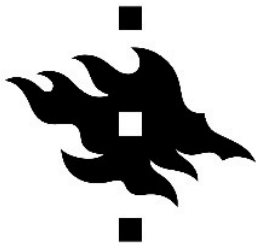


# ABSTRACT BOOK: PAPERS & POSTERS NERA 2025 HELSINKI

*PEDAGOGY OF HOPE: GRATITUDE, DIVERSITY, AND  
SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATION*



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI



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# Conference theme

The theme for the NERA 2025 conference Pedagogy of Hope: Gratitude, Diversity, and Sustainability in Education is essential in contemporary educational research and practice for several reasons. First, it reminds us of the meaning of why societies should value education: the hope for a more equal and just world. Second, the theme hopefully also seeks to challenge ready-made answers and assumptions about what education is for. In the Nordic countries, we must defend our values of a democratic, just society and our hope in its continuum; this is why educational research and theorising matter, perhaps more now than ever, because of market economy values gaining more and more grounds.

We think that hope also closely relates to gratitude. By encouraging children, young people, or whoever we educate, to be thankful for what can be justified as good these days – like good regarding equality, fairness and democratic values – then we can say we have hope for their futures and that the next generations are worth the same thing. If succeeding, this can promote a sense of empathy and belonging amongst people living in a world where we are not alone, raising questions about flourishing and vulnerability.

Therefore, we encourage asking what the perspective of hope requires from education. Furthermore, we think/assert that diversity supports empowerment through (the cultivation of) critical thinking. We can, for instance, ask ourselves what we mean by inclusion, equity, social justice, and respect. As we see it, sustainability can be about the interrelation of social, economic, and natural realms. It can also address critical and complex questions about climate change, environmental depletion, or the despair these themes foster within people. Hope is not to give up but to seek change; education is the most promising tool.

# Papers

**Network: 1. Educational  
measurement and  
assessment**

## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

### Comparability and fairness issues related to mode effects in IEA studies: The case of Sweden

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In the last decade, educational testing has been transitioning in various ways to computer-based assessment (CBA) from paper-based surveys (PBA) both at the international and national levels. This change in assessment mode might introduce unintended comparability and fairness issues arising from, e.g., students' access to and efficacy with digital devices. Mode effects refer to "differences in measurement caused by unequal properties of different test administrations, holding test items constant" (Kroehne et al., 2019, p.99). Mode effect research has been generally positive but inconclusive about the digitization of large-scale trend assessments.

This study investigates the comparability of the PBA and CBA in the 2021 cycle of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the 2019 administration of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for Sweden. The analyses address the following research questions: To what extent does the assessment mode influence the measurement of reading, mathematics, and science achievement? How do background characteristics of the students, such as language spoken at home, possession of digital devices, or gender influence this relationship?

The three desirable properties of fairness when comparing scores that have been linked across modes of administration are distributional, construct, and predictive equivalence (Pommerich, 2016). Distributional equivalence refers to the score distributions and requires that they are the same for the linked scores. Construct equivalence concerns the measured underlying ability, and requires that the different modes measure the same construct to the same degree. Finally, if the test is conducted for selection purposes, predictive equivalence means that the different assessment modes have the same predictive relationship with a criterion measure.

We employ publicly available data collected in representative samples in grade four in PIRLS 2021 and TIMSS 2019. Sweden administered a smaller, PBA version of the trend items to a randomly equivalent bridge sample. Using these bridge data, the main analytic method is mixed effects item response theory modeling with covariates (Fox & Glas, 2016).

This study contributes to the research field on mode effects and fairness in digital assessments. The findings may benefit international and national assessments that are transitioning to CBA.

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Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

Longitudinal influence of socio-economic and migration background on academic achievement in Sweden

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While the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and academic achievement in Nordic countries is among the weakest internationally, SES remains a significant predictor of educational outcomes. In Sweden, recent studies indicate that the impact of SES on student achievement has intensified over time, highlighting a decline in educational equity. These SES-related differences often intersect with ethnic inequalities, varying notably by school context (Yang Hansen & Gustafsson, 2019).

This study aims to examine the longitudinal relationship between SES and student academic achievement in Sweden, as is indicated by grades, and how migration background and its interaction with SES may affect this relationship. Although extensive research supports the link between SES and academic performance (e.g., Sirin, 2005), the interaction between SES and migration in Sweden requires further exploration, particularly given recent demographic changes (Gustafsson & Yang Hansen, 2018).

This study uses data from the Swedish longitudinal project Evaluation Through Follow-Up (ETF), focusing on the 2004 cohort (N = 9437). It examines student GPA scores in core subjects (mathematics, Swedish, and English) across grades 6, 8, and 9. Key independent variables include parental education and migration background, with controls for gender, school type, and cognitive ability to ensure a comprehensive analysis.

Mixed-effects regression models are employed to analyze repeated measures and capture the multi-level nature of the data, with time nested within students (Heck et al., 2014). This approach allows for in-depth understanding of how SES, migration background, and academic performance interact over time, incorporating both fixed and random effects.

