutes by allowing each child a turn to say something, and the children are clearly tiring and losing focus. The practitioner nevertheless continues to direct her attention from one child to the next in the circle in order to ensure that every child has the chance to contribute. The children are expected to sit still and concentrate on the leading practitioner and her conversation with each child. Silently and initially unnoticed, one boy caresses the girl next to him and gently grooms her hair, which she seems to appreciate. When he leans over to kiss her forehead, another girl notices and softly tells the boy to stop. This second girl then pinches the boy's ear. The boy turns towards her and likewise pinches her ear playfully. For a while, the three children playfully touch each other, until a nearby practitioner notices and tells them to stop.

Here, the practitioner acts to reintegrate the three children into the group, thereby policing the prevailing order. Though the three children do not directly resist the norms of circle time, their microcommunity of playful, caring intimacy excludes them from a social order in which they have lost interest. In this microcommunity, alternative possibilities for meaningful interaction emerge, as shown in the vignette. Thus, this vignette shows some potential for sporadic democracy: The children succeed in creating new forms of participation beyond/below the established order.

13.3.5 *Forms of Communicated Caring Values*

Caring values are expressed nonverbally through facial expressions and gestures and, when speaking, through tone of voice, intonation, and rhythm of the language. Like democratic values, caring values are expressed during everyday interactions, and we also see a variation in forms of communicated caring values (which now and then also hold disciplinary values). In caring interactions, the practitioners often merge processes characterized by socialization and adaptation of culture (values, norms, attitudes, and behaviors). These processes unite care, discipline, democracy, and education and can thus be identified as *educare* (Broström, 2006b). Based on the research material, we have identified four forms of caring values:

13.3.5.1 **Emotional Care-Care as Recognition**

Emotional caring values are communicated and expressed when an adult spontaneously follows the child's initiative (shared intentionality) and perspective, also identified as the "careful value" (Hansen, 2013).

Noddings (1986, p. 30) has characterized the caring practitioner as one who manages to receive others in him or herself and to look and feel with them—in a sense, to become one with them. Devoted caregivers share children's intentions and show that they care, and they view caring as a way of being in the world together with others in need of care.

Using our theoretical care approach and focusing on the empathic relation to others as expressed by Noddings, we identified a large number of interactions characterized by symmetrical relations which give the child a basic self-confidence: a kind of emotional recognition. We conceptualize caring values communicated via such an empathic relation as emotional care:

Two girls, Vera and Inga, aged four and five, are sitting next to each other at a table outside in the garden. They cut carrots and potatoes into small pieces to put in a pot with water. A preschool teacher, Helen, is with them. In front of them on the table, they both have a cutting board with a carrot on.

Vera at first holds the knife with her right hand and the carrot with her left, but when she cannot cut the carrot, she grasps the knife with both hands. The carrot slips a little. Helen asks: "Should I help you by holding it? Should I hold the carrot?" She grabs the carrot and says: "Now you can saw". Vera saws with the knife. She makes a small notch in the carrot. "A little bit more, you'll soon be through", Helen says. And after a few seconds: "Ahh, one last little bit of sawing now... It's not far now". Vera then succeeds and cuts off the very tip of her carrot. "Yeah!" shouts Helen, and bends down to look underneath Vera's sun visor. Vera looks at her and smiles. Helen holds up the pot so that Vera can put the piece of carrot into it.

The preschool teacher concentrates her attention on the two girls' cutting work. She acknowledges them when they succeed in cutting the vegetables. As an example, she asks Vera "Should I help you by holding it?" before carefully observing the girl's actions. The preschool teacher encourages and recognizes the girl's exhaust-

ing cutting activity with verbal support, stating “Ahh, one last little bit of sawing now.” Through such supportive activity, she creates a harmonious atmosphere and cares about the girls’ work. Because of such ongoing emotional expression and support, we can identify the concept of emotional care.

13.3.5.2 Educational Caring

Besides the practitioners’ caring interaction with the children, the subject–subject relation and the being together, children and adults often also have a shared focus on an object or a theme which the children are learning about. In this way, the practitioner expresses idea-generating and expanding, interaction-guiding, and educative values. The practitioner supports the child’s discovery of the world; she also points out things of interest and names the observed objects and phenomena. This requires a foundation of planned educational activities which are adapted to each child’s stage of development (Hansen, 2013). Simultaneously with caring interaction, the practitioner often challenges the children’s learning and development, in the process facilitating caring. Thus, we call this form of caring *educational caring*:

Five children aged between two and three years and one preschool teacher, Emma sit together at a table in order to eat lunch. Emma sees that Agnes has a lump of butter on her sandwich and she shows her how to spread the butter out.

Emma says: “You can try, Agnes. Then I can see if there is anything I can help with.” Emma turns to Tom: “What should one do to spread it out (the lump of butter)?” Immediately, Klara responds: “Like I do!” Tom and Emma look at Klara, who spreads her sandwich. Then they look at Tom’s sandwich and Emma says: “Shall I show you the same as I showed Agnes?” She takes the butter knife while Tom observes what she is doing. She gives Tom the knife and he tries again, with his attempts to put butter on his sandwich proving successful. He looks at the sandwich with an air of satisfaction.

The practitioner establishes a caring and cozy atmosphere while the children carry out a meaningful educational activity. However, the preschool teacher focuses on the children’s efforts to spread the butter themselves. This was challenging for the children but, in a caring and gentle way, the preschool teacher supported the children’s struggle to spread the butter. She expresses *caring* values in order to support their learning. She combines care with an educational perspective and realizes an *educare* perspective.

13.3.5.3 Disciplinary Caring

Some caring interactions contain a disciplinary dimension. The practitioner supports and helps the child in order to achieve a positive interaction with other children or to avoid negative behavior. The value of disciplinary caring is not negative, judgemental help, but positive, constructive, and culturally founded caring values:

During circle time, three practitioners and 12 children, aged 14 to 34 months, sing songs which the children take turns in selecting. This circle time session is dominated by a boy,

aged 22 months, who is impatient and repeatedly tries to attract attention by interrupting the songs. He also tries to grab objects involved in the song selection, which are placed in the center of the circle. The practitioner closest to the boy places her hand gently on the boy's arm and looks at him with a gentle but also determined gaze. Nevertheless, the boy continues his activity. The practitioner then moves closer to the boy and says in a firm tone of voice, "Now, you have to stay calm and wait for the other children!" When the boy calms down, she smiles and gently squeezes his hand.

The disruptive boy becomes the object of the practitioner's care, which he might interpret as a kind of reprimand. However, the practitioner does not scold him; on the contrary, she expresses a caring attitude by squeezing the boy's hand. She expresses a double perspective, both disciplinary and caring. However, the disciplinary intent is nevertheless communicated with tact (Van Manen, 1991); one might say that the disciplinary values are used instrumentally in order to reach the value of care. For that reason, one can argue that two independent values are in action. However, because they are concurrent, we name this value *disciplinary caring*.

13.3.5.4 Democratic Caring

Democratic caring communicates caring values which at the same time open for children's influence.

An (abridged and edited) observation wherein a 4-year-old girl, Tiina, plans to go out to the playground on a cold day when the temperature is minus 13 degrees:

The practitioner Tanja says: "Tiina, here are your clothes (dungarees and fleece trousers); you can begin to dress yourself". Tiina sits down and begins to put on woolen socks; she then tucks the legs of her dungarees inside the socks and tries to adjust the legs many times without succeeding. She leaves the fleece trousers on the floor and puts on a hat. Tanja returns and, kneeling near Tiina, says: "You have to put the fleece trousers on and then take that jacket". Tiina despairingly raises her shoulders and cries: "I can't put the fleece trousers on!" Tanja places Tiina's dungarees and fleece trousers in her lap and, in a gentle tone, says: "Which of these do you want to put on?" Tiina points to the dungarees with her toe. Another adult Saara interferes: "Okay, you pick these; let's put them on". Tanja helps Tiina to put on her hat and, smiling, says: "You look so sweet; you have such a warm hat!" Then she gives the mittens to Tiina who happily heads out into the playground.

Tanja tries to force Tiina to put on two pairs of trousers because of the frost outside. When Tiina refuses, Tanja offers her a way out of the situation and lets her choose one pair of trousers. The practitioner handles the situation in a caring way, employing a gentle tone and complimenting Tiina. Simultaneously in this caring dimension, the practitioner models a democratic perspective by giving Tiina a choice. This is a type of sporadic democracy, which, as mentioned previously, refers to temporary emancipatory processes. In this way, the girl might realize a kind of influence and may come out of the situation with a new way of looking at herself. Instead of being only an object of the adult's disciplinary communication, the girl is now a subject engaging in a compromise. Thus, we name this value *communication for democratic caring*. However, a disciplinary dimension is again present. Although Tiina has some influence, the practitioner's power and disciplinary action are present throughout the situation.

13.4 To Sum Up

Based on a theoretical description of care and democracy as well as discipline, we investigated how caring and democratic values are communicated and expressed in the early years of education as illustrated by research material organized in short vignettes and summative comments, in response to the research question “How are caring and democratic values communicated in interactions between children and practitioners?”

Through our analysis of ECEC practice, we were able to identify and characterize different forms of caring and democratic values. We differentiated between two forms of democratic values: resistance-related and mutuality-related democratic values. While we were unable to identify examples of direct discipline, we found several episodes characterized by sporadic democracy. We also identified four forms of caring values: emotional care-care as recognition, educational care, disciplinary care, and democratic care.

As mentioned above, both democratic and caring values contain a variety of nuances and are expressed and communicated in different forms, also involving disciplinary values. Thus, the three sets of values overlap and intertwine and are often communicated simultaneously.

13.4.1 *Closing Remarks: Toward a New, Valued-Based Approach to ECEC*

Care and democracy are central values in Nordic early childhood education and care (Einarsdottir et al., 2015; Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006; OECD, 2001). In the OECD report *Starting Strong* (2001), the Nordic social pedagogy approach is described using concepts such as care, relation, activity, democracy, and development. However, from our point of view, this approach needs to be supplemented with a learning dimension; an educational approach based on caring and democratic values appears to point toward a values education in the future.

The reason why care and democracy values represent key pointers for an education for the future seems obvious. An emotional, caring, and empathic relation is crucial for children’s well-being and learning in the preschool and childcare settings where they spend most of their day. In addition, it is crucial for children to encounter democratic values and to experience their own influence on their everyday lives. New generations will face major societal challenges with which they will have to cope as adults. With democratic values in their luggage from an early age, they will become active participants rather than passive onlookers.

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Chapter 14

Recognizing Children's Diverse Backgrounds: Democracy and Equality in Preschool



Berit Zachrisen

14.1 Introduction

In the foundation of a democratic education, which aims to develop each child's full potential, there is an appreciation of the knowledge, skills, and competences each child brings with her or him to the institution. This assertion can be elucidated from many different angles. This study draws on Bourdieu's theory (1999) and theory of multicultural and culturally sensitive pedagogical practices (Banks, 2006; Gay, 2010). The research question examined is: How do educators make children's diverse backgrounds recognized and relevant in daily encounters with the children in preschool?

For most children, preschool represents their first opportunity to participate in an interethnic community. These experiences seem central for children's growing understanding of democracy and equality and in counteracting discrimination (Biesta, 2011; Quennerstedt, 2011). The Convention against Discrimination in Education (United Nations [UN] Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1960) maintains that "states parties" have to pay great attention to different forms of discrimination in education in order to ensure equal opportunity and treatment in education. How educators relate to children's diverse knowledge, experiences, and competencies (children's backgrounds) in pedagogical practice in preschool is important for ensuring equal opportunity and treatment in the institution.

Attending a preschool with a multicultural pedagogical approach can help to expand all children's perspectives and prepare them for citizenship in an ethnically diverse democracy (Parekh, 2008). However, many studies have found that the majority culture and language often have a disproportionately dominant position in

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ethnically diverse preschools in Scandinavian and other countries, such as England. Children's diverse ethnic backgrounds and first languages may be barely visible (Brooker, 2005; Lunneblad, 2006; Zachrisen, 2013).

In a survey comprising preschools in rural areas and smaller cities in Norway with diverse ethnic groups, the practitioners were asked which content they regularly or seldom chose in interactions with children in large and small groups (Andersen et al., 2011). The answers indicated that values, knowledge, and experiences from the majority culture had a very dominant position as the chosen content. Such practice may teach the children that the majority culture and language have an overriding and highly privileged position over minority cultures and languages. Considering citizenship in a diverse society, these experiences are unfortunate for all children. The situation in preschool should be seen as a fragment of the privileged position of the majority language and culture in the broader society (Banting, Johnston, Kymlicka, & Soroka, 2006; Lunneblad, 2006).

Banks maintains that an ethnically diverse nation cannot create unity in society by forcing people to leave their culture and language at the schoolhouse door:

Citizens in the new century will need the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to function in their cultural communities, beyond their cultural borders, and in the construction of a national civic culture that embodies and exemplifies democratic values. (Banks, 2006, p. 194)

Articles 29 and 30 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) state that all children shall have the same opportunities to get an education directed to develop their personality, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential and as well have the same opportunities to be accepted for who they are as a member of a social group or community. The aim of this study is to explore how educators approach ethnic diversity among the children in pedagogical practice in preschool.

The study is part of a postdoctoral study and is connected to a Nordic project on values education in early childhood education and care [ECEC] settings (Johansson, Fugelsnes, Mørkeseth, Røthle, Tofteland, & Zachrisen, 2015).

14.2 Theoretical Framework

This study sees encounters between children and practitioners as a pedagogical event closely related to the society and the culture in which the meetings take place. To explore this relationship, inspiration is taken from Bourdieu (1997, 1999). His concepts were originally developed for macro-level analysis. In this study, the analysis was conducted on a microlevel. Because of this transplantation of Bourdieu's concepts, some have been developed further, and new concepts have been constructed (Zachrisen, 2013). The frame of the analysis was chosen to accentuate features that have a basis in the relationships between participants, in aspects of the environment, and includes power as an influential factor in interactions. This study understands power as an opportunity to affect others and create social change

(Willis, Guinote, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2010). Power may influence encounters in preschools consciously, as well as unconsciously.

In this study, three concepts inspired by Bourdieu were of particular interest: capital, habitus, and recognition. The concept *capital* refers to resources that are valued in a social environment. Two forms of capital are of special interest for this study that explores pedagogical encounters between educators and ethnically diverse preschool children: cultural capital and physical capital.

Cultural capital can be connected to conscious and unconscious knowledge about cultural and social expressions (Bourdieu, 1997). Cultural capital is seen as a social resource that can be used to consider who is to be included or excluded in a group or collective (Zachrisen, 2013). Which cultural capital the educators consciously and unconsciously recognize will be prevalent for how children's diverse backgrounds are actualized and recognized in encounters between educators and children.

Physical capital is a concept used in another study (Zachrisen, 2013). Physical capital represents the capital one holds by virtue of one's physical body. This concept emphasizes the physical appearance and competences the participants display within a social context. Physical traits, like skin color, hair color and structure, eye color and shape, physical size, and physical competencies, are elements that make up one's physical capital. According to Erwin (1993), much of the research on friendship among children has ignored the importance of physical appearance in the exploration of social processes. What we consider to be physically attractive qualities in other people cannot be understood independently of the social and cultural conditions that surround us. When white educators in a white society take care of children of color, it seems to be important to explore how physical capital can come into play.

Habitus refers to how individuals are constructed in a social context (Bourdieu, 1999). The concept highlights patterns in people's thoughts, perceptions, and behavior and how these patterns are formed by the social contexts. Habitus is a disposition system understood as attitudes, motivations, interests, theories of reality, perception of options for action, and ways of behaving or presenting ourselves (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008). Habitus is organizing our perception and our actions or behavior in a social environment. In our interaction with the outside world, our already acquired methods of understanding usually have priority over the creation of new ones (Bourdieu, 1999). The richness of ethnic or cultural expressions in preschool will be crucial for the degree of recognition and familiarity children from diverse ethnic backgrounds can experience and how the children's competencies are actualized and implemented in the daily encounters. Highlighting of *metacognitive perspectives*, connected to the knowledge we take for granted in a situation, by seeing it in a social or cultural context, can prepare children for encounters with divergent views and others' attitudes.

Recognition Encounters with other people can provide the most important (existentially): recognition, status, and by this "existence-entitlement" (Bourdieu, 1999). Not achieving this can be a catastrophe. A socially recognized position can be

described as a powerful position with extensive space to define what should be recognized and what should be unappreciated in the group (Bourdieu, 1999). In preschool, the educators by virtue of their age, knowledge, competence, and formal position/function (usually) are in such a position. Which capital they consciously or more unconsciously recognize in their encounters with the children in formal and informal situations will be crucial for the children's possibilities of experiencing recognition in preschool.

Summing up, the theoretical framework that is the basis of this study can help to explore and understand how the pedagogical encounters between educators and ethnically diverse preschool children can be infused or permeated in the society and the culture in which the meetings take place.

14.3 Previous Research

In this section, previous research connected to pedagogical encounters between educators and preschool children in ethnically diverse groups are highlighted. The focus is on how the children's ethnic diversity is cared for by educators, in formal and informal encounters where the educators take a leading position. Because of language limitations, research written in Scandinavian and English with an emphasis on research from Scandinavian was searched for.

Only a few studies within a Norwegian context were found. However, Lauritsen (2011) explores how the staff in two Norwegian preschools construct the challenges they face in taking professional care of a group characterized by cultural diversity. In both preschools, a smaller group of the children was from an ethnic minority background. In interviews, the staff in both preschools describe the pursuit of equality in their pedagogical practice. They maintain that everyone should be treated equally regardless of their background. However, the ideal of equal treatment of all children seems to be in sharp contrast to the discrimination that the children can experience in practice. Practicing equality seems to imply that everyone is expected to act according to the same standards. Such practice may easily ignore differences among the children that are important to pay attention to in a pedagogical encounter, for example, different experiences and knowledge among the children based on their diverse backgrounds.

Similar results are emphasized in a Swedish study by Lunneblad (2006). The pedagogical practice Lunneblad (2006) observes seems to make the diversity in the languages and cultures among the children invisible. This situation appears to be in contrast to the educators' articulated intentions, which are to highlight the diversity in languages and culture. However, through (habitual) practice, which entails not speaking about diversity among the children and treating all the children "alike," these diversities became invisible. Still, in one of the preschools, a rethinking of the practice has started. A new understanding has emerged of how cultural diversity can be implemented in the preschools' daily work. Previously, they had, from time to

time, highlighted, for example, food and song traditions in the minority cultures. As an alternative, the preschool now wants to focus on all the children's home culture. Multicultural pedagogical practices should be led by an attitude that highlights reciprocity, respect, tolerance, diversity, and social justice, states Lunneblad (2006).

In another study from Sweden (Stier, Tryggvason, Sandström, & Sandberg, 2012), 17 preschool teachers from 10 preschools are asked to describe two critical incidents in their work which addresses ethnic and cultural diversity. Based on these descriptions, four understandings and approaches to ethnic and cultural diversity are constructed. (A) *An instrumental approach* depicts a shallow understanding illustrated by concepts as "exotization of other cultures" or as "totemization." The teachers appear to be uncertain how to act and are uncomfortable addressing issues connected to ethnic and cultural diversity with the children. (B) *A co-productive approach* depicts an approach in which the teachers appear to recognize themselves as bearers of culture, ethnicity, and stereotypes and therefore also understand they can be blind to alternative interpretations of retorts or events. (C) *A facilitative proactive approach* is characterized by a sincere openness to explore different cultural expressions. The pedagogical task is seen as providing a constructive and inspiring climate for each child's identity formation. (D) *An agitative proactive approach* is similar to the facilitative proactive approach; thus, this approach more actively encourages children to transgress cultural and ethnic boundaries. The instrumental approach is most common in the study (Stier et al., 2012).

