Chapter 2
Mapping the Field: What Are Values and Values Education About?

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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; Kjørholt, 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; Kjørholt, 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 &
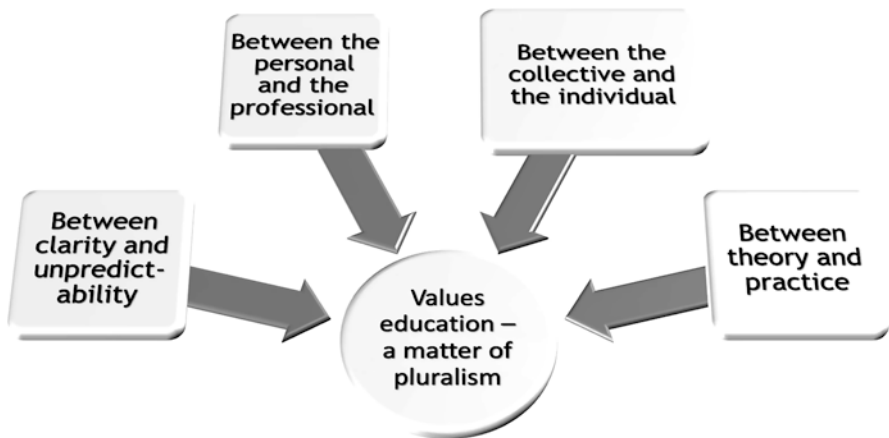
Fig. 2.1 Core elements of values education

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. Professionality 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 & Röthle, 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; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 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; Sigurdadottir & Einarsdottir, 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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