Preliminary findings align with previous research, indicating that while SES is a strong predictor of academic achievement, its interaction with migration background produces varied achievement patterns. The analysis revealed a non-linear relationship in which GPA initially declines but improves in later grades. Random slopes reveal variability in students' initial GPA and rates of change, indicating individual differences in academic trajectories. Covariates such as gender, school type, and cognitive ability significantly predict GPA.

The results hold critical implications for educational equity policies in Sweden and the broader Nordic region. By illustrating how SES and migration background jointly impact educational outcomes, this study highlights the need for targeted interventions that address both socio-economic and demographic disparities. The insights gained can guide policy efforts to promote academic success for all students and enhance educational equity.

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Yang Hansen, K., & Gustafsson, J.-E. (2019). Identifying the key source of deteriorating educational equity in Sweden between 1998 and 2014. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 93, 79–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.09.012>

## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

The development and validation of tools to assess the educational climate in the classroom- a new observation protocol (EduCAT-Observation) and a student questionnaire (EduCAT-Student)

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Positive educational climate in the classroom is related to various positive outcomes, such as psychological wellbeing, academic motivation, and academic performances. Reliable and validated instruments to assess the quality of the classroom educational climate would be useful both for research and practice. The hypothesis is that the educational climate in the classroom is a construct that can be identified and assessed beyond individual differences among students and temporal variations. The construct should also be sensitive to interventions aimed at improving the quality of educational climate in the classroom. Theories compatible with the model proposed are self-determination theory, theory of basic values and the CASEL framework.

The aim of the study presented is twofold: to test the psychometric properties of the student questionnaire EduCAT; to test the psychometric properties of the observation protocol (EduCAT- observation) where an external observer rates the educational climate in the classroom.

The student questionnaire EduCAT- Student includes 10 scales with 40 items rated on 4-point Likert scale which cover both aspects related to group functioning as cohesiveness, solidarity, structure and rules that allow a purposeful learning environment, and aspects related to an educational climate that allows and enhances individual expression, growth, competence, initiative, as well as persistence in efforts. The respondents were about 900 students from 38 middle school classes in eight schools situated in different locations in Sweden. The data was analyzed with CFA with Mplus and the model structure was confirmed with the items loading significantly to ten latent variables. Since there were high intra-class correlations for nine of the ten scales, two-level models were tested. The two-level model required a reduction of the number of latent variables. The model with the best fit retained one factor at the individual level and one factor at the class level.

The protocol, EduCAT- Observation, contains 20 items rated by an observer in a 4-point Likert scale, related to five dimensions (improvement, structure, relationship, influence) similar to those of the student questionnaire and expected to cover in a comprehensive way significant and visible aspect of the educational climate. Six trained observers conducted the observations in 106 elementary classes in 12 schools located in various municipalities Middle Sweden. Inter-rater agreement was calculated. The observations lasted between two to three hours. The data was analyzed with CFA in Mplus. The items have significant factor loadings on the corresponding five latent variables. A second-order factor (Clim) was introduced in the model loading significantly on these variables.

The analyses show that the instruments' structure correspond to the hypothesised contents. Their anchoring in a solid theoretical frame may contribute to their empirical validation. The instruments could be used in future research to investigate organisational features in school and classrooms even if more research is needed. In ongoing research, we explore the instruments' convergent validity (students' wellbeing) and concurrent validity (another classroom assessment scale). The student questionnaire EduCAT could tentatively be used in practice, where the sum of scores at the class level could give indication of comprehensive educational climate features.



## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

### The importance of student self-efficacy for school achievement – evidence from Swedish compulsory school

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#### 1. Research topic

Why children succeed or fail in school is a core social and educational concern. Students' individual differences in psychological traits predicting outcomes have been widely studied, yet the evidence of the importance of self-efficacy for predicting school achievement and how the predictions work for different subgroups of students is inconsistent. This study seeks to use a large representative sample of 20 000 students in Grade 9 in compulsory school in Sweden to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and achievement across core academic subjects.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

A sub-construct of self-belief, self-efficacy is defined as individuals' beliefs in their own capabilities to perform certain task, affecting current and future endeavours, such as courses of action, effort, perseverance, and resilience when facing difficulties, as well as thought patterns, anxiety and realized accomplishments (see, Bandura, 1977). A multifaceted concept, self-efficacy affects how students regulate their learning and how they manage difficult subject matters, which in turn may affect their motivation, interest, and academic achievement in school (see, Bandura, 2006). Interplays between self-belief, individual characteristics, and achievement have been investigated in the literature: self-perception of abilities varies by gender (e.g. Skaalvik & Hagtvet, 1990), low socioeconomic status is associated with low self-efficacy and poor academic performance (e.g. Usher, et al., 2018), while self-efficacy mediates the relationship between socioeconomic background and achievement in older youth (Caprara et al., 2011).