Palludan (2007), a Danish researcher, singles out two modes of practitioners' communication with children in ethnically diverse preschools: *teaching* and *exchange*. The teaching mode, which is frequently used in conversations with children from ethnic backgrounds, constructs the child as an object for the practitioners' teaching. The emphasis is on introducing, explaining, and instructing. The child's role is to listen and to answer the practitioner's questions or follow his or her guidelines. The exchange mode, which is the most common in conversations with children from ethnic majority backgrounds, constructs the child as a subject and an equal interaction partner. The child/children and the practitioner exchange experiences, interpretations, and knowledge, taking turns asking and answering questions. Despite the educators' aim to see and listen to all the children, the educators create inequality among the children through their pedagogical practice (Palludan, 2007).

Summing up, all four studies try to explore how educators in preschool understand and/or approach ethnic diversity among preschool children. Although the studies are conducted in three different countries, they draw a similar picture of the situation. The political idea of preschool as an arena for interaction and integration of diversity in culture and languages (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015) appears to be weakly implemented in the field of practice. Two studies (Lunneblad, 2006; Stier et al., 2012) highlight the educators' attitudes and their ability to reflect on what they take for granted and look for new perspectives in their own practice.

Diversity in society and educational institutions is increasing quickly. It is urgent to continue to develop our understanding of how pedagogical practices can give every child equal opportunities to grow and be an active citizen. This study is an

extension of previous research in this field. By exploring how educators in two Norwegian preschools make the children's diverse backgrounds recognized and actual in daily encounters with the children, the study will contribute to the discussion of how a multicultural pedagogical practice could be conducted in a preschool.

14.4 Method

This study is a small-scale ethnographic study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The research material consists of approximately 120 observations. The focus of the observations was encounters between educators and children in formal and informal situations in which the educators took a leading position. The observations lasted from a few to approximately 45 min. The research was conducted in the context of two Norwegian preschools, where the children spent from 6 to 9 h each day. One preschool (A) was private; the other was municipal (B). Information about the participants is shown in Table 14.1.

In preschool A, two educators were from an ethnic minority, but they did not have the same first language and the same ethnic background as any of the children in their groups (classes). All the educators were white and from a European background.

In this study, the term *ethnic minority background* is used when a child has Norwegian as his or her second language and both parents come from an ethnic minority background. The children's ethnic backgrounds were American, Congolese, Indonesian, Pakistani, Filipino, Polish, and Somali. The term *ethnic majority back-*

Table 14.1 The participating children and educators

Participants	Preschool A (private) 2 groups		Preschool B (municipal) 1 group
	Group 1	Group 2	
	13 children aged 2 years (2 from an ethnic minority background)	23 children aged 3, 4, and 5 years (4 from an ethnic minority background)	18 children aged 3, 4, and 5 years (9 from an ethnic minority background)
Educators	4 (1 part time)	7 (4 part time)	5 (2 part time)
	2 preschool teachers	2 preschool teachers	2 preschool teachers
	2 assistants (different educational backgrounds)	5 assistants (different educational backgrounds)	3 assistants (different educational backgrounds)
	(1 from an ethnic minority background)	(1 from an ethnic minority background)	
Principals	1		
Supervisors			1 (in selected counseling sessions)

ground is used when a child has Norwegian as his or her first language and at least one parent from an ethnic majority background. In this study, ethnic backgrounds such as Swedish, Danish, and Icelandic are included in the concept *ethnic majority background*. These ethnic populations have many similarities to the ethnic majority population in Norway in terms of history, language, and culture.

Written informed consent for participation in the study was obtained from the educators and the children's parents. In addition, each observation required sensitivity toward the participants and especially the children's reactions to being observed. The study followed the ethical requirements for social science in Norway (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, NESH, 2006).

14.4.1 *The Analysis*

The analysis process began with a thorough reading of the observations to get an overview of the research material. A list of the observations was made to facilitate further process. A narrower analysis process, going deeper into each situation, began afterward (Creswell, 2007). The main question in this process was which and whose capitals are highlighted and recognized by the educators in the encounters, with children from diverse ethnic backgrounds. A didactic approach was chosen, in which the interactions were analyzed based on the content, methods, and material used and how metacognitive aspects were highlighted by the educators (Banks, 2006; Gay, 2010). The didactic concept content, methods, and material are well-known analysis and planning tools for educators (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2011). The three elements should not be considered strictly divided. More correctly, they partly overlap and infuse one another. This overlap is prevalent in the analysis presented in the next paragraph.

In the analysis of the *content*, a central question was how the chosen content related to the participating children's varied cultural backgrounds. Another aspect was how child-generated ideas and topics were handled by the educators. Did the children have the same opportunity to present and be acknowledged for their initiatives? In the analysis of the *methods*, a central question was how the educators worked with the children to facilitate the achievement of a topic: the use of facilitating methods that could engage and motivate all the children according to the topic and could offer them an active role in the encounters. A child-oriented practice can be seen as an aid to respond to each child's cultural and linguistic background and his or her learning needs (Aceves & Orosco, 2014). The third didactical concepts focused on the pedagogical material used to concretize and to illustrate a topic or the content. How did the material mirror the children's different backgrounds and support their opportunity to experience some kind of familiarity and identification with the topic or content? According to Walker and Snarey (2004), supporting minority children's agency in educational settings can be understood in relation to

the elements: self-reflection, consistency, personal responsibility, pride, decision-making ability, and self-reliance.

The fourth concept was connected to a *metacognitive perspective* on knowledge production and the knowledge we take for granted (Gay, 2010). This can be seen as a part of the method used in pedagogical encounters. Highlighting *metacognitive perspectives* can enhance the children's views toward, for example, different cultural expressions and how "dependable knowledge" (our own or others) often is infused by social or cultural assumptions (Bourdieu, 1999).

In the last step of the analysis, I tried to identify different approaches in the educators' encounters with ethnically diverse groups and how they made the children's backgrounds recognized and relevant in the pedagogical arrangements. Two main approaches were identified in the research material: a *multilateral approach* and a *unilateral approach*. A *multilateral approach* conceptualizes pedagogical encounters in which the children's diverse experiences and competencies are recognized and valued through the didactic approach. The blend of content, method, and material used makes the children's diverse backgrounds acknowledged, relevant, and actual. The pedagogical encounter gives the children opportunities to experience themselves as acknowledged and equal members in an ethnically diverse collective and to expand their perspectives on diversity and cultural expressions. All the children get opportunities to have their agencies reinforced.

A *unilateral approach* conceptualizes pedagogical encounters in which the children's diverse experiences and competencies are not recognized and valued through the didactic approach. The blend of content, method, and material used does not make the children's diverse backgrounds acknowledged, relevant, and actual. The pedagogical encounter gives only some of the children opportunities to experience themselves as acknowledged members in an ethnically diverse collective. The pedagogical arrangement gives the group none or very restricted chances to expand their perspectives on diversity and cultural expressions. Only some of the children have opportunities to get their agencies reinforced. In the next sections, the two approaches identified in the pedagogical encounters will be presented more extensively.

The two patterns can be seen as extremes on a scale. Few situations were identified to represent exclusively one approach. Instead, by virtue of their didactic characteristics, they could be placed on the scale somewhere between but with a center of gravity in one of the approaches.

Most of the encounters had their center of gravity in a *unilateral approach*. Regular use of content, methods, or material safeguarding the diverse ethnic backgrounds in the group was not prominent in either of the two preschools, neither was highlighting of metacognitive perspectives. Often, the content had a universal character, and some of the methods used supported the children's active participation in the situation. However, the content, material, and the spectrum of methods used are intertwined and work through each other. For example, if the pedagogical material mirrored only a white, Norwegian society, and this was not reflected on together with the children, then the overall impression of the situation was a *unilateral approach*.

Many pedagogical encounters were placed near the middle of the scale but with a slight slope toward a unilateral approach. These were situations with universal content and materials and with some methods focusing mostly on physical competencies. However, no linguistic adaptations were observed in these interactions regarding the children's various linguistic situations (e.g., the use of compensation strategies, such as translation of central words in the children's first language, repetition of essential words in Norwegian, clear use of concretizations, the use of dividing or reformulating of utterances, or the use of routine chants) (Flores & Corcoll, 2016; Forster, 2005). In none of these encounters were metacognitive perspectives highlighted. The research material seen as a whole had no examples of educators who highlighted metacognitive perspectives together with the children.

A few encounters could not be placed on the scale. In these encounters, none of the children, regardless of background, seemed to perform the acknowledged cultural capitals. One interpretation was that some of these encounters were marked by a "preschool culture," unique for this special setting. For example, in one observation, four children, all 4 years of age, are sitting around a table. Two of the children are from an ethnic minority background (Natia and Jarek), and two are from an ethnic majority background (Siren and Ada).

The educator tells the children that they are going to color rice grains. She begins to hand out a handful of rice to each child. Siren protests and says loudly with a horrified expression: "This is food!" The educator does not answer him, continuing her distribution of rice. Afterward, the educator asks the children which season it is. Natia says, "Monday?" The educator answers, "No, I said *season*." She discusses this with the children for a little while, and they agree that it is autumn. She then asks, "What colors are connected with autumn?" Jarek looks through the windows where the nature is all green and says, "Green?" The educator says green is the color of the summer, and she continues to ask the children if the leaves can be yellow, red and brown before they fall to the ground. Some of the children answer "yes" quietly. The educator then asks the children what color they want to use to color their rice grains.

The recognized cultural capital in this encounter seems foreign to all the children. Rice is a food well known throughout the world. However, using rice as a craft supply seems strange to the children. None of the children seems eager or motivated by the activity, but only Siren protests loudly, getting no response from the educator. The activity appears to conflict with Siren's values associated with food. The children do as they are told, but no enthusiasm or happy faces are observed around the table. *Why* the coloring has to be done is not verbalized by the educator. A recognizable target could have increased the children's opportunity for familiarity in the encounter.

14.5 A Unilateral Approach

The first observation is a formal learning situation where the topic is fire protection (content). All the children are aged 5 years. The group has worked with the theme over a certain period. It appears as a universal topic in the sense that people all over

the world have to handle fire as a required element in their lives and as a threat. Two preschool teachers (Camilla and Einar) and six children are sitting around a table. Four of the children are from ethnic minority backgrounds (Ozella, Saim, Sophia, and Thomas); two are from an ethnic majority background (Tina and Kasper). Three of the children are children of color (Saim, Sophia, and Thomas); the other three are white. In addition, there are two observers: a supervisor visiting the preschool this morning and the researcher. All the adults are white and from an ethnic majority background.

Firefighters

Camilla takes the lead and shows the children a big picture of a fire station. In the picture, many firefighters are doing different operations. The children and the teachers look at the picture together and talk about it. Camilla has also brought a picture book with a firefighter on the cover. All the firefighters in the picture and on the book cover are white. Camilla puts the material on the table. Handing out white sheets of paper to everyone, she instructs the children to draw themselves as a "fireman." On the paper is an outline of a firefighter (male), whom they ought to color. The children and the teachers start to color their firefighter. Einar colors a firefighter with blue eyes, white skin and blond hair, physical characteristics that he possesses. Saim, sitting on Einar's lap, colors very carefully peering occasionally at Einar's paper. Saim, who has dark brown skin and black hair, gives his firefighter yellow hair and white skin. The supervisor asks him: "What skin color does a fireman have?" Saim answers quickly and firmly, "White!" Nobody comments on this statement. The two other children of color give their firefighters dark skin and dark hair. Nobody comments on this, either.

The universal nature of the topic firefighters is not highlighted in the interaction. It may have been highlighted earlier during the work period. The method used is to encourage the children to draw themselves as firefighters. This method requests a capital (drawing competency) all the children seem to possess.

The material used to illustrate the topic for the children and the chosen concept (firemen) contributes significantly to the strong unilateral feature in this encounter. Although half of the group are children of color, none of the firefighters in the pictures presented for the children are people of color. Some of the firefighters in the big picture are women (4–21), all with yellow hair. The outlined firefighter on the white drawing paper is a man. The physical capital tacitly recognized in this material is the features of white Europeans (men).

Despite the lack of appropriate role models, two of the children of color (Sophia and Thomas) color their firefighters with brown skin and dark hair. However, the third boy, Saim, gives his firefighter white skin and yellow hair. To the question "What skin color does a fireman have?" he promptly answers, "White!" The physical characteristics Saim holds by virtue of his body seem not to be characteristics he wants to make visible in his drawing. Why he feels like this is hard to say. However, the absence of appropriate role models in the pedagogical material and among the educators may be of great significance. In this setting, it seems almost surprising that Sophia manages to give her firefighter some physical characteristics her body possesses. She does not have many clues for identification in the previous sketches, white (male) face, or in the pictures and the concept used (firemen). In the chosen materials and concept, Sophia is ignored in two ways: as a girl and as a child of color.

White people and majority culture mark the social context in the preschool and in the society in which the habitus of Saim, Sophia, and Thomas is constructed. The context and the habitus can be seen as enmeshed in each other. In this interplay, there seems to be a huge discrepancy between the (tacit) acknowledged physical capital and the children of color's own body experiences. An assumption is that this discrepancy may create a confusing situation for the children and may counteract a feeling of consistency, especially if this represents repetitively recurring experiences in the preschool.

In this encounter, metacognitive perspectives are not highlighted by the teachers. Saim's claim that all firefighters are white could have been a starting point for a common reflection on the domination of white maleness in the encounter. Such reflections could have expanded all the children's perspectives on the knowledge taken for granted in the interaction and enhanced their experiences of being a recognized member in a diverse, equal community. Accentuation of metacognitive perspectives on the knowledge taken for granted in the interaction could also have supported the children's agency. Agency can be seen as a basic value and connected to pride, self-reflection, consistency, and self-reliance. In an educational setting dominated by majority culture, it is very important to support the agency of the children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The absence of metacognitive reflection gives little power to the children from minority backgrounds (and to the girls) to rise above the elements of oppression and ignorance in this encounter.

The absence of metacognitive perspectives highlighted by the teacher can be seen in light of their own habitus and how their thoughts, perception, and action behavior are formed in a monocultural society. The unilateral approach appears connected to knowledge and values the teachers themselves take for granted.

Despite a universal topic and a method, which requests drawing competencies all the children seem to possess (cultural capital), the encounter is marked by a unilateral approach. This is particularly connected to the material used and the absence of metacognitive perspectives.

14.6 A Multilateral Approach

The next observation is made during a music session. An educator has taken Sara, Liv, Yasmin, and Karl, all 2 years of age, to a little room furnished as a living room. Yasmin is from an ethnic minority background and is new in the preschool this month. She knows only a few words of Norwegian. Sara, Liv, and Karl are from an ethnic majority background and started in the previous preschool year. The four children are sitting in a row on a comfortable sofa. In front of them is a low table. The teacher sits in a two-seater on the short side of the table, in front of Karl.

Music session

On the table is a plastic box with different music instruments. The teacher passes out rhythm sticks to the children. Then she sits down, smiles toward the children and begins to sing, "Beat, beat with the sticks loud and silent..." She demonstrates with her own sticks how to

beat. The children, with excited and eager faces, follow her. Yasmin looks at the educator and sometimes at Karl beside her and follows the others. She seems concentrated on the task, and her tongue sometimes comes out. After some playing, the teacher collects the sticks and gives the children small blue and pink rhythm eggs. The educator starts to sing and shows with her movements how to shake the egg to get sounds. Her face has a happy look. Yasmin, Sara, Liv and Karl imitate her. When there is a break in the singing, Yasmin tries to open her egg. The teacher smiles to her, shakes her head and says that the egg can't be opened. The educator starts to sing a well-known Norwegian song while she demonstrates how to mark the rhythm. The children imitate her rhythm, but no one sings. At the end of the song, the teacher throws her egg up in the air and catches it again. She repeats the song, and now with a big smile, she encourages the children to throw their eggs in the air. The children throw their eggs with small laughter and big smiles. The session continues, and the children are allowed to try more instruments: Caracas, thrums and last a xylophone. When the teacher takes out the xylophone, she says that this is the last sound of the day. She plays a little on the xylophone. The children without instruments look at her in silence. At the end, Yasmin silently stretches her left hand toward the xylophone. The teacher gives it to her, and Yasmin starts to play. The teacher sings the final song, and Yasmin accompanies her. While playing, Yasmin shifts between looking at the teacher and the xylophone. The session ends.

Recognized capitals in this encounter are seen in relation to the chosen topic, method, and material. The content is music and sound production. It has some but not extensive cultural marks. The method consists of encouraging the children with a happy face and small words to participate and modeling their play actions by using self-composed instructional songs and demonstrations. Yasmin's opportunity to understand the teacher's verbal instructions is unclear. However, the quality of the interaction with an emphasis on a demonstration of play-technics and facilitation through simple instructional songs allows her to get the necessary information to participate through listening and observations of the teacher's and the other children's play.

The encounter also includes a manifest play element: the egg throwing. All the children seem to enjoy this suggestion from the teacher. Emilson (2008) maintains that playfulness can demonstrate qualities within a communication connected to joy and humor and can lead to a sense of shared reality and equality among the participants. In addition to the manifest play element, the interplay seems to contain hidden play elements. They are visible in the teacher's happy face and joyful approach and constitute a cheerful atmosphere in the interplay. This cheerful atmosphere also has space for the children's initiatives. Yasmin takes the initiative to play on the xylophone, and the teacher lets her try. This is recognition of Yasmin's initiative.

The equipment is different rhythm instruments, some well known all over the world. Some of the songs seem composed by the teacher in the situation, and some are well-known Norwegian children's songs. Even though some of the children may be more accustomed to some of the songs than others, none of the children sings. The self-composed instructional songs can facilitate Yasmin's and the other children's participation in the music lesson by highlighting and repeating how to play with the correct rhythm (Forster, 2005). Seen as a whole, the capitals recognized in this encounter through the chosen content, method, and material are available to all four children despite their diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Metacognitive perspectives are not highlighted by the teacher. The children are all 2 years of age. Their capacities to discuss metacognitive perspectives on music and sounds can be limited. However, the multilateral features of the interplay could have been further increased, for example, by using songs from Yasmin's background. This could have widened Sara, Liv, and Karl's perspectives on musical styles and traditions and all the children's perspectives on which (or whose) musical traditions are acknowledged in the preschool. Another relevant theme with potential to broaden the children's perspectives on the topic could have been music and sounds as something universally human that people worldwide appreciate and enjoy.

Earlier in this chapter, metacognitive reflection was connected to children's agency and elements, such as pride, self-reflection, and self-reliance. Including songs and music from Yasmin's background could (also) have enhanced Yasmin's experiences of pride and her possibilities for self-reflection. However, the universal basis for the rhythm instruments and Yasmin as a very competent and engaged participant may boost her self-esteem and give her an experience of being an equal and respected member of the group.

Summing up, a multilateral approach characterizes the encounter. The recognized capitals are available to all four children. The children's diverse experiences and competencies are given value through the blend of a universal topic, methods based on demonstration and clarification through the songs, and the use of universal rhythm instruments everyone can manage. All the children have opportunities to get their agency reinforced. The music session gives all the children a chance to expand their perspectives on rhythm instruments and to experience themselves as recognized and equal members of an ethnically diverse collective.

14.7 Discussion

Two main approaches to pedagogical work in ethnically diverse preschool groups are identified: a unilateral approach and a multilateral approach. The two examples presented highlight universal topics relevant to people all over the world (fire protection and music). However, content never works alone in a pedagogical encounter but is intertwined with the methods and material used.