#### 3. Methodology

The study uses data from the Evaluation Through Follow-up (UGU) database for the 1987 and 1992 birth cohorts to first model self-efficacy for three core subjects using Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis, and Measurement Invariance testing. Secondly, structural equation modelling is used to identify the contribution of self-efficacy and student background indicators such as gender, immigration background, parental education (and interaction effects) on achievement.

#### 4. Expected results

Girls are expected to universally outperform boys, and immigrant background youth are expected to perform at lower levels and report lower self-efficacy than their native peers. Socioeconomic background is expected to mediate identified relationships. Similar patterns of relationships are expected for the two birth cohorts.

#### 5. Relevance

The study exploits the UGU data infrastructure, a rich source of nationally representative longitudinal data from Sweden, and can highlight how relationships between self-efficacy vary for social groups across the core curriculum in the Nordic region's largest country.

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Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

Addressing non-uniform rater effects with extended many-facet Rasch models: A case study

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Research topic/aim

How to detect and account for non-uniform static rater effects in performance assessment.

Theoretical framework

In performance testing, non-standard interpretations of rating scales, or *rater effects* (Myford and Wolfe, 2003) are a common issue that can distort the measurement process by introducing bias into scores – the same performance may receive a different score depending on the random factor of the choice of rater. Saal et al. (1980) identify four main static rater effects: the uniform effect of *leniency/severity*, and the non-uniform effects of *halo*, *central tendency*, and *restriction of range*. The many-facet Rasch model (MFRM; Linacre, 1994) extends Rasch measurement (Rasch, 1960) beyond the standard two facets of person and item to contexts where additional facets such as raters may affect test scores. The MFRM can account for differential rater *leniency/severity*, but does not explicitly model non-uniform rater effects in the rater representation (Myford and Wolfe, 2003).

Methodological design

Elliott & Buttery (2022) introduce extended rater representations that capture a range of static non-uniform rater effects and, through a process of anchoring to a subset of ‘gold standard’ raters, isolate rater behaviours more fully from features of the instrument itself; this increases the inferential power of the models and may lead to different inferences from the standard MFRM. This presentation applies extended MFRM analysis to a real-world data set previously analysed in the literature with the standard MFRM (Primi, Silvia, Jauk & Benedek, 2019; Sylvia & Beaty, 2012). The data is analysed using the extended matrix MFRM model and results and key inferences are compared to the standard MFRM analysis. Two different anchoring frameworks are also employed within the extended MFRM analysis, and results and key inferences are compared between the two extended MFRM analyses.

Expected conclusions/findings

The presentation shows how extended rater representations produce different inferences from the global MFRM for the raters, instrument and persons, in terms of model fit as well as locations. It also demonstrates the importance of selecting ‘gold standard’ raters for anchoring when using extended models, and how selecting different anchor raters can result in quite different inferences, for the instrument as well as for the raters.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

Adjusting for differential rater behaviour is relevant for all performance-assessment based educational measurement with multiple raters.

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## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

### The role of external examiners in Norwegian secondary schools' oral exams

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#### *The role of external examiners in Norwegian secondary schools' oral exams*

Oral exams have a longstanding tradition in the Norwegian school system. It is still important in secondary schools today, as the grade goes on students' final diploma. In one part of the exam, an internal examiner (the students' teacher) and an external examiner pose the student questions. The system of using an external examiner can be traced back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and has been seen as one of the most important mechanisms to ensure good quality and reliability (Gynnild, 2016). Previous research has shown that *internal* examiners lead the questioning and that their actions affect students' opportunities to display knowledge (Vonen et. al, 2022; Skovholt et. al, 2021). However, we know little about the *external* examiners' role, which is not specified in the national guidelines. In this study the external examiners' conversational contributions are examined with a conversation analytic framework, focusing on the functions and consequences of these contributions, as well as the distribution of roles between the two examiners in these sequences.

Preliminary results on 39 video-recorded oral exams in lower and upper secondary schools show that external examiners participate actively in the exams, and that their contributions can be categorized as:

Confirmations/"go-aheads" in the third position, where they encourage the students to continue speaking or confirm the internal examiners response to the students' previous answer.

"Invited" contributions after explicit requests from internal examiner, which are often questions that occur in sequence-closing environments or in the end of the exam.

Unsolicited contributions, that are often sequence-initiating questions in first position or follow-up questions in third position. These often lead to interactional trouble.

This indicates a need for specifying the external examiners' role in Norwegian oral examination guidelines. The results are useful for rater training in Scandinavia, where oral exams and oral national tests are used in secondary schools, and can inform broader discussions about quality assurance and examiner roles in oral assessments within the Nordic educational context.

#### Literature:

Gynnild, V. (2016). «Kriteriebasert vurdering» - hva innebærer det i praksis? *Uniped*, 36(1), 26-40. <https://doi.org/10.3402/uniped.v36i1.20959>

Skovholt, K.S, Solem, M.S, Vonen, M.N, Sikveland, R.S, Stokoe, E. (2021). Asking more than one question in one turn in oral examinations and its impact for examination quality. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 181, s.100-119.