In both examples, the children are assigned an active role through the chosen methods: drawing and playing with music instruments. However, the drawing has restricted boundaries: a self-portrait in a grown man's face, conceptualized as a "fireman" and illustrated with white firefighters. These traits weaken the encounter opportunities to arouse a sense of pride and self-reflection in all the children. During the music session, the educator uses modeling as her main method and encourages the children through her self-composed songs, happy face, and the use of play elements. This last encounter has the potential to enhance all the children's feelings of pride and competence and to support their experiences of being a recognized member of an ethnically diverse collective.

The material used in a pedagogical interplay can support and prevent children's engagement in and motivation for the planned activity. In the first example (firefighters), the chosen material and the concept *firemen* primarily contribute to the strong unilateral approach. In the music session, the material, as it appears through the chosen instruments and songs, has weaker unilateral traits.

In none of these encounters are metacognitive perspectives highlighted or discussed with the children. The white, European cultural mark on most of the pedagogical practices in these two preschools can be described as a part of the educators' habitus and a part of the preschools' implicit or hidden curriculum. Or we could say a part of the *doxa* in the field (Bourdieu, 1999). Bourdieu's concept *doxa* comprises values, beliefs, and perspectives that are taken for granted in a field and have to be accepted if one wants to be taken seriously by the participants. A pedagogical practice strongly dominated by the majority culture gives the children very different possibilities to feel at home and to exhibit their competencies and skills and to experience themselves as recognized, equal members of the community.

The two encounters seem to include missed opportunities for addressing issues of race and diversity with the children. Saim's claim that all firefighters are white could have been made the starting point for joint reflection about firefighters and fire protection as universal subjects important to people all over the world (content), whiteness or lack of diversity in the pedagogical material (metacognitive perspectives), how the drawers' cultural and ethnic backgrounds could have affected their pictures (metacognitive perspectives), and how words (fireman and firefighters) can reflect traditional power hierarchies and changes in power hierarchies in society (metacognitive perspectives). Embedded in such reflections is the potential to extend all the children's perspectives on diversity in society and to support their diverse identities and their citizenship in a multiethnic democracy. Many educators may feel discomforted by discussing topics connected to skin and hair color with children and other adults (Andersen, 2015). Taylor (2008, p. 199) sees it differently: "...young children are aware of differences *because they embody them*, and they also realize that these differences do not all attract and enjoy the same status and authority."

Some authors recommend that preschool teachers should focus on similarities in a diverse group (Brenna, 2008). Highlighting similarities in diverse groups may support the children's feeling of sameness, friendship, and belongingness to the peer group. However, highlighting equalities within a unilateral pedagogical approach can be in danger of covering important differences in power and influence in the institution and in the society. Emphasizing similarities among the children makes sense only within a multilateral pedagogical approach where respect, awareness, and recognition of diversity are the foundation. Instead of trying to make differences disappear from the preschool, we need to explore what the many variations and positive possibilities of differences inside and between groups can do for the children and the pedagogical work (Andersen, 2015).

This study sees empowering children as an important goal for all educational work. Empowering is connected to elements, such as pride, self-reflection, and self-reliance (Freire, 1999). Every child has the right to be proud of who he or she is by

virtue of his or her gender, ethnicity, cultural background, social class, and beliefs. All children are citizens in a diverse society. They all need knowledge and skills to take an active role in this society and develop competencies that can be used to promote their own needs and interests and to seek common goals for the community. Children who learn to acknowledge cultural diversity and racial identity as important factors in their experiences, in their encounters with other people, and in society may develop thoughtful responses to ethnic and cultural differences. "We cannot prepare children to make a better world if we cannot see *this* world for what it is," Thompson (2004, p. 37) states.

This study makes a contribution by providing empirical data regarding how educators in two preschools recognize the children's diverse ethnic backgrounds through their didactic choices. While a multilateral approach makes the children's ethnical and cultural backgrounds in the group recognized and relevant, a unilateral approach makes the same variety irrelevant and unrecognized. A multilateral approach has the potential to give all the children opportunities to experience the encounter as a meaningful learning situation where their agency is reinforced. With a unilateral approach, only some of the children are given the same opportunities. Accordingly, a multilateral approach, compared with a unilateral approach, can safeguard all the children's opportunities to experience a democratic practice with equal opportunity and treatment in preschool in a more comprehensive manner.

The study highlights the importance of educators' self-reflection about their beliefs, values, and interpretation of diversity and equality in their pedagogical work and how these attitudes and values affect their didactic choices.

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Chapter 15

“There Is No Room for You!” The Politics of Belonging in Children’s Play Situations



Jaana Juutinen, Anna-Maija Puroila, and Eva Johansson

15.1 Introduction

Sanni is playing with a girl, Laila, and two boys, Arttu and Eetu, in the playground. There are two other boys, Alvar and Topi, playing next to them. All the children are four years old.

Sanni asks Alvar: Why don't you play with me?

Alvar replies and points to Laila, Arttu and Eetu: But you do have friends!

Topi continues: You do have three friends.

Still, Sanni says to Alvar: But can you play with me?

Alvar answers: No. I won't play with you now. You already have friends.

Sanni continues: Why won't you play with me?

Alvar replies: Because I'm playing with Topi, that's why.

This small story took place one morning in the playground of a preschool. Sanni expressed her desire to play with Alvar, but was not allowed to join in Alvar and Topi's play. Alvar wanted to continue his play with Topi and argued that Sanni already had other friends with whom he could play. This small story involved moments of both belonging and exclusion. Using stories like this one, and as part of a Nordic project on values education, this study employs a narrative approach to explore the politics of belonging in children's play situations in Finnish preschools. The politics of belonging refers to the processes by which belonging and exclusion emerge in the many relations of daily life (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Preschools are significant sociocultural communities for children to experience belonging (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). However, recent studies in early childhood

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education have found that even young children encounter exclusion in preschools (e.g., Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012; Nutbrown & Clough, 2009; Puroila, Estola, & Syrjälä, 2012). Exclusion generates inequality and marginalization, both of which are considered scientifically and societally relevant topics on a global scale (Macartney, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016; Puroila et al., 2012). By contrast, the value of belonging relates to democracy and the value of caring, since children have the right to be part of their community, to participate, and to feel that they are treated with care and respect (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016; Zachrisen, 2016). Belonging has long been considered an important value in pluralistic and multicultural societies, such as Australia and New Zealand, which have highlighted the role of education in preventing marginalization (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). While Nordic societies have long been notoriously monocultural, due to rising levels of immigration and globalization, children's daily environments are becoming increasingly diverse. This makes belonging a highly topical value in the future development of early childhood education.

The previous scientific literature has theoretically approached the concept of belonging from two slightly different but interrelated perspectives: the sense of belonging and the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011; also Stratigos, Bradley, & Sumsion, 2014). The predominant perspective has focused on the *sense of belonging*, which refers to an individual's emotional attachment to other individuals and communities. This subjective orientation has been widely examined within psychological and sociological streams of research (e.g., Bowlby, 1969; Parsons, 1951). In the context of early childhood education research, for instance, Singer and de Haan (2007) and Hännikäinen (2007) have studied young children's sense of belonging in terms of togetherness. They suggest that children express their sense of belonging toward peers in preschool through different modes of expression, such as verbal communication, the sharing of play and learning, and physical closeness to others. Koivula and Hännikäinen (2016) note that children's sense of community develops through three stages: first, it evolves gradually through experiences in joint play; second, stable friendships are formed through play via a variety of ways of creating togetherness; and third, children experience emotional bonding. Belonging has also been approached from the relational and phenomenological perspectives by Johansson (2017), who explores children's experiences and the value of sharing life-worlds and being included in collective activities based on the Maurice Merleau-Ponty's lifeworld theory (1964). Johansson (2017) notes that the sense of belonging is part of children's everyday life in preschool: a matter of their very existence. Zachrisen (2016) takes a closer look at the interactions between children and educators in relation to democratic practices. Her study highlights that both group interactions and the dyadic interactions between child and educator provide diverse opportunities for developing a sense of belonging and the value of community. These studies highlight children's sense of belonging as part of human beings' fundamental need to both engage with their community and form emotional attachments.

Conversely, the *politics of belonging* takes a collective rather than an individual approach to belonging. The politics of belonging refers to how belonging and exclu-

sion are constructed through particular collectivities: that is, “how different groups continuously produce and reproduce the boundaries of membership” (Nagel, 2011, p. 120; see also Yuval-Davis, 2006). We understand the politics of belonging as including both belonging and exclusion, such that one does not exist without the other. According to Yuval-Davis (2006), the politics of belonging is about meeting other people and deciding whether these people are “us” or “them”: inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the community. This study aims to explore how the politics of belonging emerges in children’s play situations in preschool. We apply the macro-level concept of the politics of belonging to understand what happens at the microlevel in the daily encounters among children, educators, and the preschool environment. Though the focus is on the politics of belonging as constructions of multiple relations, we agree that these constructions are not separable from the sense of belonging. In other words, both perspectives on belonging exist simultaneously.

The politics of belonging is an emerging research field that has rarely been addressed in early childhood education. Moreover, children’s roles and positions in the construction and production of belonging and exclusion have largely been ignored (Stratigos et al., 2014; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). The aim of this study is to deepen our understanding of the politics of belonging as it emerges in children’s play. By taking a relational approach, we broaden our focus from the individual child to the diverse and dynamic relations that take place within the preschool community. Here, play is understood as a significant part of children’s daily lives in preschool and, therefore, a fruitful context within which to explore the processes of belonging and exclusion. Our research question is, thus: What kinds of tensions can be identified when children are included in and excluded from play situations?

15.2 The Politics of Belonging: A Relational Approach to Belonging and Exclusion

This study takes a relational approach to belonging and is theoretically informed by Sumsion and Wong’s (2011) conception of belonging, which draws on theorizations and conceptualizations from a range of disciplines. Rather than concentrating on individuals, the study focuses on how belonging and exclusion emerge in the many relations that exist among human beings, culture, and the environment. A few studies (Antonsich, 2010; Peers & Fleer, 2014; Stratigos, 2015) call for further theorization of the concept of belonging as both an everyday concept and a theoretical or philosophical one. In accordance with recent studies, meaningful relations for the processes of belonging are understood more broadly than as simple social relations: for instance, material, political, and cultural relations are considered (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016; Sumsion & Wong, 2011). Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) employ the relational materialistic approach, which opens up possibilities to understand the child as emergent in relations.

Using theoretical mapping, Sumsion and Wong (2011) conceptualize belonging as a complex phenomenon that can be approached from two perspectives: the dimen-

sions of belonging and the axes of belonging. First, they define ten overlapping *dimensions* that constitute the multilayered nature of belonging: emotional, social, cultural, spatial, temporal, physical, spiritual, moral/ethical, political, and legal. These dimensions reflect the ways of experiencing belonging, illustrating how one can belong in different places and times in multiple ways. However, since Sumsion and Wong (2011) do not understand belonging as a passive ontological state, another perspective reflecting the dynamic nature of belonging is needed. This second perspective comprises three *axes* of belonging: categorization, resistance and desire, and performativity. Like the politics of belonging proposed by Yuval-Davis (2006), these three axes address how, by whom, and for what purpose belonging is cultivated and enacted. However, Sumsion and Wong (2011) extend the concept whereby these processes of belonging can be analyzed within the three axes.

Categorization refers to the national, local, cultural, social, and personal agendas of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, such categories as ethnicity, nationality, and gender can limit people's belonging, even when their own sense of belonging is fluid. Analytical questions relating to categorization include the following: Who are the arbiters of whom, and who belongs? Who is included, who is excluded, and on what grounds? *Resistance and desire* refer to how people reformulate the boundaries of categories: How are categories maintained, transgressed, contested, or subverted, and can people choose where and to what to belong? The third axis of belonging is *performativity*, which reflects the continuous nature of the making and remaking of oneself in relation to other community members. This axis has to do with how people narrate themselves and become narrated by others as members of the community (Sumsion & Wong, 2011; see also Stratigos, 2015). While Sumsion and Wong (2011, p. 32) see Yuval-Davis' (2006) conceptualization of belonging as crucial, they also "think there is scope to tease out and expand the analytical possibilities of the politics of belonging beyond boundary maintenance."

This study explores the politics of belonging by using these three axes to analyze video material from children's play situations. A relational approach provides insights into the complexity of belonging. Sumsion and Wong (2011) challenge us by asking what kinds of everyday practices contribute to belonging, what narratives of belonging are performed, and what resources are mobilized to maintain the categories of belonging. Following Yuval-Davis (2006), Antonsich (2010, p. 645) opens up the politics of belonging as a "discursive resource, which constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion." These theoretical underpinnings emphasize an exploration of the power that exists in the many relations of daily life.

15.3 The Methodology

15.3.1 A Narrative Ethnography and Small Stories

The methodology of this study is based on narrative ethnography (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008), which is not commonly used in early childhood education research. The ontological and epistemological premise of narrative inquiry is that humans make

sense of the world and themselves through narratives (Spector-Mersel, 2010). Traditionally, studies applying narrative approaches have focused on verbal and large-scale life stories as told by adults. Recent narrative research involving children has revealed the multimodality of children’s narration, as well as the potential of children’s spontaneous narration (Kinnunen, 2015; Puroila et al., 2012; Viljamaa, 2012). Rather than concentrating solely on the contents of narratives, narrative research involving children draws attention to the *processes* and *contexts* of narration.

In this study, we applied the concept of small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008), which can be understood as the verbal and nonverbal expressions that emerge in the daily interactions that occur between people and their environments. The study focused on children’s narration; however, the educators and researchers were also involved in telling the small stories that were generated in the preschools. Throughout their everyday lives, children both narrated themselves and were narrated by others as being either inside or outside of groups and communities. Such categorizations occurred not only through verbal narrations but also through interactions with the physical environment, institutional and cultural routines, and children’s manners of being and living in the preschool context.

Narrative ethnography takes a holistic approach to narrativity in children’s worlds. The present study focuses on narrativity in its broad sense: How are children included in and excluded from play groups (see also Gubrium & Holstein, 2008)? By exploring the small stories of daily life, we can gain knowledge about how the politics of belonging emerges in the numerous relations that exist in preschool. Preschools are conceptualized as narrative environments in which children’s everyday narratives are lived, relived, told, and retold (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008; Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). We highlight that not only the social and cultural environment but also the material environment is a significant part of the overall narrative environment (see Bennet, 2010; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016).

15.3.2 *The Research Process*

Four preschools participated in two research projects¹ conducted in Finland in the years 2013–2015. Altogether, there were 104 children, aged 1–5 years old, and 20 educators involved in these projects. The first author of this chapter participated in the everyday life of these four preschools. The research material was created through participatory observation and video recordings in the autumn of 2013. The research material as a whole consisted of 26 h of video recordings and 60 pages of written observations.

¹The BELONG project (*From Exclusion to Belonging: Developing Narrative Practices in Day Care Centers and Schools, 2013–2015, project number 264370*), funded by the Academy of Finland, and the ValuEd project (*Values Education in Nordic Preschools: Basis of Education for Tomorrow, 2013–2015, project number 53581*), funded by Nordforsk.

The research ethics in this study were based on relational morals and responsibility for the “other” (Estola, Kontio, Kyrönlampi-Kylmänen, & Viljamaa, 2010; Noddings, 1984). In practice, this meant creating and maintaining ethical sensitivity and mutual trust throughout the research process. Consent forms were collected from the children, their parents, and the educators and leaders of the preschools that took part in the projects. The names of the participants were also changed. The first author entered the preschools with a desire to understand the interactions, practices, and relations among children, educators, and the environment. She also participated in the material production of the project and the formulation of small stories when the children invited her to take part in their everyday activities. The researcher attempted to be sensitive to the children’s willingness to be filmed (see also Pálmáðottir, Juutinen, and Viljamaa, Chap. 8 in this book).

In collaboration with the second and third author of this chapter, throughout the three phases, the analysis alternately considered the research material and the theoretical perspectives on the politics of belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). In the *first phase*, the research material was analyzed as a whole and organized according to the four preschools. A table with four columns was then created for the analysis. The video material was analyzed from the following perspectives:

- Who was involved in the situation (children, educators, parents, researchers, others)?
- Where did the situation take place (the space in the preschool), and what was the situation about (play, lunch, dressing, sports, etc.)?
- What was happening in the situation?

A fourth column was used to note anything special that drew the researchers’ attention. In the *second phase*, we decided to focus more closely on play situations. The reason for concentrating on play situations was manifold. First, play is a crucial part of children’s daily lives in preschools. Second, play situations appeared to provide a fruitful basis for deepening our understanding of the processes of belonging and exclusion in preschool communities. Finally, the video material contained a variety of different play situations. In this phase, the analysis focused on situations in which the children themselves were negotiating between being insiders or outsiders of play or in which something else seemed to form the group of players. Nearly 15 h of video material were identified as play, and the small stories that comprised these play episodes ranged from 2 min to 1 h. In the *third phase*, the analysis proceeded closer to those moments in which the children were balancing between belonging and exclusion, positioned either by themselves or by others as insiders and outsiders of certain instances of play.

During the analysis process, we applied the three axes of belonging (*categorization, resistance and desire*, and *performativity*) as analytical tools for understanding what was happening in the play situations. According to Sumsion and Wong (2011, p. 33), these axes serve as “a scaffold to critically analysing the politics of belonging.” Based on theoretical assumptions of the axes of belonging (Sumsion & Wong, 2011), an analytical framework was created (Table 15.1).

Table 15.1 Analytical framework based on the work of Sumsion and Wong (2011)

Axes	Analytical questions
Categorization	What kinds of categories appear?
	Who are the arbiters of whom?
	Who is included and who is excluded and on what grounds?
Resistance and desire	What happens when the categories are produced or contested?
	How are categories maintained, transgressed, contested, or subverted?
	Can people choose where to belong and what to belong to?
Performativity	How do children perform and narrate themselves and become narrated by others as part of the community?

15.4 The Findings

Our aim is to explore how the politics of belonging emerged in the play situations by asking what kinds of tensions can be identified when children are included in or excluded from play situations. We identified three kinds of tensions that illuminate the processes of belonging and exclusion in preschool communities. The axes of belonging seemed to be intertwined in the children’s play situations. In the following sections, we explore a variety of small stories to depict how these axes operated in the observed processes of belonging and exclusion in children’s play.

15.4.1 *Tensions Between Stability and Variability*

Our analysis revealed that the processes of belonging involved a tension between stability and variability. We found that age, competence, and gender were meaningful categories for children’s belonging in play groups. On one hand, these categories appeared relatively stable: for instance, the girls often sought other girls’ company (and boys acted the same way). On the other hand, the categories were also constantly challenged and contested. As the following small story shows, being a girl did not inherently guarantee access to a girls’ playgroup:

Three 4-year-old girls are playing together in a hut built of chairs and blankets.

Elli (3 years old): I would like to join that play (points to the other girls with her finger)

Elli to girls: I would like to join you in the hut and play with you.

Tiina: There is no room for you!

Miia: As you can see, you cannot fit in here!

Liisa: This play is for older girls, and we won’t take younger ones with us!

Elli goes to tell the educator that the other girls will not allow her to join in the play. They both return to the hut.

Educator: Let’s make this hut a bit larger so that Elli can also fit in here. You should take Elli, too, to join in the play with you.

Together, they expand the hut, and Elli joins in the play with the girls. The other girls seem to accept Elli taking part in their play.

This play situation involved a negotiation about belonging among four girls. Initially, one of the girls, Elli, was excluded from the play. The other girls used three arguments to keep Elli from joining in the play. First, Tiina and Miia referred to materiality by arguing that there was not enough physical space in the hut for Elli to join. Second, Liisa positioned herself, Miia, and Tiina as older than Elli. Third, the girls referenced competence, suggesting that younger children could not join in the play and that the play involved activities that only the older children were sufficiently competent to do (see also Puroila & Estola, 2014). By excluding Elli, the older girls asserted their belonging. They used the word “us” and emphasized that they shared the same age and space. By expressing her desire to play with them, Elli challenged the age and competence categories that the other girls used as criteria to exclude her. The educator made room for Elli in the hut and told the girls that they could not exclude Elli from the play. Thus, Elli needed the educator’s help to cross the boundary line defined by the playgroup. This small story reveals a tension between the children’s ideas concerning how to formulate a playgroup and the educator’s response to the conflict. This tension echoes the cultural rule to include everybody in play, which could also be interpreted from the perspective of values education. By expressing Elli’s right to participate in the other girls’ play, the educator highlighted the value of belonging.

The next small story illustrates how physical spaces and items were used to categorize the children in the playgroups. One of the participating preschools had a play map made of different colors of cardboard situated in its hallway. The preschool had been divided into different play areas (e.g., home play, drawing, building blocks, cars) by the educators. The children chose both their method of play and the room in which they wished to play by placing their own nametags on the chosen part of the play map:

It is afternoon, and two 4-year-old girls are looking at the play map. Tina chooses to play a board game and places her nametag on the play map. The girls smile at each other; they giggle, and Lisa places her nametag on the same section. They go together to start the board game.

The girls had an idea to do something together, and they used the play map in two ways. First, Tina chose from the existing play categories, and Lisa wanted to join her. Second, they communicated to other members of their community that they would be playing a board game together by placing their nametags side by side. Thus, in this case, the piece of cardboard played a role in the girls’ processes of belonging. However, as the following small story illustrates, it could also create tensions related to belonging:

It is morning in the preschool’s hallway. A four-year-old boy, Alfred, is standing in front of the play map. He seems to wonder which room to choose and what to play this morning. He takes his nametag and places it on many parts of the play map. He moves the nametag away from the map and places it on the wall outside the map. He starts to wander around the hallway alone.

Sometimes, the children resisted choosing a type or space for play, as Alfred did in the small story above. The first time a researcher observed Alfred’s behavior, the

researcher assumed that Alfred simply could not decide what to do. However, the same scene—in which Alfred was left alone wandering in the hallway—was repeated many times during the 5 days of observations. From the perspective of categorization, the play map maintained children’s categories in a particular way: for instance, play areas were organized primarily according to gender. The play map also arranged children based on age: for instance, children under 3 years old were not allowed to enter the construction room because it contained small items, such as marbles.

The practices surrounding the play map also involved a variety of values. The educators’ intention in using the play map was to promote and support children’s long-lasting play. This practice guaranteed peaceful spaces for the children to play and meant that the children did not have to finish and tidy up their play if they wished to continue it later. However, the play map was also a means to control and discipline the children, since its function was to maintain order and divide children according to play areas. The play map also implied that every child should commit to certain play activities.

However, in the case of Alfred, the play map did not help him join the others’ play. Though the purpose of the play map was to divide children into groups, finding a friend to play with requires more than a piece of cardboard on the wall. This became clear when the children were allowed to bring their own toys to the preschool:

It is early morning, and Alfred runs after Jaana, the researcher, in the hallway. With a big smile on his face, he says, ‘Look at me, look what I have got!’ He shows her two soft figures from the cartoon *Angry Birds*, and Jaana looks at them. Then, the educator approaches with another boy, Tim, who also has an *Angry Birds* soft toy. The educator asks, ‘Would you, Alfred and Tim, like to play together?’ The boys express their happiness with a smile and move closer to each other, saying ‘Yes!’ The educator guides the boys into one of the play rooms, and the boys begin a play involving throwing the *Angry Birds* soft toys across the room. The boys laugh loudly together.

Having the same kind of soft toy united Alfred and Tim, and they played together the whole morning after the educator noticed the similarity and helped them create a shared play. This example, like other small stories from our study, illustrates the multiple meanings of materiality for the processes of belonging. In accordance with Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010), our study shows that children have strong relations with artifacts and spaces in educational settings. The material environment not only provides stable physical conditions for children’s play but also plays a powerful role in uniting and separating children.

15.4.2 Tensions Between Including and Excluding

Our research material offered insights into how the axis of “resistance and desire” operated in children’s play situations. There were countless small stories in which the children expressed their desire to be part of a community. Conversely, there were also several play situations in which some children’s attempts to join the play were resisted, and the children were excluded. The processes of belonging and

exclusion seemed paradoxical: some children's states of belonging were strengthened by the exclusion of other children from the play. Moreover, the children did not always want joint play, as illustrated by the following small story:

Maisa: Hey Otto, do you need a friend?

Otto: I would like to play by myself for a while now.

Sanna: So would you, Maisa, play with me?

Maisa: Yes!

Sanna: Let's go and start a play in the home corner; alright for you?

Maisa and Sanna expressed their desire to play with someone, but Otto wanted to play alone. Our research material suggested that being alone was not always a negative thing from the children's perspective. In the above example, the girls accepted Otto's wish to continue his solo play. Furthermore, even though he was playing alone, Otto may still have felt a sense of belonging to the preschool community. This notion raises an important possibility: belonging is deeper than sharing a space or toys with others. The small story above also shows the complexity of belonging, illustrating the challenge of separating the sense of belonging from the politics of belonging. When exploring the processes of belonging, one must consider both perspectives of belonging. Overall, the crucial finding from the material is that children have a right to decide on their own participation (see also Johansson et al., 2016).

The tension between belonging and exclusion also emerged in the following small story:

Two 4-year-old boys, Arttu and Eetu, have started to play with two 4-year-old girls, Sanni and Laila, in the preschool's outside playground. The children are surrounded by several kinds of buckets and spades and are playing bakery. Two other four-year-old girls, Paula and Minea, were previously on the swings on the other side of the playground, but are now moving towards Arttu, Eetu, Sanni, and Laila. Arttu moves towards Paula and Minea and says: 'Only Paula can come with us.' Arttu gently pushes Minea's chest. Paula joins the play with the others. Minea turns around, walks a few meters, and sits down on the lawn. She turns her back to the other children. A few minutes later, the educator comes near the children, stops, and says: 'Oh, you're having such nice play here! Soon, we will go for lunch, but you can still play for a while.'

In this play situation, Arttu used multiple methods to express that Minea was not allowed to join the play. Arttu first prevented Minea from joining in the play by physically pushing her. Verbally, he argued that the children who were already playing were "us" and that Minea did not belong. Minea was upset, and her body language expressed disappointment about being excluded. She moved away, turned her back to the others, and began sulking. Meanwhile, Arttu, Eetu, Sanni, Laila, and Paula shared a space with their toys and continued the bakery play. In this small story, the politics of belonging concerned the simultaneity of insider and outsider states of being. By excluding someone, the children articulated and confirmed their own belonging. When the educator arrived, she immediately assumed that all of the children were playing nicely together, perhaps because they were sharing a space and could be categorized as a play group. However, as in this example, the analysis of our research material showed that the children's play was not always as harmoni-

ous as it first seemed. Instead, children tended to be excluded and to exclude others from shared play mostly when the educators were not present.

The study also revealed how cultural rules influence the politics of belonging. When children had already started playing with someone, they no longer felt obligated to include new children in their play. In such cases, one child’s desire to belong was heard and acknowledged, while another child’s was not. The next small story examines the core of the tension between belonging and exclusion:

Three 5-year-old boys—Oliver, Oscar, and Pete—are in the play room with big blocks. Oscar and Pete have made crafts from their blocks, which they use to battle one another. Oliver builds a craft alone and tries to secure contact with Oscar and Pete by moving closer to them and attempting to make eye contact. The door opens, and Robert comes into the room. Robert moves toward Oscar and Pete, and they tell him that he is not allowed to take their blocks ‘...because these are ours! We are building the enemy!’ Robert moves toward the big box with more blocks. ‘But those are ours, too,’ says Oscar. Robert answers, ‘They are not yours.’ Then, Oliver tell Robert, ‘you can take them.’ Robert starts to build his craft while talking to Oscar and Pete. Oliver, who is positioned between the three boys, tries to get their attention by showing them his craft and repeating, ‘Hey, look at this.’ The other boys ignore him.

At the beginning, Oscar and Pete were building crafts together, and Oliver was close to them, obviously wanting to join in the play. Then Robert came along, and Oscar and Pete first tried to exclude him, arguing that they had the right to all the blocks because they had started building the enemy. Oliver appeared to take Robert’s side, telling Robert that he could use the blocks. Robert started to build the craft, and Oscar and Pete accepted Robert’s desire to join the play by including him in their conversation. Meanwhile, Oliver remained alone. He tried to get the other boys’ attention many times by speaking loudly, but Oscar, Pete, and Robert ignored him. Thus, whereas Robert overcame Oscar and Pete’s resistance by challenging the boundaries of the play and earning the right to use the blocks (which Oscar and Pete had claimed as their property), Oliver failed to do so. Here, as Sumsion and Wong (2011) highlight, the perspective of power relations according to the axis of resistance and desire is highly relevant. Oscar and Pete seemed to possess the power to decide whom to involve in the play, and Oliver and Robert accepted this. Such power perspectives emerged very clearly throughout the analysis and led to more questions about the roles of cultural rules and practices in the politics of belonging.

15.4.3 Tensions Between Individuality and Collectivity

The politics of belonging also impacts the tension between individuality and collectivity. Individual children construct and perform their belonging and positions in relation to other members of their community. The axis of “performativity” creates possibilities to make and remake oneself in relation to others in the community (Sumsion & Wong, 2011). When analyzing play situations from the perspective of performativity, we were able to see the multimodality of the children’s narration:

children performed as parts of the community through diverse social, material, and cultural relations. One such performance occurred later in the small story of Oscar's, Pete's, and Robert's play:

Then, Oscar goes to Robert and takes the blocks from the box. The boys begin to argue. Robert says, 'You are not allowed to take it. It's my block,' and takes the block from Oscar. Oliver says, 'You can take it. All blocks belong to everyone; they are not someone's blocks. You are not allowed to hoard them.' The researcher asks whether all the blocks are shared, and the boys say, 'Yes, they are all shared!' Oliver responds, 'But still you have a lot of blocks.' Robert and Oscar look at him, but they don't say anything. Pete moves to Oscar and Robert and says, 'Let's build something.' They leave Oliver alone.

Oscar and Pete appeared to accept Robert in their play, but not Oliver. First, Robert argued that the blocks belonged to him, but, then, the boys began to play together. Robert seemed to accept the idea of sharing the blocks with Pete and Oscar, but not with Oliver. Meanwhile, Oliver continued to try to join the others' play but was constantly ignored by the three other boys. Oliver also tried to act as a peacemaker and solve the others' arguments by referencing equality and saying that everyone had a right to use the preschool's blocks. In other words, he said that the blocks belonged collectively to everyone and that the boys should compromise and share the preschool's artifacts with others. This episode illustrated both Oliver's individual desire to join the play in multimodal ways and his arguments concerning the children's collective right to share both play and artifacts. The boys' play continued:

Oscar asks Robert to show him his crafts because 'I want to build the same kind of craft as yours.' Robert gives advice to Oscar and Pete, who also want to build the same kind of craft. Oliver looks at the boys while they build and says, quietly, 'I want to, too, but I can't do it.' He does not appear to have the correct block shapes. 'Boys, can I have one of your little blocks?' Oliver asks, kindly. Oscar responds. 'No.' Pete moves next to Robert and Oscar and says, 'We are on the same side.' Then, the boys stand up and begin to walk around Oliver, flying their crafts. 'These three are all flying together again,' the boys say.

Oliver tried to gain acceptance into the other boys' play in several ways. He performed his desire to join the play by building the same kind of craft as the others. However, at the same time, the three other boys seemed to perform acts of belonging among themselves: they did the same things, imitated one another's activities, were physically close to each other, used the word "we," and flew their planes together. Oliver was left alone on the floor, trying to find the same block shapes as the others. Here, the materiality of the blocks played a role in categorizing Oliver as an outsider. These small stories of block play involved the tension between an individual child's right to join in others' play and other children's right to exclude that child if desired.

The tension between individual and collective rights also emerged in the following small story, in which Anna was playing with two children in the playground and Julius approached the educator:

Julius (age 4): Anna won't play with me.

Educator: Oh, should you find another friend, if Anna has already started to play with someone else?

Julius: No, I want to play with Anna.

Educator: Yes, you always want to play with Anna, but if Anna is already playing with someone...

Julius goes alone to the playground.

Julius wanted to play with his best friend, Anna, but the educator highlighted Anna’s individual right to continue her play with others. In this small story, the educator played a crucial role in producing the children’s belonging and exclusion. The educator simultaneously supported both Anna’s belonging and Julius’ exclusion. One might suggest that the educator’s preference was to help the children create larger networks of peer relations. Therefore, the educator did not support Julius’ wish to play with his best friend, Anna. This tension between individuality and collectivity raised the following question: Do children always have to play with everyone, or does a child have the right to choose the friends with whom he or she wishes to play?

15.5 Conclusions

This study aimed to deepen our understanding of how the politics of belonging emerge in children’s play situations in educational settings. The study contributes to early childhood education research both theoretically and empirically, by generating empirical knowledge concerning the tensions involved in the processes of belonging and exclusion. The study has both scientific and pedagogical implications.

The axes of belonging (categorization, resistance and desire, and performativity), suggested by Sumsion and Wong (2011), emerged as fruitful analytical tools for exploring the complexity and dynamics of belonging in children’s play situations. On one hand, the axes helped to identify different categories that were meaningful for the children’s processes of belonging and exclusion, such as the children’s gender and age. By showing that children belong to a variety of categories at the same time, the study responds to Antonsich (2010, p. 653), who calls for scholars to “look for plurality of scales at which belonging is articulated.” On the other hand, the study reveals the dynamics of belonging, showing how the axes of belonging exist in a state of constant movement that results in a continuous making and remaking children as insiders and outsiders. Our findings reveal how the boundaries of play groups are constantly negotiated by children and educators.

Our study draws attention to the diverse tensions and power relations embedded in the processes of belonging. As Stratigos et al. (2014, p. 179) note, boundary lines operate by “simultaneously disciplining the behavior of those inside, while keeping others out.” Our study adds to previous research by providing insights into what happens in the various relations that exist in the daily lives of preschools. The processes of belonging and exclusion take place not only in the social relations between people but also in the children’s relations with their material and cultural environments. The study provides diverse examples of how belonging and exclusion are constructed through physical spaces and items and cultural rules and routines.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study reveals that the means of exclusion among children can be discreet, such as small gestures or tones of voice. In the observed instances of play, exclusion typically occurred when the educators were not present. Thus, the play situations were not always as harmonious as they seemed at first glance. One of the core findings was that it was often one child who was excluded from the shared play situations. In other words, there were few cases of “us and them,” but several cases of “us and the other one.” In accordance with some previous studies, the small stories of our study revealed both the joy of being included and the pain of being excluded from the company of others (e.g., Puroila et al., 2012). These findings suggest that if a particular child is continuously excluded from joint play, the experience may threaten his or her well-being. This notion challenges educators to rethink their pedagogical practices and become more conscious about the tensions surrounding the politics of belonging.

This study contributes to the research on early childhood values education by revealing knowledge of how the value of belonging is lived and enacted in multiple relations within preschools. Thus, relationality is one way to reflect on values and values education. The study further highlights that the tension between individuality and collectivity is at the core of the values of belonging (see also Johansson et al., 2016). Therefore, values and values education play a significant role in the processes of belonging and exclusion. Such information is particularly relevant for modern educational settings, which communicate and teach societal values in a constantly changing, globalized world (OECD, 2016). This study challenges researchers and educators to explore educational settings from the perspective of the politics of belonging, illustrating the need to consciously consider the processes of belonging and exclusion in order to create possibilities for each child to feel belonging in the early childhood education settings.

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Chapter 16

Tacit Discipline in Early Childhood Education



Anette Emilson

16.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is directed toward tacit discipline in early childhood education. The study is part of a Nordic participatory research project, ValuEd, which aims to deepen understanding of the institutionalized fostering of values in Nordic preschools.¹ During the project, it became obvious that discipline was both negatively viewed and neglected by most of the participating educators. It was also noticed that the communication of discipline in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings was often very friendly in character. These findings have prompted the purpose of this chapter, which is to discuss and problematize tacit discipline in early childhood education. The research questions that guide the discussion are: What does the negative attitude toward discipline mean for values education in ECEC? In light of children being treated as rational subjects, how can the relationship between the value fields of discipline and democracy be understood?

It can be established that the fostering of disciplinary values in ECEC institutions has changed over time. Previous research shows how the exercising of power has been transformed from open authoritarian forms to more invisible and friendly arrangements. Several researchers have portrayed how such invisible and/or friendly fostering of discipline is often communicated by routines, rules, and children's self-regulation (Bartholdsson, 2007; Bigsten, 2015; Broström, 2004; Emilson, 2008; Nordin-Hultman, 2004; Puroila, 2002). In a study by Bigsten (2015), social order appeared as an important value for educators in their fostering of good citizens. According to the educators, order could be maintained by teaching the children to

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listen to and obey adults. Nevertheless they also believed in a balance between rules and the children's opportunities to exercise freedom, autonomy, and influence in their daily educational practice. Discipline is also communicated through play, and Tullgren (2003) has shown how educators direct the children's attention to specific play contents and play actions that are considered desirable.

There are also studies, however, showing how educators communicate disciplinary values in an authoritarian way in which the child becomes an object of fostering by adults. Then obedience and adaptation without negotiations are encouraged (Emilson, 2007; Emilson & Johansson, 2009, 2013). Ekström (2006; also Berthelsen, 2005) has found that ECEC institutions foster "normalized, modulated and obedient citizens who are responsible and independent with the ability to join in the system of rules and practices" (p. 16). Some studies show that children are viewed as an active part in the construction of prevailing order, while other studies illuminate how children rather try to adapt to rules and order. For example, Cobb-Moore, Danby, and Farrell (2009) have shown how young children co-construct adult-formulated rules and social order and how they negotiate their own peer-constructed social order and imposition of their rules. In contrast, another study revealed that children strive toward adaptation to prevailing conventions and to the educational system rather than being active participants in the construction of the conventions (Johansson, Cobb-Moore, Lunn-Brownlee, Walker, Boulton-Lewis, & Ailwood, 2014).

Moreover, it is shown that the communication of disciplinary values is gendered (Einarsdottir, 2005, 2008; Johansson, 2007; Palludan, 2007), something educators may not be aware of. Educators' contradictory reasoning about gender issues is shown in several studies (Hedlin, 2007; Thorne, 1993). On the one hand, gender neutrality is emphasized, but on the other hand, gender duality is taken for granted, in the meaning that girls and boys are seen as biologically different (Emilson, Folkesson, & Moqvist Lindberg, 2016). Erden and Wolfgang (2004) have shown, for example, how educators treat girls and boys differently when they misbehave. While the boys are treated rather strictly with references to rules and consequences, the girls are encountered deliberately. Moreover, Einarsdottir (2005, 2008) has found that the girls appeared to accept the rules in preschool, while the boys tried to challenge them. Palludan (2007) has revealed that educators discipline boys' and girls' voices differently. Girls are asked to be quiet or requested to repeat their inquiries with quieter voices more often than is the case for boys. Hence, boys and girls appear to have different opportunities to interact, express themselves, question, and relate to rules (e.g. Emilson & Johansson, 2013; Hellman, 2010; Johansson, Emilson, Röhle, Puroila, Broström, & Einarsdottir, 2016; Månsson, 2000). Disciplinary values seem to be communicated more or less implicitly through rules for behavior and the child's self-regulation. However, the role that gender plays in relation to disciplinary values is not obvious, as children are capable of both upholding and transgressing traditional gender patterns (Johansson, 2007; Markström & Simonsson, 2011).