Vonen, M.N, Solem, M.S, Skovholt, K. (2022). Managing students' insufficient answers in oral examinations. *Classroom Discourse*

# Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Living Through - a Lifelong Gradual Maturation Process of Being, Acting, and Performing

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This artistic research delves into the concept of 'living through' as an integrative process that incorporates being, acting, and performance. It aims to demonstrate how organic aesthetics, sonic picking, and collaborative bioregionalism can all work together to foster sustainable and inclusive communities.

My study is based on the idea that all knowledge is local and experiential. The theoretical framework integrates ecological civilization theory with sensory-based learning, emphasizing the importance of emotional connections to information and their development through active participation. Furthermore, it blends democratic participation theories and communal auditory experiences to provide comprehensive 'felt sense' knowledge.

Employing an artistic and qualitative methodology, this research comprises around one hundred personal encounters, acts, and performances involving nature and lay people in the northern part of Finland. Practical examples include work with newborn babies, immigrants in a chapel, children, and theatre enthusiasts. Techniques such as sonic picking and pointillism are utilized to explore the sensory dimensions of living and their implications for democratic participation and sustainable civilization. Art triggers 'living through' phases.

The predicted results indicate that 'living through' as a dynamic and participative process promotes mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation among individuals and organizations. This technique is designed to reinforce democratic values and foster long-term cohabitation. The findings are expected to emphasize the importance of organic aesthetics, sonic picking, and collaborative bioregionalism in generating harmonious and inclusive ecosystems.

This study has implications for educational approaches since it suggests techniques that are compatible with the ideas of ecological civilization. 'Living through' methods are both inclusive and responsive to current ecological and societal concerns by encouraging the merging of sensory-based learning and democratic values. The findings have the potential to shape policies and practices aimed at creating sustainable and democratic environments maturing from rule-based attention towards felt-sense awareness.

The research conducted at the University of Arts Helsinki has been funded by the Kone Foundation.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Empowering Student Agency through Visual Art Education

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#### Research Aim

This study investigates and problematizes how student agency relates to constructions of positions and knowledge in visual art education in upper secondary school. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how teachers can invite students to select images and content for teaching, facilitating critical reflection on the visual culture that students are surrounded by and are a part of. The main research question deals with how art teachers can empower students to construct and assume active and knowledgeable positions in visual meetings in the classroom.

#### Theoretical Framework

The study applies a Foucauldian discourse analysis, focusing on concepts of power relations, resistance, freedom and technologies of the self to articulate the notion of agency. Although Foucault did not explicitly use the term agency, his later work provides a valuable framework for understanding how subjects navigate and resist power structures. By linking visual culture with discourse analysis, this study examines how institutional norms affect constructions of student and teacher positions, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with educational practices that either enable or limit student agency.

#### Methodology

Employing an ethnographic approach combined with action research, this study engages in a participatory inquiry within visual art classrooms. Through observations, interviews, and collaborative discussions with students and teachers from four different visual art classrooms, the study explores the processes through which students construct active and knowledgeable positions in the classroom. Ethical considerations include addressing how student agency can foster more inclusive educational practices and reflect the voices and experiences of students while challenging existing power structures in the classroom. Data analysis focuses on students' experiences, teacher facilitation, and the institutional frameworks that influence classroom interactions.

#### Results

The results reveal how teachers balance their provision of direct guidance with allowing students more autonomy, while addressing the complexities of time management, institutional constraints and power relations in the classroom. Inviting students into dialogue about their learning content fosters critical thinking and amplifies their voices, enabling them to take on more active and knowledgeable positions. This approach can enhance their motivation, engagement, and sense of ownership in the classroom.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This research aligns with the Nordic commitment to democratic and inclusive education, emphasizing the necessity of addressing diversity, equity, and sustainability in teaching practices. By focusing on visual art education as a means of empowering students, the study underscores the importance of educational practices that prioritize student agency.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Preservice Music Teachers Caught Between Passion and Pragmatism

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This doctoral thesis explores the complex negotiation of dual identities—those of musician and teacher—among preservice music teachers in Sweden. It focuses on the tensions and synergies that arise as students develop both their artistic and pedagogical roles. The study uses a qualitative approach, with data gathered from semi-structured interviews and observations, to investigate how these students navigate between their passion for music and the pragmatic demands of teaching.

Central to this research is the concept of self-efficacy, drawn from Bandura's social cognitive theory, which plays a critical role in how students balance their musician and teacher identities. The findings highlight how students leverage their musical experiences to enhance their teaching, while teaching practices, in turn, influence their musical expression. Teacher training, in the form of practical experience, significantly contributes to building students' self-efficacy, reinforcing their professional growth and identity as both educators and musicians.

However, the process is not without challenges. Many students report struggles in maintaining their musician identity as they transition into professional teaching roles. This tension is often driven by the conflicting expectations of being a performing artist while meeting the educational demands placed on them. These conflicts affect their personal and professional development, raising questions about how best to support future educators in integrating these dual identities

Additionally, the study sheds light on how personal motivations and emotional needs, such as the desire to continue producing music, influence students' professional development. By examining the personal reflections and experiences of these music teacher students, the research provides insights into how educational systems might better support the integration of musician and teacher identities. Ultimately, the study suggests that fostering a balanced identity that honors both musical passion and educational responsibilities is crucial for the long-term success and well-being of future music educators.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the broader discourse on identity formation in the field of music education, emphasizing the importance of self-efficacy and personal well-being in the professional development of preservice music teachers.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Exploring Elementary Students' Prompt Modification Strategies in AI Text-to-Image Generation: A Mixed-Methods Study with Eye-tracking Analysis

Yung Chi Yang, Guan Ze Liao

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Generative AI (GAI) tools are transforming art education. This study explores the integration of GAI tools—specifically DALL-E 3, in Grade 6 elementary school art classes in Taiwan, involving 155 participants. The research focuses on how students modify prompts to create images, aiming to provide a framework for effective prompt instruction.

This research utilized Design-Based Research (DBR) over eight months in three iterative stages: initial observation and problem identification with a core group of 26 students, followed by preliminary implementation expanding to 70 students, and culminating in formal implementation and evaluation with all 155 participants. This approach combines qualitative methods (classroom observations, interviews) with quantitative techniques (surveys, eye-tracking data analysis). Applying the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Celik, 2023) to explore AI tools integration in the learning environment, emphasizing teachers should be equipped with AI prompt guiding ability. We incorporate dialogic teaching (Liang & Wu, 2023; Vartiainen et al., 2023) and scaffolding activities (Lee et al., 2023) as instructional strategies. Students were guided to reflect on and observe prompt modifications while enhancing their understanding of prompt-image relationships.

Eight types of prompt modifications were identified: (1) clarification; (2) simplification; (3) substitution with alternative terms; (4) creative exploration; (5) sentence restructuring; (6) descriptive specification; (7) scene reconstruction; and (8) retrospective modification. To gain deeper insight into students' cognitive processes and selective attention patterns during prompt revisions and image selection processes, we selected 11 students to employ eye-tracking technology (Holmqvist et al., 2011). We found that modifications involving sentence restructuring, creative exploration, and scene reconstruction showed more complex scan paths and longer fixation times, indicating higher cognitive engagement, while simplification and clarification demonstrated more linear eye movements, suggesting systematic thinking processes.

This study extends Nordic educational research on AI integration in creative education (Vartiainen & Tedre, 2023), aligning with Nordic educational values of creative expression, digital literacy, and student-centered learning approaches while offering practical frameworks and insights into how elementary students engage with AI generative tools and teachers' understanding of prompt modification strategies. Future research could explore cross-cultural comparisons and examine how these findings might scale to different age groups and educational contexts.

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Digital Culture Meets Visual Arts Education

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Abstract

This poster presentation explores how digitally expert visual arts teachers make sense of the digital visual world, and how their perceptions impact their pedagogical approaches.

Digital visual cultures are rapidly changing through the influence of social media, video games, and AI-generated content, fundamentally reshaping our understanding of visual norms.

Theoretical framework

New media literacy encompasses skills that enable meaningful engagement with digital media, highlighting the value of creative interaction with digital tools in visual arts education (Kafai & Peppler, 2011). Digital literacy, a component of new media literacy, focuses on the technical aspects of media (Chen et al., 2011).

Methodology

Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, this research applies thematic analysis and narrative templates. The goal is to shed light on the relationship between teachers' digital expertise and their classroom practices.

Interviewed teachers (n=8) were all subject teachers with a Master of Arts degree in art and design and they considered themselves experts in teaching digital art.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to identify themes across the interviews. In parallel we examined teachers' narrative templates (Wertsch, 2002) —shared frameworks for understanding and describing the digital visual world.

The depth of themes in the interview formed the foundation for the narrative templates.

Findings

The narrative templates identified were "Proficient Users," "Adapters," and "Digitally Immersed Teachers." Each template reflects different levels of participation and pedagogical integration of digital visual culture in visual arts education.

Relevance

Instead of embracing traditional art conceptions, the youth often view visual art as pretentious and outdated (Kiil, 2009). Imageries in digital cultures are inclusive and provide diverse representations of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion, increasing students' sense of ownership and engagement in visual arts education. Intertextual method (Paatela-Nieminen, 2019), new media literacy and digital literacy make it possible to understand layers within these digital images.

Our findings underscore the importance of professional development and in-service training for visual arts teachers, emphasizing deeper digital cultural immersion to enhance students' engagement with new media.