Findings from the Nordic participatory research project about values education confirm previous research about disciplinary values, but this project in addition reveals that disciplinary values are neglected in the educators' talk about values education since they seem to view discipline as something negative. Another finding

to add is that children often are treated as rational subjects (Johansson et al., 2016) in the meaning that they are treated as both sensible and reasonable people worth listening to. This can be seen as a consequence of the transformed exercising of power, where open authoritarian forms have changed into more invisible and friendly expressions (Johansson et al., 2016). Questions about the relationship between discipline and democracy arise, which can be identified as a gap of knowledge in previous research, together with a critical discussion about what this tacit and friendly disciplining of children's behaviors means for values education in ECEC.

16.2 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

In the Nordic ValuEd project, Jürgen Habermas' theory was used as an overall theoretical framework (see Chap. 2). In the discussion of tacit discipline, four essential concepts derived by Habermas have been useful: life world, system, communicative action, and strategic action. Habermas (1995) suggests an analysis from both a life world and a system perspective if we want to understand as fully as possible a phenomenon in society. The life world perspective means to turn to the participants themselves with the purpose of attaining their point of view and acquiring an inside perspective of the studied phenomenon. On the other hand, the system means to address the conditions that might frame the phenomenon in focus, for example, the laws, policy documents, organization, and economy. While the life world is based on a communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding, the system is based on a strategic action oriented toward goals and success. To clarify, the intention behind a communicative action is shared understanding between people, while the intention behind a strategic action is to reach specific goals effectively. Of importance to emphasize, however, is that the perspectives and the actions are to be viewed as complementary, and according to Habermas, the life world and the communicative action should be in focus, without disregarding the systemic circumstances. The discussion in this chapter will use both the perspectives and the communication forms to problematize tacit knowledge. Previous findings from the Nordic project comprise both the educators' point of views through interviews and observations, and the systemic conditions that frame their practices like the ECEC curricula from the different countries. These previous findings concern values education in different ways, but not explicitly tacit discipline even if the phenomenon is implicitly touched. Therefore, in this chapter, I use some published findings and examples from the project, interpreted in the light of discipline. In the analyses I have looked for how discipline explicitly or implicitly appears in the publications. Thus the examples and quotes presented in publications from the project are re-analyzed with the purpose of answering the present research questions. Also, findings from different studies are used as a base for the discussion. The following publications constitute the empirical data for the chapter:

- Bjervås (2016). Spänningsfält i det värdepedagogiska arbetet i förskolan. (Chapter)
- Einarsdóttir et al. (2014). Democracy, caring and competence: values perspectives in ECEC curricula in the Nordic countries. (Article)
- Emilson and Moqvist-Lindberg (2016). Värdefull förskola. Perspektiv på värdepedagogiskt arbete. (Book)
- Emilson et al. (2016). Gender Beliefs and Embedded Gendered Values in Preschool. (Article)
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16.3 Disciplinary Values As Negatively Viewed and Neglected

The first issue to discuss refers to the discovery that disciplinary values are often neglected and/or negatively viewed by the participating educators from the different Nordic countries. Some educators from one Icelandic preschool are, however, an exception, since they actually chose discipline as a value to focus and develop during the project, together with the values of care and respect (Sigurdadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016). Discipline was, however, experienced as the most complicated value to handle, with the explanation that the value is negatively viewed and that people are reluctant to talk about discipline in the context of early childhood education (Sigurdadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016). Because of the silence around disciplinary values, these educators found this even more important to clarify (*ibid.*). One can ask why this negative view toward discipline is so prominent in the data.

One reason might be that discipline as a value is not explicitly expressed in educational policies of early childhood education in the Nordic countries, in contrast to other values such as democracy, care, and competence which all are emphasized and prioritized in the different curricula (Einarsdóttir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015). This might explain why most of the participating educators were unwilling to talk about or focus on developing disciplinary values. It is, for example, known from the Swedish part of the project that the educators started their participa-

tory process with a careful reading of their curriculum and focused on what kind of values should be prioritized in ECEC according to the system. The purpose was to choose a value or value field to develop during the project and, in so doing, also implement the curriculum and a systematic quality work advocated by policy documents and, thereby also, the system. Their review resulted in choices of values closely related to the field of democracy (Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilson, 2016), which was in line with their assignment. During the whole project, these educators relied strongly on the curriculum. The document was used not only for planning activities and valuations but also for defending and/or explaining activities to parents, politicians, and/or researchers (Emilson et al., 2016). Hence, a suggestion is that the system, through policy documents, affects the priority of values and how to define and live these values.

Since disciplinary values are not explicitly expressed in policy documents, there is a risk that they fall outside the educational discussion, which in turn might lead to a negative and neglecting attitude. But on the other hand, one can ask, what would a curriculum signalize that explicitly expressed order and rules? One can also ask, what happens if discipline is not discussed and problematized at all in educational practice and thereby left to personal interpretations and actions? Although there is a reluctance to talk about discipline, it does not mean that discipline does not exist in the Nordic ECEC practices. Findings from an observational study in the project, concerning children's rights, indicate several strategies for exercising discipline, like ignoring, correcting, and threatening children. Very few observations, however, comprised explicit authoritarian forms. Instead discipline often took on a friendly and benevolent expression (Johansson et al., 2016). Thus, so far, one might say that the system advocates neither disciplinary values nor authoritarian educating but seems to encourage implicit disciplinary forms. From a life world perspective, one interpretation is that some kind of discipline and adaptation to social order appears desirable among the educators, as long as it is mediated in a nonauthoritarian and implicit way.

Thus, previous findings indicate that the educators prefer tacit discipline, while explicit discipline seems to evoke discomfort. It is shown how educators differentiate themselves from authoritarian attitudes or behaviors (Puroila, Johansson, Estola, Emilson, Einarsdottir, & Broström, 2016), which became evident in an analysis of the educators' discussion about a dressing situation in ECEC. The educators from the different Nordic countries reflected on and interpreted the same narrative, and their interpretations were very much similar regardless of their country or cultural context. Strong criticism was raised toward how the educators in the narrative communicated with the children. "The educators interpreted that there was a lot of negatively oriented interactions: forbidding, correcting and even shouting at the children" (Puroila et al., 2016, p. 148). Such strategies do not seem to fit very well with the prevailing view of children as competent, equal, and rational subjects (Johansson et al., 2016), which also might be a reason for the negative attitude toward discipline. The educators seem to value strongly their role as a listener and a sensitive supporter, with mutual understanding and guidance characterized by respect. The value of respect and respectful communication are recurring in different studies linked to the ValuEd

project (Folkesson, 2016; Johansson et al., 2016; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 2016; Sunesson, 2016; Söderlund Wijk, 2016). Moreover, a finding is that respectful encounters seem to include the idea of children as rational subjects and implicit disciplinary forms (Johansson et al., 2016), which will be further developed below.

16.4 A Friendly and Benevolent Discipline

The second issue to problematize is related to the finding that the communication of discipline is often of a friendly and implicit character, in which children are treated as rational subjects. This raises questions about the relationship between discipline and democracy, which will be discussed from the perspective of Habermas' (1995) theory by using his concepts of strategic and communicative actions.

In a previous study it is shown how disciplinary values almost always were communicated strategically (Emilsson & Johansson, 2009) where the teacher became the subject and the child an object. Some strategies used were firm correcting of children's behaviors, threats and yelling. These power strategies still occur in the data from this project, but there are also indications of changes in the communication of disciplinary values. Even if the communication often is still interpreted as strategic, goal-oriented, and of a subject-object character, the tone of voice differs from the previous study. More often the communication is described as friendly and benevolent. When correcting children's behaviors verbally, the expressions were often gentle and cheerful, and also bodily corrections were mild, for example, by placing a hand gently on the child's hand (Johansson et al., 2016).

Another friendly power strategy of a tacit character is ignoring. Observations show how educators sometimes choose not to comment or pay attention to a behavior that is not fully accepted (Johansson et al., 2016). These observations do not, however, give any explanations as to why ignoring is used as a strategy. Several reasons are possible; one might have something to do with the expressed discomfort of open disciplinary forms, as well as the ambition to treat children with respect even if the child is being corrected. It might also be a conscious choice to ignore what is to be viewed as incorrect and instead confirm what is to be viewed as good behavior.

The ValuEd project reported that the educators developed their views on, and their relationships with, the children during the project toward a more positive attitude in which children's competences were emphasized (Johansson et al., 2014; Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilsson, 2016). Through systematic observations, some educators discovered, for example, how often they said *no* and corrected the children without any further consideration. This insight led to a change of focus. Instead of just saying *no*, they started to ask the children more open questions and tried to find solutions or suggestions together with the children (Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilsson, 2016). Another identified change during the project was that the educators went from a focus on the children and how they should develop and change behavior, to a focus on themselves and their own professional development in relation to the

children, but also in relation to each other as colleagues. Educators and leaders describe this in terms of an open, positive, permissive, and curious atmosphere (Johansson et al., 2014; Moqvist-Lindberg & Emilson, 2016; Rosendahl, 2016). This means that also the participation in the ValuEd project could have had an influence on tacit discipline. Is it a good thing then that open authoritarian forms of discipline have changed into more tacit forms and an atmosphere characterized by a positive and permissive attitude? It is difficult to answer anything but *yes* to such a question. The problem is, however, that power expressions and processes are harder to catch sight of when the control is of a friendly or implicit character (Bartholdsson, 2007). Thus, the friendly exercising of power risks making power processes invisible to educators and thereby creates an ambiguity about what kind of power processes that actually are involved. Instead there seems to be a kind of surreptitious disciplining, in which the exercise of power is about getting the child to do what the educator wants, but based on the child's own free will. In other words, it is about controlling children by getting them to control themselves, which might be interpreted as good pedagogy. What should be emphasized here, however, is that power is not always something negative.

Such implicit discipline, as described above, is embedded in the pedagogy, and is exemplified in the Finnish case study about the use of traffic lights to communicate rules for play. A green light was the symbol for play, a yellow light was a sign to round off the play, and a red light was the symbol for cleanup (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016). The traffic light became the solution for a chaotic situation in the preschool with the purpose to help both the educators to maintain control over the children's behaviors and the children to adapt to the situation by also motivating them to tidy up so other activities could begin (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016). Moreover, it was obvious that the educators decided when to switch the light, expressed as an agreement between the educators and children.

At first, we didn't actually think about who is allowed to change the lights. Then the card-board was torn many times and we fixed it. Then some children started to argue about who can change the light. So then we said let's make an agreement that it is the adult who changes it (Juutinen & Viljamaa, 2016, p. 200).

The educators put forward that they made an agreement. One can ask between whom this agreement is made. It rather looks like an adult decision and a strategic action, maybe of a disguised character. According to Habermas (1995), a strategic action can be conducted either openly or disguised. If the strategic action is open, the goal-oriented intention behind the action is explicit from the very beginning, while it is hidden in a disguised strategic action (see also Emilson, 2008). Not only the decision expressed in the excerpt but also the traffic light as a tool for social order can be interpreted as disguised strategic actions in which the children are expected to control themselves. Nevertheless, this kind of control is not to be viewed as a new phenomenon. As early as the 1990s, the Swedish researcher, Kenneth Hultqvist (1990) highlighted this disguised control and conceptualized it as a productive exercise of power. His findings, however, were derived from policy analysis, while the findings from the present project foremost are empirically based. This

way of governing can also be related to the rhetoric about the pink pedagogy (Callewært & Kallos, 1992) and the hidden curriculum (Broady, 1998) that refers to a norm critical perspective and a side-effect in the transmission of values in an educational context. What can be put forward as a difference in this project compared to previous research is the finding that the communication between educator and child also implies a perspective of children as rational subjects (Johansson et al., 2016).

In the data, the children appear as rational subjects in both formal situations, in which the educators gather the children for conversations of a deliberative character, and informal situations grasped spontaneously in everyday life in ECEC (e.g., Johansson et al., 2016). In both kinds of situations, the children were able to express their perspectives and put forward opinions and arguments. This can be interpreted as an implemented deliberative idea, which can be related to Habermas' democracy ideology in which the communication is emphasized, as well as the value of letting different views meet in argumentations (Englund, 2003; Habermas, 1995). In other words, both conversation and argumentation are of fundamental importance for democracy according to Habermas (1995). The deliberative view has had a major impact on how to understand democracy in educational contexts, at least on a rhetorical level and in relation to older children and youth (Englund, 2004; Roth, 2003). Nevertheless, data from this project indicate that also very young children are involved in procedural communication processes and that they are treated as rational subjects, able to express and argue for their views (Johansson et al., 2016). Therefore I suggest that there is a strong belief in a communication that enables different opinions and values to be formed, debated, and questioned both in the system, here representing a political level and, in the life world, representing a practical level. This can be understood as highly ambitious on the part of the educators, evident in the data through their ways of allowing the children to raise their voices and be listened to. However, with this procedure, commonly based on the idea of consensus, the educators seemed to have a goal-oriented agenda. Ultimately, it was often the educators who had the last word, meaning that it was far from always that the children's voices were also taken into account (Johansson et al., 2016). One can ask if this rational and deliberative idea is just another way of disciplining children, in a tacit way, in the sense of controlling the children in the name of democracy. However, it must also be emphasized that disciplinary values are needed to maintain a democratic society. Self-control of behavior and adaptation to social order are qualifications of importance in a desirable citizenship; however, if discipline values are given too much space, there is a risk for a colonization of a life world based on democracy, critical thinking and the courage leading to resist oppression, and what Habermas (1995) conceptualizes as the reification of people. So, how do we balance between democracy and discipline and make sure that a democratic citizenship is not threatened? There are no easy answers, but the final discussion deals with tacit discipline and examines the implications of its limitations and opportunities.

16.5 Discussion

So far discipline has been discussed as something negatively viewed and neglected in the educators' talk about values education. Discipline is also highlighted as friendly and benevolently communicated with deliberative purposes in which children are treated as rational subjects. With the purpose of understanding this tacit discipline, I have used Habermas' (1995) system perspective with reference to pre-school curricula in the Nordic countries, and his life world perspective with reference to the educators' experiences of their educational practice. It is shown that the curricula influence the educators' understandings of values and values education, on both a public professional level and a personal level (e.g., Emilson & Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016). Notable is that disciplinary values are not explicitly expressed in the different curricula and not mentioned as a subject for discussion among the educators in the project (apart from one Icelandic team). Therefore one suggestion is that there is a relationship between what is expressed in the curricula and what the educators occupy themselves with.

I have also shown that the educators' views of children and their professional assignment do not appear consistent with discipline in terms of strong teacher control and explicit governing of children. This statement is in line with the curricula and the public professional role, since the policy documents rather emphasize lived democracy in terms of children's real influence and participation rather than their adaptation to social order. But this could just as easily be referred to the life world and a communicative agreement in how to view children on a more personal level. Thus, ECEC institutions include both a public dimension expressed in policy documents and a personal dimension, i.e., educators' (and parents' and children's) personal norms and values. In a value pluralistic society, it is not obvious that the personal dimension coincides with the public one. In other words, it is not obvious how the values, decided in the system and expressed in the curricula, are defined and communicated to children in practice, since what is considered as socially desirable differs among individuals, cultures, and contexts (Emilson, 2008). Can the negative view, and the fact that the educators do not talk in terms of discipline, mean that discipline is not desirable in ECEC anymore? Probably not. It is interesting to notice that some educators criticize parents for not correcting their children's behavior (Moqvist-Lindberg, 2016). This means that neither educators nor parents seem to be very fond of disciplining processes, and perhaps both parts expect the other part to take the responsibility for the communication of discipline. Accordingly, tacit discipline might lead to unnecessary misunderstandings between educators and parents, and that disciplinary values fall between the cracks, which might be interpreted as a limitation.

16.5.1 *The Relationship Between Discipline and Democracy*

It can be established that an explicit discussion about the relationship between democracy and discipline is largely missing in the data from the project. Democratic and caring values are definitely prioritized (Einarsdottir et al., 2015, Emilson & Moqvist Lindberg, 2016). With reference to Habermas (1995), I have argued that if disciplinary values dominate educational practice, there is a risk for a colonization of the life world. But the question is if also a lived preschool democracy, as it is expressed in action, can lead to a colonization of the life world. Let me try that idea by using observational data from the Swedish part of the project which is not yet published.

There are several examples in the video-recordings showing how the children are encouraged to make their own choices regardless of what the other children in the group choose. Letting the children choose appears as a democratic expression important to the educators who organize different kinds of “choice-situations”. A video observation from the Swedish data is presented below, in which the children are expected to choose an activity after being outdoors.

A whiteboard on the wall is divided into six activities, decided by the educator. On the whiteboard there are also small magnets with the children’s names. One child at a time is to make a choice by putting one’s magnet in one of the squares representing an activity. Kevin, four years old, is one of the last children to choose an activity. He stands in front of the whiteboard, holding his magnet in his hand, and searches for his friends’ names. He does not pay any attention to the activities. When he finds his friends’ magnets, he starts to count the magnets in the square. He looks disappointed and says, *I hate this*. He puts his magnet in another square and walks away with slow steps (April, 2015).

What kind of choice is actually offered to the child in this situation? It is the educators who have decided the number of activities, which activities to offer, and how many children are allowed to be in each activity. Thus the situation is largely conditioned by the educators. In the example, it is clear that Kevin counted the magnets in the square where he recognized his friends’ names. He found the activity fully booked and expressed his disappointment by saying, *I hate this*. To Kevin it seems more important to be with his friends than to do a specific activity, which he shows by looking for specific names instead of specific activities. We cannot know from the video-recordings the educators’ intentions behind their actions, but maybe they want to strengthen the children as persons, and make them able to resist peer-pressure. It might as well be about an organized plan to maintain control. From the child’s perspective, however, it is not sure that having an individual choice of an activity is the most important expression of experiencing some kind of influence over one’s everyday life in ECEC. More essential is perhaps to be with peers, like for Kevin. This puts other social qualities in the forefront, like adaption to others and a willingness to compromise, which is about both discipline and democracy: discipline in terms of adaption and democracy in terms of negotiation.

Let us turn back to the idea that not only disciplinary values but also lived preschool democracy can colonize the life world. In the presented example, there is the risk for such a colonization. A suggestion is that lived preschool democracy, here

concretized as making one's own choices, can be counterproductive for democratic values. What was meant to be an opportunity to influence the educational practice became rather a limitation for Kevin who probably experienced being strongly controlled instead of having an impact on his everyday life in preschool. Thus, democratic intentions switched over to discipline rather than to democracy. To develop democratic and disciplinary values in ECEC, it is of importance to reflect collectively on how to understand and practice these values, which also highlights the relation between theory and practice. The crucial point is not only to transform theoretical knowledge into educational practice but also to transform educational practice into theory and reflect on the educational consequences.

Another tension field is the one between the individual and the collective. One can ask if encouraging making one's own choices, regardless of what the other children in the group choose, contributes to the fostering of individualistic-oriented values rather than collective ones. We know from previous research that democracy in ECEC often is individual oriented (Emilson, 2014; Westlund, 2011). Individuality is also a strongly emphasized value in this project (Johansson et al., 2014), but at the same time the interviews indicate that the educators are worried about the individualistic society of today and refer to parents who only see to their own child without showing an understanding that they, the educators, must take the collective into account (Bjervås, 2016). But it is also revealed that the educators mainly communicated collective rights concerning shared institutional rights, a shared community for all to participate in, while it was foremost the children who claimed individual rights (Johansson et al., 2016). So there are findings pointing at educators who encourage individuality, while the children are focused on the collective, and there are findings pointing at educators who encourage collective rights, while the children claim individual rights. The conclusion is that the tension field between the individual and the collective also involves discipline and democracy and the balance between individual freedom and adaptation to others. One can ask what this means for the educators' professional role.