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

A/r/tographic proposals for preschool children's digital image creation

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### 1. Research topic/aim

A report from the Swedish Media Council (Andersson, 2023) highlights that children actively engage with digital visual culture daily, both within and outside of preschool. From an early age, digital tools, images, and media play a significant role in children's lives, fostering a digitalised reality that is also reshaping image-creation practices within preschools (Magnusson, 2017; Olsson, 2023; Lagergren & Jonasson, 2023; Eckoff, 2017). This paper investigates how art-based a/r/tographic proposals for image creation can be utilised in preschools to encourage open-ended, rhizomatic aesthetic explorations with digital tools. Children are offered two a/r/tographic proposals for image creation, combining artistic guidance with their ongoing projects. These open-ended proposals are designed to support children's interest and engagement as they create images digitally.

Research question:

- What kinds of visual processes and expressions are formed when children create digital images with a/r/tographic proposals?

### 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework proposes that culture and knowledge creation involve not only human social relationships but also other materialities, such as technology (Åsberg, 2012; Karlsson Häikiö, 2017). To analyse the children's images, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concepts of the rhizome and assemblage are central in the theoretical framework. This approach aims to deepen understanding of the images by illustrating the diversity of children's processes and expressions that emerge together with more-than-human components.

### 3. Methodology/research design

In this doctoral study, children's image creation is examined through the observation of a group of 22 children, aged 4–6, in a Swedish preschool, combining visual ethnography with a/r/tography. The children primarily use a smartphone and a tablet to create images, including photographs and videos both within the preschool and in the surrounding environment.

### 4. Expected results/findings

Six dynamic and complex categories of images are created by the children and the camera: fabulative images, machine images, network images, haptic images, ritornello images, and nomadic images.

Based on the results of the study, a/r/tographic proposals are suggested to be further developed by initiating video walks that could evolve into a method of working with digital tools in a creative way in pedagogical practice.

A/r/tography is highlighted as a method that promotes the creation of shared aesthetic experiences and supports the development of pedagogical practices in early childhood education.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper not only enhances the pedagogical use of digital tools but also integrates them into a broader visual culture and educational framework, potentially transforming how children interact with and understand the digital world around them. There is a democratic dimension to expand the educational image making practice, and a/r/tography can be one way to further develop the use of digital tools and initiating various forms of visual expressions.

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Pedagogy of Dissensus as a Pedagogy of Hope (Or Not)

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University of Agder, Norway

In this paper I present what I call a pedagogy of dissensus. By referring to my newly launched book *Dissens and Sensibility: Why Art Matters* (Skregelid, 2024) I aim to explore this pedagogy as a pedagogy of hope. In the book I say: “When dissensus is inspiring education the norms and regular ways of teaching are challenged, possible disruptions of the expected are offered. Risk and uncertainty are welcomed. Equality and the unforeseen knowledge are emphasized. Pedagogy of dissensus might lead to resistance, and changes in perceptions and attitudes, along with changes and transformations in the subject” (p. 1). In the book I write about how this pedagogy informs different contexts ranging from museum education, teacher education, education involving artists to my own arts-based research. In this paper I examine in an autoethnographically manner what stand out as dissensual educational events from my own formative years as a pupil in primary school, secondary school and upper secondary school. Special attention is given to my recalls of both teacher actions, the teachers’ bodily presence, and how multiple senses were activated. These events that were all disruptive and that made me feel both vulnerable and confused are discussed in relation to current rhetoric about art and education as instrumental tools for fixing problems (Biesta, Skregelid & Bøe, 2024), and how art and education can promote a more equal and just world. How can a teaching that leads to moments of doubts, that shakes and de-territorialize promote hope and imagined utopias not yet known? Where is inclusion, equity, social justice, respect and care in a pedagogy that challenges and destabilizes the pupils?

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Interactions Between Music and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

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Research topic:

This research plan presents a longitudinal intervention study with the goal of gaining insight into the effect of music-enriched teaching on Chinese as foreign language (CFL) learning. Chinese, as a tonal language, utilizes lexical tones (pitch contours) in addition to consonants and vowels to define semantic meanings of words. There is evidence showing the interactions between the tonal structure in the native language and the encoding of music (e.g., Bidelman et al., 2013; Dawson et al., 2018). The presence and absence of music in tonal language learning by the speakers of quantity languages, such as Finnish, might affect the learning outcomes.

Methodology:

To confirm this, we will follow two groups of elementary school-aged Chinese learners for at least one school year. The intervention group will receive music-enriched teaching as part of their Chinese lessons, and the control group will be recruited to continue their traditional learning without additional interventions. The research methods include tasks that explore language learning in a variety of ways, electroencephalogram (EEG) technologies that explore the physiological basis of learning, and short questionnaire-based interviews.

Expected findings:

Compared with traditional teaching in the control group, the music intervention is expected to have more obvious effects on learners' performances as indexed by the brain response called mismatch negativity (MMN) and language skills from the perspectives of speech discrimination, word recognition, and word-sound integration.

Relevance to Nordic educational research:

While teaching and learning foreign languages hold significant importance in Finnish schools and society, recent trends indicate a decreased and unilateral nature of language studies by young Finnish people. Several factors contribute to this issue, one of which is language studies are perceived as demanding. Based on the basic research data that is applicable to everyday school life, this study could help in improving language teaching methods so that language studies will be more effective and motivating.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Visuality and Multimodality as Tools for Learning in Geography and Art Education

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*Research topic/Aim* The presentation elaborates didactic perspectives on, place-based learning in geography education and art education and childrens' spaces and places (Rasmussen, 2004). Visuality and multimodality plays a central role in acquisition of subject-specific but also generic competencies (Wagner & Schönau, 2016). Visual information forms the basis for an understanding of perception of time and space; social space, perception of spatiality, geographical locations, topography etc. In art education perception, seeing, but also the way you look are parts of creating an understanding of the surrounding world as an observer (Illeris, Buhl & Flensburg, 2004). *Theoretical framework/Earlier research* Situated learning is a term used to describe how learning is staged in a specific situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A media-ecological approach argues that if new media is used in education, it will also change the prerequisites for the learning situation (Erixon, 2014). Schmidt (2011) has investigated the importance of social perspectives, relational aspects of spatiality in relation to participation and availability to public spaces for children. Research has elaborated on the significance of space and place as part in childrens' identity construction (Bendroth Karlsson, 2014) or the role of the built environment on children's mobility and play (Weir, 2023). Spaces are also related to childrens' feeling of belonging in school (Nind et al., 2022). Children's spatial experiences are multi-dimensional and connected to abstract processes, but also physical places and objects (Cele, 2006). In this way children's geographies can be related to embodiment and embodied spaces (Colls and Hörschelmann, 2009). *Methodology/research design* New media have affected the teaching practice in compulsory school but is also debated and have become a political matter of interest. Still, a traditional interpretation of a public place is outdated since a public place today may be virtual, a part of visual culture, instead of a physical place. Use of media, maps and mapping are dependent on childrens', pupils' and students' ability to see, perceive and interpret visual information in order to function as educational tools. The discussion will emanate from examples related to different educational settings, mainly in compulsory school, and use of mapping and multimodality in the teaching. Theoretical perspectives is discussed on the significance of creating understanding of two- and three- dimensionality in education based on key concepts like direction, distance, location, place, space, time etc. but also lines, shapes, symbols, markers. *Expected results/findings* A media-ecological approach creates didactic consequences for education, e.g. globally exposed and visual media affects both geography and art education in crucial ways. Educational settings are besides being physical environments for learning also emotional, relational and virtual spaces. *Relevance to Nordic educational research* The presentation takes stance in recognizing visual (optical), haptic and tactile learning as essential to learning processes. The presentation offers a discussion of changes in the knowledge fields concerning the subjects geography and visual arts in compulsory school as well as about the significance of using spatiality, visuality and multimodality as tools for learning.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

What are the barriers and facilitators for developing and enabling student agency in schools?

Ingelin Burkeland

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Research topic/aim

This contribution to a paper-session will focus on one of the articles of a ongoing PhD-project that will examine the interrelationship between leaders' practice and students' voice to promote student agency in the context of democratic citizenship education. The aim of the article is to map what is currently known about the facilitators and barriers to enable student agency in schools.

*The paper-presentation is linked to the NERAs network "Arts, culture and education".*

### 2. Theoretical framework

The extant literature evidence that student voice and participation are key factors for students' motivation and belonging (well-being) at school (Biesta, 2006; Department of Education, 2019; Dewey, 1900, 2016/2011; Directorate of Health, 2015; Jones, 2022; Riley, 2022). Successful engagement for meaningful exercise of student voice requires recognition of school leaders as cultural architects (Hillestad, 2022; Schein, 2010) who create the culture needed for students to be involved in their own learning processes. Voice and participation are important prerequisites for students to become agents in their own development, to experience belonging and responsibility, and for building sustainable, democratic communities.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The article will be written after a scoping review-process.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The scoping review is in it's early start, but it's estimated that school culture and politics are two key factors that can both be barriers and facilitators. School culture that prioritize control and lack psychological safety, and politics that discourage risk-taking and creativity and has high focus on standarized testing might be barriers. School culture that flourish of psychological safety, belonging and value student voice and politics that work for a flexible student-centered curruculum might be facilitators.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Student agency is highlighted in several national and global policy documents as important for both flourishing and thriving in society, to be an involved part of and build competent and sustainable democratic communities, which is line with the main topic for the conference.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Sustainable Dyeing: The Role of Natural Dyeing in Higher Education and Craft Practices

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The Craft Studies program at the University of Helsinki leads and organizes the EU-funded international project Colour4CRAFTS, which explores textile dyeing with natural dyes by combining traditional techniques with the latest technologies. The project incorporates biosynthetic dyes produced through microbial processes and waterless dyeing and textile printing methods. The goal is to examine how traditional dyeing culture and modern biobased dyes can together offer a sustainable future for craft and the textile industry.