The importance of being sensitive to the individual child is strongly emphasized in the data. There is evidence of an eagerness among the educators to follow the children's interests and to understand their point of views, which sometimes leads to the children rather guiding the educators in their profession, than vice versa (Bjervås, 2016; Emilson et al., 2016; Johansson et al., 2014). Such an approach promotes implicit disciplining processes, which can, however, undermine the collective empowerment and education for rights and democratic values according to Johansson et al. (2016). However, Folkesson (2016) has shown how strong teacher control does not necessarily lead to an authoritarian discipline but rather to an explicit leader role that controls the children with respect, playfulness, and sensibility. She argues, with reference to Dewey's (1933) pedagogical philosophy that strong teacher control is also compatible with the fostering of democratic values. "Dewey has never advocated an unconditional openness where children can choose all the time. On the contrary, he has advocated the combination of discipline and freedom" (Folkesson, 2016, pp. 152–153) (my translation). Thus, an educator needs to be able to switch between a strong and a weak framing and control. In other

words, democracy is not to let children do what they want all the time; instead lived democracy requires some kind of adaptation and discipline, too, something that appears as lost in the rhetoric along the way. The lack of discussion about disciplining processes can be seen as a limitation, since there is a risk that the awareness of power expressions is lost and that disciplining processes become a hidden and blurred phenomenon behind a friendly and benevolent facade. This might rather restrict than develop the relationship between children and educators and the correspondence between their different perspectives. With reference to Habermas (1995), I have in previous research claimed that democratic values need a communicative action, based on mutual understanding and respect, but also closeness to the child's perspective, emotional presence, and playfulness (Emilson, 2008). These qualities remain important in the communication of democratic values, but what should be added is that they are also important in the communication of disciplinary values. This means to communicate discipline in an un-authoritarian but conscious way. A suggestion is that also disciplinary values can be mediated in accordance with Habermas' communicative action and the three qualities above. In a way, this is what we have revealed in the project: that discipline is communicated in a way that is friendly, benevolent, and sometimes also respectful.

16.6 Conclusion

According to the findings, a conclusion is that disciplining processes can be both friendly and benevolent, but not necessarily tacit. Instead the study suggests that educators need to be more open and aware of the power expressions and disciplining processes that are going on, and not deny or hide them but rather try to analyze such processes and understand them in relation to democracy. This should be done in order to avoid a situation very similar to sham democracy, in which children's voices are heard and listened to but seldom taken into account. This awareness should also provide opportunities to catch sight of hierarchical power structures, and once these are made visible, they also become possible to change in line with a more equally divided power structure between the educators and children. Educators' closeness to the child's perspective, their emotional presence, and their playfulness are qualities that might open up for negotiations regarding discipline.

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Chapter 17

The Valuable Index Finger: Communicating Democratic Values Through Pointing



Berit Tofteland

17.1 Introduction

At the end of lunchtime, only Jane (2.1 years old), Eve (2.8 years old) and an educator are left sitting at the table. The educator has two lukewarm washcloths to wash the girls' faces. In turn, she throws the washcloths over their heads and begins to play peek-a-boo. Every time a washcloth falls down, everyone bursts into laughter. Eve still has bread in her mouth. While Jane hides under her washcloth, Eve spits the bread out in her hand and puts it on the table. The bread looks like a little ball. When Jane's washcloth falls down, they laugh as usual. Suddenly, Jane points at the bread on the table. Her face expresses astonishment as she looks first at Eve and then at the educator. The educator replies, 'Eve was satisfied'.

The aim of this study is to explore children's pointing during meals as part of communication in early childhood education and to interpret the values communicated therein from a democratic perspective. Even though pointing is likely a universal human skill, by itself it is meaningless; it must be interpreted (Kita, 2003 in Tomasello, Carpenter, & Liszkowski, 2007). In the above observation, Jane's pointing was part of her communication with Eve and the educator. As readers of the observation, we can interpret this scenario from different angles. One possible interpretation is that Jane was searching for information from the educator about *what* was lying on the table. A second possibility is that she was wanting information about *who* had put it there. A third interpretation is that Jane was not seeking information, but her pointing was to inform the educator that Eve had shown poor table manners. While we can reflect on the observation and try to understand it in hindsight, the educator had to interpret and respond to Jane's pointing at the moment of communication. From her response, it seems she interpreted Jane's pointing as a request for information about *why* someone spit bread out on the table instead of

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eating it. Though pointing is meaningful for Jane, this brief observation also reveals how the interpretation of others can change the meaning of the pointing (Tomasello, et al., 2007). Tomasello et al. (2007) have done many experimental studies concerning children's pointing. They recommend that researchers make "rich interpretations" of children's pointing (Tomasello et al., 2007, pp. 706). I follow their recommendation in this study and explore what they describe as the *function* of the pointing. To do a rich interpretation of the function of the pointing means that sometimes I interpret possible *intentions* that children may have when they point, and other times I interpret others' reactions or the *responses* to the children's pointing. The main questions in this study are: *What functions do children's pointing have in communication and what values do they communicate? How can children's pointing be understood from a democratic perspective?*

This study is part of a project focusing on aspects of values education in Nordic early childhood education (Johansson, Fugelsnes, Mørkeseth, Røthle, Tofteland, & Zachrisen, 2015). It aims to explore what values are communicated between educators and children in preschool and how these are conveyed. "Values" refer to principles and general guidelines for behavior by which human actions are considered good or desirable (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Values education features educational practices in which values "... are mediated to or developed in the child" (Johansson & Thornberg, 2014, p. 19). In education, values of democracy are encountered daily as children interact with each other and with educators (Biesta, 2011). This study explores what kind of values *children* communicate through the act of pointing. Because the responses to their pointing can change the meaning of the pointing, the analysis has both a relational and contextual approach.

Since its emergence in the city of Athens, many scholars have participated in the debate to define democracy (Biesta, 2015). An enduring question is whether human beings are essentially free individuals or primarily members of a community (Syse, 2004). As values like freedom and liberty relate to individual rights, equality relates to responsibility for the common good. In society, there is a constant tension between values connected to individual liberty and those related to the common good (Mouffe, 2005). This tension can be portrayed in two main ways. One is to describe individual and collective values as dichotomous, which is as different, contrasting and conflicting; here individual and collective values are deemed as irreconcilable. They cannot coexist in the same practice, and the dilemmas have to be solved. Others frame this tension as a false dichotomy (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 124). Mouffe (2005) describes the tension between these two fundamental democratic principles—individual freedom and equality for all—as a "democratic paradox" that cannot and should not be erased in a pluralistic society. The paradox is necessary to foster democracy.

Biesta (2015) claims that the duality between individual and collective values is not only characteristic of democracy but is also questioned in the field of education (Biesta, 2015). On the one hand, education is about how to transform individual wants into what is deemed desirable for the individual child and his or her life with others. On the other hand, education is concerned with what is envisioned as collectively desirable (Biesta, 2015). To promote democracy in a pluralistic society,

Mouffe (2005, pp. 52) notes the importance of what she calls “conflictual consensus,” which implies that participants in society must agree upon the institutional rules and values. At the same time, they must be allowed to interpret them differently. In other words, consensus must be accompanied by dissent.

In preschool, children under three participate daily in many practical situations where their own physical well-being is taken care of, such as having their nappies changed, eating, and sleeping. Meals are a central part of the daily routine. The mealtime is both an individual and shared social situation. Simmel (1993/1957) argues that eating and drinking are egoistic activities as well as common to all people. Seen from the field of values education, the meal presents possibilities for children to learn and communicate values associated with both individuality and collectivity. According to Unger (2005), a Brazilian political philosopher, democracy begins in everyday practices. In countries where he describes the political government as “the dictatorship of no alternatives” (Unger, 2005, p. 1), there is no alternative way for citizens to act; they must obey and relate to what *is*. The main value and action to promote democracy is resistance. The participants must be exposed to alternate ways so they can understand how these everyday situations *could* have been or *can* be. They must realize that society’s structures and values are not hidden in invisible ideas but are implemented in the practical activities of everyday life. Thus, changes toward a more democratic society must begin in day-to-day, real-world situations and with disobedience. Unger (2005) calls these processes *democratic experimentalism*. According to Carpendale and Carpendale (2010), examining children’s pointing as a form of communication makes it possible to study a first step towards what it means to be human. By exploring children’s pointing in everyday situations through the lens of democracy, the current study contributes knowledge about children’s initial steps towards what it means to be a participant in democracy.

17.2 Previous Research About Democratic Values in Preschool

Educators describe their moral functions in preschool as traversing through a “messy landscape” (Puroila & Haho, 2017, pp. 540). The educators must navigate through changing situations, diverse values, and moral dilemmas. Research about democracy in the daily lives of preschool children can also be described as “messy landscape,” as it has been explored from many different angles, both theoretical and methodological. Despite these complexities, Emilson (2009) characterizes two main discourses about democracy in educational contexts: taught democracy and lived democracy. Taught democracy means that children learn about values that they will need later in life to be good citizens who can participate in a democratic society. Lived democracy is democracy in the here and now in children’s life. For example,

this study describes how children participate by using their index fingers as part of their communication during mealtimes.

Some studies investigate democracy in preschool from a communal perspective and analyze how the preschool emphasizes collective values (Johansson, Emilson, Röthle, Puroila, Broström, & Einarsdottir, 2016; Kjörholt, 2005; Tofteland, 2015; Winger, 2008). However, a central approach has been to explore democracy from the perspective of children's individual rights within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (Bae, 2012; Emilson, 2008; Pettersvold, 2016). These studies reveal that whether children's rights are upheld depends on how educators act and communicate with them. The quality of the relationship between educators and children can either stimulate or hinder children's possibilities to participate (Bae, 2009). A challenge that educators face when trying to promote democracy in early childhood education is finding a balance between individual and collective values (Zachrisen, 2016). Adults and children also communicate different values concerning democracy: while children mainly claim individual rights, educators strive to foster collective rights (Johansson et al., 2016). Conflicts, children's resistance, and opportunities to negotiate are also described as democratic practices in preschool institutions (Grindheim, 2014; Grindland, 2011; Johansson & Emilson, 2016; Kjörholt & Winger, 2013; Seland, 2013).

Routine situations in preschool, such as mealtimes and dressing in the locker room, offer children opportunities to participate in democratic processes (Emilson, 2008; Johansson et al., 2015; Mørkeseth, Tofteland, Johansson, Röthle, & Fugelsnes, 2015; Ødegaard, 2006; Tofteland, 2015). In such situations, however, the educators are less sensitive to children's body language than they are, for example, while playing (Degotardi, 2010). This is because educators must take care of practical issues like going to get bread, pouring milk, and cleaning up spills (Degotardi, 2010). Routines and everyday schedules can also affect educators, causing them to neglect young children's body language and reducing their possibilities to participate (Nyland, 2009). This could be because verbal language holds a leading position in society, whereas the dominant form of communication for children less than 3 years old is body language (Greve, 2009; Løkken, 2000). However, when preschool educators observe children's body language, like a pointing finger, and follow their initiatives, this gives children opportunities to democratic practices as it can influence and change what is going on in the whole mealtime community (Myrstad & Sverdrup, 2009).

17.3 Theories About Pointing As Communication

Researchers disagree about how to conceptualize children's pointing (Carpendale & Carpendale, 2010). In earlier studies, the functions of pointing were theoretically conceptualized into two main categories: proto-imperative and proto-declarative (Bates, Camaioni, & Volterra, 1975). The meaning of both proto-imperative and

proto-declarative pointing is to affect others, but in different ways. The function of the first, pointing proto-imperative, is to make an inquiry of others. The child wants the object pointed at but needs help from others to get it. One example can be when the child wants ketchup on his or her macaroni and points at the bottle of ketchup standing outside of his or her reach. This pointing signals a question directed toward someone to do something; thus, the “someone” becomes a tool for the child to get the object. The second function mentioned in earlier studies is pointing as proto-declarative. This is when the child points to get others’ attention. One example is when a child points at an airplane. He or she does not necessarily want the plane, but the function can be understood socially. Either the child wants to direct others’ attention to the plane or to him or herself; the object pointed at becomes an instrumental tool to get attention from others (Carpendale & Carpendale, 2010).

Both proto-imperative and proto-declarative pointing are instrumental ways to communicate (Tomasello et al., 2007). However, children also point because they understand that others are attentional and intentional agents (Liszkowski, Carpenter, Striano, & Tomasello, 2006). Therefore, the function of proto-declarative pointing was extended theoretically to the categories of expressive and informative declarative pointing (Tomasello et al., 2007). This extension of concepts and functions creates opportunities to interpret children’s pointing as less instrumental and more socially oriented. Expressive pointing is when children want to share their feelings and interests about an object, event or location with others—they point and anticipate that others will share their enthusiasm (Liszkowski et al., 2006). With expressive pointing, pointing at an airplane can communicate the enjoyment of simply seeing the plane and sharing this delight with others. Although expressive pointing has a social function, informative pointing is more about cooperation and functions as a way to inform or help others. The child is aware of others’ needs for information and communicates this through pointing, without any immediate benefit for him or herself (Liszkowski et al., 2006). Categorizing children’s pointing as informative assumes that young children are conscious that they possess information that other people need. With informative pointing, the purpose of pointing at an airplane could be to inform others about the relationship between a sound and the plane they see high up in the air.

In addition to the four categories that describe how children’s pointing functions in communication—proto-imperative, proto-declarative, expressive, and informative—Bates (1976 in Carpendale & Carpendale, 2010) described a fifth function of children’s pointing: private pointing. Initially, private pointing is not communicative, rather it is a manifestation that the child’s attention is drawn to something. The purpose is to explore the object being pointed at, even when the child cannot reach the object or does not want to have it. Children’s index finger usage develops from private to communicative action when they are about 12 months old (Carpendale & Carpendale, 2010).

According to values education, the function of private and proto-imperative pointing is more about taking care of individual needs and the child’s own desires. The purpose of the other three—proto-declarative, expressive, and informative—is more social and collectively oriented (Tomasello et al., 2007). These five functions

of children's pointing are appropriate analytic tools for this study, as it explores how children's pointing functions during mealtime communication and how the values they communicate can be understood from a democratic perspective.

17.4 Methodology

This study is part of a Norwegian action research project that focuses on values education in daily activities in preschools (Johansson et al., 2015). Five researchers from the University of Stavanger, 230 educators, and 650 children from 7 preschools participated. The preschools were in two municipalities, and the children were 1–4 years old. The overall aim of the project was that educators should learn about values as theoretical constructions as well as identify and reflect upon how they communicated values in their practical encounters with children.

Different methods were used to construct the empirical material, including interviews with different groups of staff at the beginning and end of the project, narratives from educators about everyday interactions, and video observations from different everyday situations such as playtime, locker room time, and mealtime. The empirical material chosen for this study comprised 14 video recorded observations from mealtimes in four preschools. I constructed two of the video observations, and the three other researchers created the other. One reason why I choose to *observe* mealtimes is that in my doctoral thesis I explored *conversations* about mealtimes with educators at four preschool departments for children less than 3 years old (Tofteland, 2015). The results revealed that some interactions during the conversations promoted mealtimes as situations where the children could practice democracy and communicate democratic values like disagreement (Grindland, 2011). In the current study, I wanted to gain more knowledge about how children participate in mealtime conversations and how they practice or live out democracy.

The first analytic phase involved watching the 14 recorded video observations from the meals, listening to the conversations and observing what was going on. The observations lasted from 10 to 35 min, totalling 5 h and 43 min. The number of participants gathered around each table varied from 2 to 9 children and from 1 to 4 educators. One day while I was observing one of the videos, a phone call interrupted me. I switched off the sound from the video but continued to watch during the phone conversation. I suddenly realized there were many arms, both the educators and children's, stretched out in different directions across the table. After I had finished the phone call, I began a second analytic phase and narrowed my focus to situations where there were arm movements. In many situations, the arms crossed the table to receive or catch something. However, I also identified that both educators and children pointed a lot with their index fingers stretched out. Pointing was less involved in meals where most of the children were over 3 years old, so in the third phase, I chose 12 observations where most of the children were less than 3 years old. Pointing was part of the mealtime communication in all the observations and included observations from all preschools. Totalling, there were 36 episodes where

children were pointing. The number of participants gathered around a table varied from 2 to 6 children and from 1 to 4 educators. I described shortly what each episode was dealing with. I went back and forth between reviewing each of the 36 episodes, reading theories about pointing, democracy, and my own descriptions of the observation. I tried to understand the human life (the pointing) as contextual and this analytic step was hermeneutic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Following Tomasello et al.'s (2007) recommendation, I made a rich interpretation of the children's pointing. Sometimes, this implied trying to understand what intention the child might have and other times the effects or responses of others to their pointing. I identified all five different functions of children's pointing. While the main concern of this study is to explore the function of children's pointing as *communication*, I included the private function of pointing as a category here based on my assumption that communication is more than simply taking part in a *conversation*. The children who point privately are part of the mealtime community and are all *potential* participants in the communication.

After I categorized the pointing episodes into the five different functions of children's pointing, my interest was drawn particularly to one observation from a meal that lasted for 35 min. My reason for choosing to go deeper into this observation was that one of the boys, Anders (2.2 years old), participated enthusiastically in the mealtime conversation through pointing. Sometimes he used one of his index fingers, but sometimes he also pointed in different directions and at different targets using both his index fingers simultaneously. I identified all the five categories of pointing performed by Anders during this only meal. In addition to Anders, there were three girls (Kari, 3.2 years old; Helle, 2.3 years old; and Milly, 3.2 years old) and two other boys (Linus, 2.1 years old, and Hjalmar, 3.1) who participated in the meal. Elin was the only educator. They were seated around a high, square dining table. The children in high chairs that allowed them to sit at approximately the same level as the educator. While the video camera was directed toward the side of the table where Anders and Elin were sitting, it captured the whole table and all the participating children. Anders was sitting at the right edge of the table, Elin was on his left side, and Linus at his right around the corner of the table. The atmosphere was calm during lunchtime. Some children talk together, others eat and do not participate in the conversations. Elin chats with all the children, serving sandwiches from a common plate, smiling and helping those who need it to divide their sandwiches into smaller pieces or to pour milk into the cups.

17.4.1 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations follow the *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology* (NESH, 2016). To write about children is to write on behalf of children; this reveals the need for special ethical considerations (Pettersvold, 2016). We can never be sure what intentions children have or what meaning an activity has for them. Thus, qualitative interpretations must be described

with compassion (Leer Salvesen, 2009). Since I was not present in the room myself, I had to work with what was visible on the video. By interpreting Anders' pointing from different angles, I tried to understand his perspective with compassion. This was enhanced when I interpreted the function of his pointing contextually, focusing on what the other children and adults were doing and saying in response to his pointing. To interpret the observations from different angles and make my analysis more transparent, I offered thick descriptions of what values he might be trying to communicate.

17.5 Discussion

17.5.1 *Individual Values of Desire and Enjoyment*

Here, I present my observations from the only mealtime where Anders points. Though the communication where Anders participated by pointing, was fluid, I present his pointing here as three separate occasions. Anders is the focal point in all of them. The first episode is from the very beginning of the meal.

One by one, Elin hands the plate with sandwiches to the children. Anders chooses a sandwich with a soft and sweet cheese and puts it on his plate. With his right index finger, he scrapes the cheese off the sandwich. He does this in various ways, each time putting a finger in his mouth, licking it for a long time while looking around. Sometimes, Elin looks at Anders while she participates in a conversation with Hjalmar and Helle.

When Anders puts his finger on the cheese and into his mouth, he touches what he points at. His pointing is not meant for others and can be described as *private*. When Elin observes this without interrupting him, it seems she accepts his initiative to satisfy his personal desires. What is desirable for him becomes desirable for her. Responses, such as Elin's, allow children to bring their own initiatives into the world they share with others, enabling them to come into existence as a subject. Having others who carry out our initiatives is crucial to become a democratic subject (Biesta, 2015).

17.5.2 *Paradoxes of Values*

Though Anders communicates values connected to individual desire in this meal, he is aware of what is happening around him in the community. In the next episode, Anders first points at Jane (2,1), who comes over from another table, and, secondly, he points at his cheese again, but this time without touching it.

Jane (2.1 years old) comes into the angle of the camera from Anders' left side. Anders turns around and points at Jane with his left index finger. At the same time, he turns toward the educator, still pointing at Jane, and says: 'Jane!'. Elin turns toward Jane who says: 'Cheese?'. As Elin extends the plate filled with sandwiches to Jane she replies: 'Do you

want cheese, you?’ Jane takes a sandwich with cheese, but a different cheese than Anders has, and returns to her own table. Anders and the other children have silently observed this situation. Elin explains to them that Jane wanted a sandwich with cheese because there were none left at her table. Anders continues to eat his sandwich, but suddenly he turns toward Elin again. He tries to come close to her face and she bends down. Their foreheads meet; they make eye contact and smile. After a while, Anders returns to his first position, looks at his plate, and points at his cheese without touching it. He looks at Elin once more and says: ‘Sweet cheese!’. Elin confirms, smiling: ‘Yes, you’ve got sweet cheese on your sandwich’. Anders continues to eat, and Elin participates in a new conversation with other children.

In this episode, the function of Anders’ pointing is not *private*, it is meant for others. I primarily interpret the function of his pointing at Jane as *informative*; the educator, Elin, is the receiver. He informs Elin that Jane is coming. From a value perspective, this information can be interpreted in two different ways. The first interpretation is that he informs Elin that Jane is coming and needs her help. In that way, he transfers the responsibility for Jane to Elin. This communicates values of trust. By pointing, Anders trusts that Elin is both capable and willing to help Jane. His pointing can also communicate values of solidarity, care, and empathy for Jane. Another way his pointing can be interpreted as informative is that he informs Elin that Jane transgresses the “common order” of the meal by walking around. With this interpretation, his pointing communicates values related to order and discipline. By informing Elin, who is in charge of the community, he believes that she needs this information to ensure the integrity of the meal system.

Secondly, I interpret the function of Anders’ pointing as *expressive* and view this in two different ways. The first is, by pointing at Jane, he communicates that he is glad to see her. Maybe he wants to include her in the community around his own table. By pointing and simultaneously looking at Elin, he wants to share this feeling with her. His pointing then communicates values of happiness and belonging to a community. The second way to construe his pointing as expressive is connected with the fact that he is bound to his chair. While Jane is walking around, he must sit at the table and obey the common rules. In this interpretation, his pointing can express feelings of disappointment and values like unfairness and a lack of equality.

At the end of the episode, Anders points a second time, now at the sweet cheese on his sandwich. He does not touch the cheese as he did in the first episode. Instead he looks at Elin while he is pointing at the cheese. My interpretation of the function of this pointing is that it is more socially oriented this time than in the first episode. Under these conditions, his pointing could be proto-declarative, expressive, and informative, and these diverse functions communicate different values. First, if the purpose of Anders’ pointing is proto-declarative, his finger becomes an instrument to direct Elin’s attention toward the cheese and toward himself. The values he communicates relate to individual desire and the need for attention from someone. Elin confirms that she sees the target of his pointing as well as his desire for attention, thus making what he wants desirable for others. Such transformations are basic for taking part in democratic praxis (Biesta, 2015). Second, if the function of Anders’ pointing at the cheese is expressive, he communicates feelings about the cheese on

his sandwich. Maybe he likes the taste and wants to share this preference and individual values of enjoyment, well-being and satisfaction with Elin. If so, he communicates that he has confidence in Elin that she will share his individual values of enjoyment and desire. Again, trust can be a basic value if the function of his pointing is expressive. Third, if Anders' pointing is understood as informative, he informs Elin that he and Jane have something in common: sandwiches with cheese. If this is the case, by pointing at the cheese Anders communicates that he and Jane belong to a community of children who have cheese on their sandwiches. Sharing individual values can open avenues of communication about collective values such as pleasure and belonging to a shared community. At the same time, he also communicates their individual freedom to choose different cheeses and to satisfy their unique desires. Anders' pointing at the cheese can be interpreted as communicating democratic values like equality, well-being, and belonging to a collective identity, as well as individual values of diversity and uniqueness. The duality of individuality and collectivity are questioned in education (Biesta, 2015), as this episode reveals. To promote a democratic way of living together, Biesta emphasizes the importance of transforming the child's individual desires into what is considered desirable for both the individual child and for his or her shared life with others. This episode reveals that what is desirable for Anders is parallel to what is desirable for Jane and for the educator. Individual and collective desires and values exist side by side in this episode and are communicated in the same pointing action. As the act of pointing can contain multiple desires—both individual and collective—the values associated with individual and collective values appears as paradoxes in this episode. To promote democracy, such paradoxes must not be erased (Mouffe, 2005). Pointing is one way for children to communicate paradoxical values and to live out democracy in preschool. This study also reveals how transformation from desire to desirable during a meal can be important for encouraging a democratic way of living together (Biesta, 2015).

17.5.3 To Perform and Endure Resistance – A Question of Trust?

Before the next episode begins, Linus has been holding his cup for a long time with his right hand. Several times, he has uttered the word “milk.” Twice, Elin has replied that he must eat a little bit more before he can have more milk. Elin participates in a conversation with Helle and Hjalmar at the other end of the table. Sometimes, she turns her head, looking at Linus holding his cup with his right hand and picking at the sweet cheese with his left index finger. Suddenly, Linus cries out very loudly, “MILK!”:

Anders, who so far has been looking at something going on at the other table, turns around quickly and looks at Linus—just as quickly as Elin does. She picks up a knife at the table. Before she manages to ask Linus if he wants her to divide the sandwich into smaller pieces, Anders stretches his right arm forward between Elin and Linus and puts his right index

finger on the cap of the milk carton. Anders keeps his finger there. Without making eye contact with Anders or looking at his index finger on the cap, Elin moves the milk carton out of his reach. Anders withdraws his arm and continues to eat while Elin begins to divide Linus' sandwich into smaller pieces with the knife. She repeats that he must taste his bread before he can have more milk.

In response to Linus' cry for milk, Anders points at the milk cap. This pointing can have three different functions. The first is proto-imperative (he wants the milk), the second is proto-declarative (he wants Elin's attention toward himself, as a person that needs help, or even toward Linus), and the third is informative (he informs Elin that Linus is breaking table rules by shouting and that this can be stopped by giving him milk).

If Anders' pointing is proto-imperative, he communicates that he wants the object pointed at—the milk. Elin then becomes an instrument for him to get the milk. If so, he communicates individual values of desire and his own need for care and help.

Interpreting his pointing the second way, as proto-declarative, the function is to get attention from Elin, not only at the milk carton. If so, Anders no longer points for himself but on behalf of Linus. Linus is the one who needs attention from Elin. The milk carton becomes an instrument to direct Elin's attention toward Linus. From a values perspective, Anders communicates caring values and responsibility for Linus. Linus is the one who desires the milk, and this is desirable for Anders too. Again, he communicates the central value of trust by pointing and thereby transfers his need for help to Elin. He communicates that he has confidence that she can and will help to fulfil Linus' desire for milk.

The third way to understand the function of Anders pointing at the milk is informative. By pointing, Anders communicates that Linus has transgressed the social order of the meal by shouting. One way to stop him is to give him milk. The values Anders communicates are stated in institutionalized rules where order, not conflict, is a main value (Garsjø, 2008). If this is the information that Anders gives to Elin, his pointing becomes a way to negotiate a conflict between Elin, who administers the common ground of an appropriate meal, and Linus, who is breaking the rules. As mediator in a conflict, Anders communicates values related to what is desirable for Linus, for himself and for Elin, who is seen as a protector of collective values. At the same time, by pointing at the milk, Anders supports Linus' resistance to what Elin has asked him to do: eat before he can have more milk. In doing so, the boys seem to be familiar with the mealtime values in preschool and, at the same time, participate in transgressing them. By pointing, Anders communicates values of solidarity with Linus and, at the same time, displays courage to resist the common rules. As Elin moves the milk carton out of Anders' reach, neither he nor Linus get what they desire. They endure this disagreement. Following Mouffe's (2005) thinking, I interpret this situation as one of conflictual consensus. This means that Linus, Anders, and Elin, as participants, agree upon institutional rules and values, while at the same time allowing each other space to interpret them differently and to disagree with them. Again, trust is a basic value in this episode that allows Anders to communicate values of courage, resistance, and disagreements through his pointing.

The result of this study is that it is possible to interpret the function of Anders' pointing as private, proto-imperative, proto-declarative, informative, and expressive. Across these categories, Anders communicated democratic values. My conclusion is that values are expressed paradoxically within the same acts of pointing. One paradox was how Anders conveyed individual and collective values simultaneously. Another value paradox emerged when there was a lack of accordance between Anders' and Linus' intentions and the educator's response to the pointing. When the educator transforms the values that are communicated, the meaning of pointing is changed (Tomasello et al., 2007).

17.5.4 Practical and Political Implications

The aim of this study is to explore children's pointing during meals as part of their communication in early childhood education and to interpret the values communicated from a democratic perspective. The study has both practical and political implications. Practically, as verbal language is holding a leading position in society, whereas the dominant form of communication for children less than 3 years old is actually body language, this study highlights the importance for educators to recognize and respond to children's small motions, such as a stretched-out index finger. The political implications of the study emerge from the tendency to emphasize the significance of children learning academic skills in preschool (Johansson et al., 2015). The contribution of this study is to highlight that everyday situations are important opportunities for children to communicate values and practice democracy. Each moment is a chance to participate (Brunstad, 2009). Educators in preschools must be keenly aware of and respond to the small changes and movements in children's body positions, such as a stretched-out index finger. Interpreting what values children communicate when they point is not an easy task—these moments are short, and mealtimes are complex situations. Educators have an intersubjective obligation to support the opinion of the youngest in order to promote democracy (Hognestad, 2008). To be democratic subjects, children depend on others to take up their initiatives (Biesta, 2015). The educator in this study, Elin, supported Anders' initiatives. She was sensitive to him and responded to his pointing as communication of democratic values such as confidence, solidarity, care, fairness, resistance, responsibility, and respect for others. This study also reveals that the communication of values often emerges in paradoxes, where the educator sometimes overlooks or transforms the meaning of Anders' pointing. Learning democracy implies living with the frustration that how others interpret our initiatives is beyond our control (Biesta, 2015). Children must learn they are part of a world in which everyone exists, and that their own wishes must be transformed into what is desirable for others (Biesta, 2015).

Situations where Elin neglected the children's pointing can be understood via Degotardi (2010), who concludes that it is more difficult for educators to be sensitive to children's body language in practical situations than in leisure time, such as

playtime. Biesta (2007) claims that democracy is not a normal situation but something that happens sporadically. In preschool, democracy can emerge in brief democratic moments (Bae, 2009). Though children's communication of values does not always shine through in this study, it reveals that pointing can be an important way for children to communicate democratic values. This aligns with Noddings (2002), who emphasizes that in the context of moral education, negative, sad, and conflictual experiences are conditions for children to learn to understand other people and their needs for care.

17.5.5 *The Meal As a Situation for Communicating Values*

This study underscores the importance of children participating in daily routine situations in preschool. During meals, both children and educators take part in what Noddings (2002) calls "ordinary conversations"—conversations where they share interests and everyday activities. Though Noddings describes ordinary conversations as incidental learning situations, she emphasizes that they are foundational for moral education. In a cultural context, mealtime is defined as an occasion where central values, skills, and knowledge are transmitted from one generation to the next, facilitating both humanity and identity (Brunstad, 2010). This study reveals that meals are a central opportunity for children to communicate democratic values. Children's pointing as a means of communication is rooted in trust as a core value. Thus, pointing is an important way to live democratically and to participate in democratic experimentalism (Unger, 2005).

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Chapter 18

Discourse of Efficiency: Conflicting Values in Educators' Talk About Everyday Practices in the Cloakroom



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18.1 Introduction

The study discussed in this chapter was part of the Nordic project, ValuEd,¹ which examined values in early childhood education (ECEC). The aim of the present study is to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators' conversations about everyday practices in the cloakroom. In the Nordic preschools, the children get dressed for their outdoor play activities in the cloakroom. The dressing for outdoors is an important part of the daily routine. It has been described as a time-consuming routine, since all the children must be properly dressed for the cold climate (Röthle & Fugelsnes, 2018). The questions addressed are as follows: How does the discourse of efficiency emerge from educators' conversations? What kinds of values can be identified in the educators' descriptions of everyday practices in the cloakroom?

¹The research project Values Education in Nordic preschools: Basis of education for tomorrow, Project No. 53381.

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The results of the ValuEd project illuminate how values are confronted regularly in preschools.² The analyses show how educators experience the pressures of adhering to their own prioritized values and expectations of efficiency and the strictly structured everyday life in the preschool (Johansson, Fugelsnes, Mørkeseth, Røthle, Tofteland, & Zachrisen, 2014, 2015; Puroila & Haho, 2017). Values of efficiency refer to the institutional conditions, organization of the preschool, financial and human resources as well as the achievement of expected results (Johansson et al., 2015). Thus, values of efficiency concern the requirements imposed on the educators by the organization. Values of efficiency also seem to actualize disciplinary values (Johansson et al., 2015).

Various researchers have questioned how focusing on evaluation, measurement and efficiency affects daily lives and pedagogical practices in early childhood education (ECEC) institutions (Biesta, 2010). Biesta (2010), for example, described contemporary neoliberal societies and education in particular, as being endorsed in a time of measurement. He questioned the notion of assessing education to defend its credibility, since there are many dimensions of education, which are impossible to measure. Research has also pointed to the language of economics that interferes in the pedagogical discourse (Berge, 2015; Johansson, 2010). Seland (2009) showed how new ECEC architectures in Norway are literally and ideologically built on the ideas of flexibility and the effectual use of resources. This idea contributes to a new pedagogy and conveys how education and economics are interwoven (Seland, 2009). Berge (2015) described ECEC institutions in Norway as situated in a time of transition, where they must balance between notions of efficiency and a child-centered pedagogy. Arguably, the focus on efficiency poses a threat to the culture of caring in ECEC (Bae, 2009; Østrem, Bjar, Hogsnes, Jansen, Nordtømme, & Tholin, 2009). In Sweden, ECEC institutions have become parts of an education system, which has adjusted to the market (Bjervås, 2011, 2016; Vallberg Roth, 2014). Pramling Samuelsson, Williams, and Sheridan (2015) discussed how political and economic frames influence the curriculum and educators' pedagogical work. The educators in their study described how having to handle large groups of children of different ages makes it difficult to recognize and address each child's needs. This makes their daily pedagogical work stressful (Pramling Samuelsson et al., 2015).

Several studies have shown that Finnish ECEC settings are characterized by constant changes, increasing tempo, large groups of children, and a lack of personnel (Karila & Kupila, 2010; Puroila, Estola, Juutinen, & Viljamaa, 2018; Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2009, 2013). The increasing pressure for effectiveness appears to clash with educators' values of meeting children's educational needs and fostering a peaceful and caring environment for them (Puroila et al., 2018).

In the Icelandic context, Dýrfjörð (2011) stated that the preschool system had lost sight of various fundamental professional values that traditionally characterized its aim and purpose. The neoliberal ideology is aimed at gaining control over professional practice by rewriting regulations in the form of standardized tests and

²Preschool refers here to institutional early childhood settings where children's ages range between 0 and 7 years.

mapping tools. According to Dýrfjörð (2011), this will change the preschool practices into instrumental resolutions of predetermined procedures.

Summing up, the aforementioned studies have indicated that Nordic preschools are under the influence of the present neoliberal notions of society. This has led to a focus on efficiency that advocates measurement and evaluation, organization, and flexibility as well as economic frames, and all of this influences educators' daily work. The increased focus on efficiency seems to collide with the educators' prioritized values in their professional work in preschools. This suggests that values of efficiency influence the educators' daily work, which might lead to changes in the practices in Nordic preschools.

18.2 Focus and Research Question

In this study, values are understood as relational and social agreements for what is seen as desirable and valuable in a culture or context. Values are entrenched by language, history, habits, and social interactions (Johansson et al., 2014, 2015). The present study was intended to shed light on values from a discursive point of view and examine the language dimension – that is, how values are constructed and represented in educators' talk about everyday practices in the cloakroom. The discursive frame was aimed at deepening and extending our insights into how educators in preschools understand and respond to the influences of different values in their daily practices.

The aim of this study is to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators' conversations about everyday practices in the cloakroom. The research questions are as follows:

- How does the discourse of efficiency emerge from educators' conversations?
- What different values can be identified in the educators' descriptions of everyday practices in the cloakroom?

To answer the research questions, we explored expressions of values implicit in educators' conversations about a dressing situation in the cloakroom. Critical discourse analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 1992) was used as the theoretical and methodological framework.

18.3 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is concerned with relationships between discursive, social and cultural continuities and change at the structural level (Fairclough, 2003). In CDA, language is seen as historically and socially constructed and as a social practice through which human beings influence the world (Fairclough, 2003). The word 'critical' refers to the importance of identifying connections that might

not be transparent for those involved in the particular discursive and social practice (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). Through the critical approach, the aim of CDA is to raise people's awareness of their own practice and the ideological dimensions of that practice.

A discourse represents a particular part of the world from a particular perspective by articulating what happens in the world in particular ways (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). The discourse constitutes social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). Within an institution, different discourses are produced, and the researcher should look for competing discourses within the same area to illuminate hegemonic struggles between them (Fairclough, 1992). In this study, discourse is understood as an analytic concept, which we identified and named and which framed the analysis.

In CDA, a discursive event is seen as simultaneously being a text, a discursive practice, and a social practice (Fairclough, 1992). A text can refer to spoken and written texts and images. Discursive practice includes the context in which the text is produced, communicated, and interpreted. The analysis focus on the textual dimension, and in this particular study, the 'text' refers to the transcription of the educators' conversations. Discursive practice refers to group interviews in preschools and the context of everyday practices in the cloakroom. Social practice refers to the institutional and organizational conditions of the discursive event and to the wider social and cultural structure of the society (Fairclough, 1992). Based on the outline above, we saw the Nordic preschools as influenced by the values of neoliberal society. In the light of CDA, the neoliberal focus on preschools characterized by pressure for measurement and evaluation, organization and flexibility, and economic frames can be seen as a discourse of efficiency. In the present study, the discourse of efficiency was constructed to frame the analysis of the educators' talk about practices in the cloakroom.

18.4 Research Material

The research material analyzed in this study emanated from group interviews with educators in Nordic preschools (NordForsk, Project No. 53381). The educators participated in an action research project on values education in 27 early childhood settings in 5 Nordic countries. The research material consists of 15 group interviews (3 in each country) with educators³ from Denmark (DK), Finland (F), Iceland (I), Norway (N), and Sweden (S). In total, 75 educators participated. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 min. Before the interviews, the participants read a narrative from a Swedish preschool, which described a dressing episode in the cloakroom (Johansson, 2003, Appendix 1). The interviews were built upon this narrative and the educators' interpretations of, and reflections and thoughts on, the dressing situation. The discussions also concerned various areas connected to the work in

³The groups consisted of preschool teachers, assistants, and child minders.

preschools and educators' conceptions of values. The aim was to gain insight into the educators' values concerning education in general and those regarding their own practice, more specifically (Puroila, Johansson, Estola, Emilson, Einarsdottir, & Broström, 2016).

For this study, we utilized the parts of the interviews where the dressing episodes were discussed. The interview texts were translated into English. In light of the CDA methodology, the translation involved challenges, since translation imposes an interpretation of the text at hand. Therefore, to capture the literal meanings of the texts, the translated texts were reread and compared with the original texts.

18.5 Analytic Tools and the Analytic Process

The focus of the analysis was on educators' utterances, and CDA offers several tools for undertaking the textual analysis. Linguistic features, such as vocabulary and the semantic relationship between words, are recommended as resources for identifying how different discourses structure the world differently (Fairclough, 2003). First, the research material was treated as a whole, with the objective of identifying features, patterns, and reoccurring themes as well as differences in participants' talk and conversations. The first reading allowed us to create a sample of the texts, focusing on descriptions of the dressing situation in the cloakroom. When rereading the sampled texts, we concentrated on how the educators expressed the situation in the cloakroom, the vocabulary/wording they used, and the modality of the texts. Modality concerns the extent to which the participants committed themselves to their descriptions (Fairclough, 1992). The degree of affinity is expressed through modal auxiliary verbs, such as *must*, *may*, *can*, *should*, and so forth. The simple present tense, *is*, represents categorical modality. Categorical modality implies that the truth in the message is taken for granted. It can also be seen as a social strategy – that is, a way for participants to create community and solidarity (Fairclough, 1992). The analysis of grammatical patterns in the educators' talk (texts) promise to give insights into common sense understandings, knowledge, and practices that are known as legitimated in the preschool context. We identified a strong modality in the texts, indicating that participants committed themselves to the dressing situation in the cloakroom.

The next step was to assess the educators' constructions of the dressing situation and the values implied in their assumptions. We especially looked for metaphors in their utterances and identified those relating to the organization of the dressing situation and the educators' position and work in the cloakroom. In CDA, assumptions and metaphors are described as features that characterize discourses, and assumptions concern the implicit meanings in the text (Fairclough, 2003). Value assumptions concern what is regarded as good or desirable. Value systems and associated assumptions reflect and belong to particular discourses (Fairclough, 2003). In texts, values can be made explicit through evaluations (Fairclough, 2010). Metaphors are pervasive in all sorts of discourses; they are found in everyday language and are

defined as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). The context and background knowledge of the participants in the conversation contribute to the meaning of a metaphor (Cameron, 2003). Metaphors produce distinct representations of the world and differentiate discourses (Fairclough, 2003). They also structure in a fundamental way how we think and act and our systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Aristoteles (2006) described the process of understanding metaphors as finding similarities within differences.

In this study, we identified, addressed, and analyzed metaphors with the aim of visualizing how the educators experience and structure their professional work and the meaning they assign to various values. The educators’ use of metaphors can help us interpret the struggles between values that can be at stake in daily life in pre-schools. The metaphors can also shed light on the discourse of efficiency and implicit values, which influence the practices in the cloakroom.

The concept of hegemony offers a way of analyzing discursive practices as a mode of hegemonic struggle, reproducing, restructuring, or changing existing discourses. In this study, the discourse of efficiency framed the analysis of the discursive practice. The intention was to identify the different values that might struggle for hegemony within the discourse of efficiency in the cloakroom.

In analyzing the texts, we explored how the educators construct and represent their experiences of the dressing situation in the cloakroom through the wording, modality, value assumptions, and metaphors in their utterances. The aim was to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators’ conversations about everyday practices in the cloakroom.

18.6 Tracing Representations of Different Values in Educators’ Talk

In the analysis presented below, we highlight the metaphors and examine the values identified in the educators’ utterances. The analysis is presented through four main subjects: the cloakroom practice, an efficient dispatch; strictly structured and standardized routines; the need for many arms; and the professional educator, a juggler.

18.6.1 The Cloakroom Practice: An Efficient Dispatch

In the educators’ descriptions of the situation in the cloakroom, certain concepts and words emerged at several places in the texts: (lack of) time, stress, chaos, chaotic, hectic, busy, organizing, smooth organization, safety, and lack of control. The word

'efficiency' was explicitly articulated only once, in an interview at a Norwegian preschool.

In the initial part of this interview, a participant described the situation in the cloakroom in terms of chaos. When she was invited to develop her thoughts, she referred to the fact that the educator fails to see the children. To illustrate how she saw the situation, she compared the interaction in the cloakroom to an efficient dispatch in a post office. Further, she described the situation as very bad for the children.

Interviewer: What were your first thoughts when you read the scenario?

Elsa: Chaos.

Interviewer: OK. You thought of chaos; why and how?

Elsa: I felt that she... she did not see 'the single child'. It was as if she was working in a post office: 'Next please', and next and next. It was like she ... many children... like that in general.

Interviewer: And what was the chaos about?

Elsa: That she didn't have... she had too many... to help... alone... the kids wanted, and she expected the kids to ... I believe they did not have the opportunities to manage this.

They were not seen; they did not... they did not receive care... a very bad situation for the kids, I believe, and...

Interviewer: OK, like a post office, you said.

Elsa: Yes, (laughing) like an efficient dispatch.

Elsa described the educators' work in the cloakroom as being similar to a hectic day in a post office. She laughed while expanding on her post office simile, emphasizing that her utterance was not to be understood in a literal sense. The situation in the cloakroom was worded as "efficient dispatch." This metaphor indicates seeing the cloakroom as a busy post office, where the children are positioned as packages on an assembly line, waiting to be prepared and shipped. This description seems to suggest that the educator is trapped in the frames, with no possibility to act alternatively. She has too many children to take care of, and this makes it impossible for her to act as a caregiving preschool teacher. The metaphor positions the educator as post office employee efficiently dispatching the packages one by one.

The strong modality in Elsa's utterance – *she did not, she had* – indicates Elsa's commitment to the interpretation of the situation and claim that it is trustworthy. She described the situation as the children being unseen, implying the educator's inability to recognize the children's individual needs. Elsa's utterance shows how the educators' work in the cloakroom becomes an efficient and standardized procedure or instrumental practice that neglects the individual child's needs.

The post office metaphor represents an unacceptable practice in the preschool cloakroom. Elsa's utterance indicates that such practice does not entail caring for the individual child. The assumptions – *she did not see the single child, they were not seen, and they did not receive care* – imply an evaluation, which indicates the desirable value of caring for each individual child.

A hegemonic struggle emerged in Elsa's talk. Values of caring, which highlight the educator's responsibility to see and care for each individual child, struggle against values of efficiency, highlighting an instrumental way of coping with the

chaotic situation in the cloakroom. To build upon Elsa's assumption, it seems that caring is an implicit value, which represents the preschool as an institution where each child should be seen and receive individual care from the educators (unless it becomes an impersonal and efficient service institution).

18.6.2 *Strictly Structured and Standardized Routines*

There were also references to the organizational frames in the educators' utterances. In general, the educators recommended organizational solutions to the cloakroom situation. For instance, reorganizing groups into smaller groups was seen as helpful. Utterances referring to the use of resources and distribution of resources were frequent, and the educators raised questions about the number of educators present in the cloakroom. They envisaged the preschool staff in the presented example as absent, and they believed that they did not have enough time for each child.

In the following excerpt, a group of participants described how they organize the dressing situation in their preschool. According to their utterances, these organizational routines prepared them for smooth dressing and transition through the cloakroom in the afternoon. Their message was that challenging situations were to be solved through strictly organized structures and standardized routines.

Interviewer: Is it so, if you think of a day in kindergarten, that the dressing situation is one of the critical ones or something? It feels like you have thought about it somehow.

Nina: It is as important as other situations. If there are fewer adults and the same number of children, and if it happens so that we must dress some of the little ones outdoors after their second nap, and all of these tasks at the same time, so yeah, there's a lot to do.

Hilla: The dressing situation is maybe one of those in which you need to be present, to encounter the child as a child. Too often, the dressing situation becomes just controlling chaos. Therefore, that's what we have tried to get rid of.

Kerttu: And you should remember the wishes of all the parents about how each child should be dressed (the rest laugh).

[...]

Nina: But practically speaking, for the afternoon dressing, it is more challenging, of course, when there are fewer adults. So, we have made this system: if all of the adults are present we have two on a four-shift turn, which means that one is there first and then the next four-shift worker comes, and so there's some kind of a system, because otherwise it wouldn't work.

Kerttu: And you don't need to negotiate every day like anything else except for those four-shift workers, who go first.

Nina: And then the next ones come there, so it would work.

Hilla: And sure, if there's a substitute, so even if she would be on four-shift work, then she won't go outside with the kids first.

The "four-shift turn" refers to a person whose workday ends at four o'clock. Educators in Nordic preschools work in shifts, which means that their work is organized in set periods during the day. In the educators' utterances, the "four-shift turn" represents a routinized way of organizing the daily work in the preschool. A shift worker follows a strictly organized rotation schedule, and her/his tasks are defined

and bound to a timetable. These routines support efficiency and serve to avoid situations where educators may become positioned as controllers of chaos. The strict organization supports the pedagogical intention to “encounter the child as a child,” as they formulated it. This indicates the ambition to be aware of each child’s need for support. The utterance can also support the educators’ professional liability to deal with the child’s way of being. Nina stated that it is necessary to create routines for organizing the work in preschool. According to this categorical wording, a strictly structured system is necessary for the educators to run the institution and do their professional pedagogical work.

In this conversation, efficiency represented organizational structures, in which routines and standardized practices are prioritized that facilitate practices of caring. In this scenario, efficiency enables the positioning of the child as an individual subject in need of a sensitive educator. Values of caring appear to have a hegemonic position, since the organizational model serves to support caring for the individual child. The four-shift metaphor represents an organizational system – that is, a way of structuring the work, which supports the staff doing their work in a functional, efficient, and caring way. What was also stated was that the four-shift organization prevents everyday negotiations; thereby, the work becomes more efficient.

18.6.3 The Need for Many Arms

In this interview, the participants identified themselves with the situation in the cloakroom and described it from the educator’s point of view. They sensed a stressful situation and the educator striving to acknowledge each child.

Lisa: Well, it feels like she gets stressed; she doesn’t have time for each child... Hence, one doesn’t feel that the children are seen in a way that they might need to be seen. [...]

It’s really difficult when you are alone and there are so many [...] The children become those who suffer, because she is acting like no, no, no, ‘Over there. Can’t you see them [the clothes] over there?’ Hence, it feels like she isn’t able to focus, but it is very much... (supporting voices).

[...]

Interviewer: Do you recognize this situation from your own work? ... (supporting voices).

Eva: ... In a situation like this, one would like to be an octopus...

Other supporting voices: ... exactly.

Eva: You are supposed to see everyone, although you don’t have time to do that.

As the text above shows, Lisa described the educator as stressed in a hectic situation, because she does not have time for each child. The implicit value in her assumption is that the educator should be present for each child’s need in the dressing situation. Eva supported Lisa’s utterance and stated that the educator is “supposed to see everyone,” but since the educator is alone with many children, it is impossible for her to support each child.

Eva complemented Lisa’s utterance and described this as a situation where the educator wishes to be an octopus. The other educators supported Eva’s metaphori-

cal illustration, identifying themselves with this situation. The octopus metaphor realizes a wish for many more arms when trying to reach out to all the children in need of support. The participants construed the educator as trapped in restricting frames; she is alone with too many children and is thereby placed in the disciplinary position of having to control the children. This position prevents the educator from seeing and helping each child.

The metaphorical talk of an octopus can also be interpreted as a representation of efficiency. An octopus has eight arms; being like an octopus would enable the educator to help many children at once and at the same time. Many arms can arrange for control and make the work in the cloakroom more efficient. The modality in the text is strong and categorical: “you are supposed to.” The strong modality illuminates how strongly Lisa and Eva committed themselves to their descriptions of the situation in the cloakroom. The categorical modality implies an ideal standard emphasizing the educator’s responsibility to support and see each child.

In this conversation, values of caring, which position the educator as embracing and caring for each child, were identified. In addition, we identified efficiency as an implicit value in the octopus metaphor. The analysis results indicate an ongoing struggle between values of caring and the need for efficiency in the stressful dressing situation.

18.6.4 The Professional Educator: A Juggler

A group of educators discussed the situation in the narrow and crowded cloakroom, and one of the participants, Pia, reflected on her own physical and mental experiences of working in similar situations in her preschool. She described her head as “a black hole,” implying experiencing exhaustion after encountering such a situation. Pia’s statement below indicates that she saw the educators’ work in the cloakroom as demanding.

Pia: Your head feels like a black hole – you do not remember what happened – when you leave the cloakroom. [...] And that it was seven children in the narrow and crowded cloakroom. At first there were five children, and seven other children came. Then there were 12 children. [...] Now there are seven children in the narrow cloakroom. ... but she [the educator] is juggling many balls in the air. [...] There are many—.

Pia used the juggling metaphor to describe how the educator manages the dressing work in the narrow and crowded cloakroom. Pia’s utterance was formulated with a categorical modality – “she is,” “there are many” – which signifies her confidence that her interpretations are trustworthy.

The juggling metaphor sheds light on the physical and mental requirements of interacting with many children in the cloakroom. Describing the educators’ work in the cloakroom as “juggling many balls” indicates that the educator is skillful and professional, since she is able to see to many children at the same time. Juggling requires mental focus and bodily skills, like balancing and using movements that are

simultaneously quick and cautious. Abrupt movements can destroy the smooth activity. The juggler has the freedom to turn the balls in different directions, but if she loses control, the balls will fall to the ground. The metaphor also highlights how fragile Pia experiences the educator's work to be. What will happen if the educator loses control of the children? The juggling metaphor positions the educator as a performer and the children as objects that are under the educator's control.

Pia's utterance highlights that the educator's professional repertoire contains a capacity for control and mental focus that enables her to handle the situation in the cloakroom efficiently. The juggling metaphor indicates that efficiency is connected to the value of control but also to the value of caring for the individual child. In the juggling metaphor, the discourse of efficiency supports both the value of control and the value of individual care.

18.7 Discussion

The analysis revealed a network of different values in the educators' talk about the dressing situation in the cloakroom. Through the conversations, the discourse of efficiency emerged as a complex discourse, composed of different values, all connected with each other in complex ways.

The value of caring was represented in all the presented texts and thereby occupied a strong position in the analyzed material. The caring educator, who takes responsibility to meet and see each individual child, was given a strong focus in the participating educators' conversations. The utterances about the caregiving educator placed the child as the care receiver. We identified these utterances as a discourse of caring, which constitutes the social relations in the preschool. The strong position of the value of caring confirms the finding of Puroila et al. (2016). In addition, the Norwegian study, which was part of the ValuEd project, demonstrated that care is the most prioritized value by educators (Johansson et al., 2014). The Nordic countries, especially the Finnish and the Norwegian preschool curriculum guidelines, describe caring as an important institutional function of preschool (Einarsdottir, Puroila, Johansson, Broström, & Emilson, 2015). In the text containing the post office metaphor, the discourse of efficiency was struggling with the discourse of caring, which values the educators' responsibility to take care of each child. The post office metaphor indicates a discourse of efficiency, which leads to instrumental practices. According to the educator's utterance, such instrumental practices place the children as objects and the educator as an officer and transform the preschool identity into an efficient dispatch. The results of the present study and those of the aforementioned previous studies suggest that the discourse of caring holds a hegemonic position which molds the identity of Nordic preschools.

We noticed a strong individualistic focus in the analyzed texts; being there for each child appeared to be important to the educators. The ideal is that each educator should support and help every child. In a recent study, Bjervås (2016) found that "to see and listen to all children" is a value that educators emphasize as important.

According to Johansson et al. (2014), care is often communicated toward the individual child in preschool. The individualistic focus is emphasized in the Nordic preschool curricula, according to which each child has the right to experience care (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). The octopus metaphor shed light on the educators' endeavor to lend a helping hand to each child. The image of an octopus with an arm for each child indicates an individualistic perspective of caregiving and the opinion of care receiving as valuable. The octopus metaphor also supported the discourse of efficiency, which values control and efficient dressing and transition through the cloakroom. In a wider societal context, the values of individuality, control, and efficiency can be seen as representing neoliberal ideas and the marketization of educational institutions, which emphasize the effectual use of resources. The octopus metaphor literally points out how these political and economic policies challenge the educator's responsibility and duty in the everyday practices in preschool.

The situation in the cloakroom was described as a *typical, hectic situation*, and words like "chaos" and "stress" were used in the descriptions. The analysis showed categorical modality in the participating educators' utterances, underlining how they identified themselves with the educator's work situation in the cloakroom. According to the participants, the educator in the cloakroom is responsible for avoiding such situations, which comprise challenges and problems. They also stated that such situations indicate an overabundance of children and an insufficient number of adults to take care of the children in the cloakroom. They described this as an impossible task that positions the educators as insufficient. The implicit assumption is that organizational and financial resources are scarce. In a broader social practice, this can be related to the neoliberal idea of effectual use of resources, which has been described as weaved into educational policy and pedagogy (Bae, 2009; Berge, 2015; Seland, 2009). The utterances indicate that there is pressure, which influences the educators' positions and interactions with the children, as well as their ability to carry out their work in accordance with their professional requirements. This is in line with previous studies, which shed light on how preschools have become part of the marketization of the education system (Berge, 2015; Bjervås, 2011, 2016; Pramling et al., 2015; Vallberg Roth, 2014; Ylitapio-Mäntylä, 2013).

Efficiency can be regarded as representing the societal values, as pointed out in the introduction. The analysis results show that efficiency helps to constitute the preschool as an institution, in its structure and routines. This was seen in the four-shift turn metaphor, where routines represented efficient tools, which facilitate the educator's work and allow for avoiding chaos in the cloakroom. Thereby, efficiency can adjust everyday life in a positive way to allow for fostering other values. For instance, efficiency can function as a resource for creating valuable encounters between the educators and the children. Thus, efficiency can be regarded as an intrinsic value leading to other values, such as care. In the juggling metaphor, the discourse of efficiency identified control as a central part of the educator's professional skills. Here, control represented the educator's competence to handle a chaotic situation. This illustrates that efficiency can be a resource for the educator's professional work in preschool.

Yet the demand for efficiency can hinder or counteract the values for which the educators strive. The participating educators described their experience as one of being caught in between the demands of the organization, the frames, and their own values. This is in line with the results of Johansson et al.'s (2015) study, which revealed that the organizational structures and frames hindered the educators from acting in accordance with their values. In the present study, the educators described themselves as being trapped in organizational structure and routines, which positioned them as unable to act as professional educators. Through the analysis, the discourse of efficiency emerged as a complex and multiple discourse containing varied and contradictory values.

18.7.1 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to identify how different values create meaning regarding efficiency in educators' conversations about everyday practices in the cloakroom.

The research questions were as follows: How does the discourse of efficiency emerge from educators' conversations? What kinds of values can be identified in the educators' descriptions of everyday practices in the cloakroom?

As stated above, the results of the study indicate that the discourse of efficiency identified in the educators' conversations emerged as a discourse struggling and competing for hegemony against the discourse of caring. The discourse of efficiency was identified as a complex discourse including values of individuality, control and structured routines, and organization. These values can function to support the educators' professional work with the children and their own professional identity. The discourse of efficiency emphasizing the values of control, structured routines, and organization can also threaten the educators' professional work and identity and contribute to an instrumental focus on the professional work in preschools. In the educators' conversations, the discourse of caring was crucial to how they discussed their practices. The hegemonic position of the discourse of caring supports the values of control and structure aimed at strengthening the professional work in the preschool, and the hegemonic position of the discourse of efficiency threatens the professional work in preschools. The results indicate that caring was a cornerstone in the educators' talk about practices in the cloakroom. The results might also indicate that Nordic preschools are rooted in values that are sustained by political trends.

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