Currently, the textile industry is among the world's most polluting sectors, with synthetic dyes being a major contributor to this pollution—nearly 20 percent of global water pollution is linked to textile dyeing processes (Niinimäki et al., 2020). The Colour4CRAFTS project specifically examines the Baltic Sea region's historical textiles and craft traditions, drawing inspiration from them to develop new and sustainable dyeing technologies. In addition to traditional plant-based dyes, biobased dyes refer to colours derived from fungi, insects, algae, and bacteria, as well as their potentially modified versions (Räisänen et al., 2016).

Designers, producers, educators, and consumers have the power to shape the future of colour—its determination, application, and the meanings and impacts attached to it. Therefore, a new understanding of the future role of colour is essential. We are particularly interested in teachers, artisans, and designers' attitudes, knowledge, and fresh ideas toward natural dyes.

In autumn 2024, researchers from the University of Helsinki, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Lapland and the University of Leeds, conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews on the use, education, and business aspects of biobased dyes in Finland and the UK. This sub-study provides valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of educators, artisans, and textile industry professionals regarding biobased dyes in Finland. To date, we have recorded and transcribed over 30 interviews, which will be analysed through content analysis using the NVivo application.

Through these interviews, we aim to understand how natural dyes are taught to students in formal education and applied in crafting practices. This work will facilitate the transformation of traditional processes into sustainable, innovative practices that support creative industries and align with future Green Deal objectives.

We share a common Nordic environment and culture, where the sustainable use of nature must be central to future education and thought. Understanding the use of natural dyes, the values they embody, and their significance for the future represents an important task. This project resonates with the Nordic commitment to sustainable practices, bridging cultural heritage with modern sustainable innovations in the craft and textile sectors.

Niinimäki, Kirs; Peters, Greg; Dahlbo, Helena; Perry, Patsy; Rissanen, Timo & Gwilt, Alison. "The environmental price of fast fashion." *Nature Reviews / Earth & Environment* 1, (2020): 189–200. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-020-0039-9> (April 2020).

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Poems for bridging students' many languages: examples from multilingual classrooms

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Our presentation aims to discuss the possibilities of poetry work, not only to develop verbal language through the means of aesthetics but also to develop a sense of understanding for what aesthetics could be used for, when responding to poetry (cf. Jusslin et al., 2024). Since data is collected from multilingual classrooms, Cummins' interdependence hypothesis is used as a starting point (Cummins, 1979). However, it is here used alternatively, i. e. not only to draw attention to the importance of exploiting the relationship between students' (verbal) first and second languages, but to investigate the relationship between the students' first language and other linguistic and aesthetic expressions known to them. In line with this, 'translanguaging' also takes on a new meaning, as the learning process here is not limited only to verbal language (cf. Garcia and Li Wei, 2014).

The presentation is based on four poetry projects. In an ULF project at the University of Gothenburg a Swedish poet, Lina Ekdahl, takes part of the work. This project is based on action research, including teachers from two Elementary schools. The other three projects, at Uppsala University, involve students aged 6-19. In all four projects data is collected by focus group interviews, and in two of the studies research circles. Additionally, classroom observations are used in two of the Uppsala studies. Of special interest here is the result from one of the Uppsala studies, concentrating on the reception of a specific poem by Bruno K. Öijer, "Skymningen" ("The Dusk"). The data from this study consists of 180 responses, and includes drawings, creative writing and analytical reflections inspired by the poem.

Generally, the findings indicate a connection between teachers' attitudes to poetry as a genre, and the students' response (cf. Cremin 2008, 2013, Dahlbäck et al. 2018, Sigvardsson 2020). Regardless of the students' lexical understanding of "Skymningen", it inspired them to express themselves by making use of visual and verbal modalities, in combination, to express their poetic understanding of the poem.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Renegotiation of subject content

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Policy enactment in education is a highly complex process. Previous studies suggest that time constraints, a comprehensive syllabus, and goal-oriented management in schools can exacerbate difficulties in selecting content at the school/classroom level. This study focuses on aspects that have not received as much attention: the formation of subject content in the contextualization process, using a school subject (Art) that is not aligned with a specific academic discipline as an example. To gain new knowledge about how a subject content is formed as it is renegotiated in different policy levels, Bernstein's theory of the pedagogical device was used when policy documents and transcribed interviews were analysed; the interviews were conducted with art teachers and two Officials from the National Agency for Education during ten months as a new curriculum was implemented. The findings suggests that the lack of affiliation with a specific academic discipline enables significant changes in subject content. Moreover, the renegotiation of policy, and hence subject content, is profoundly influenced by societal changes and ideologies in the official recontextualization field. Additionally, the strong internal classification of the Art subject significantly influences content selection in the pedagogical recontextualization field. In the context of Nordic education systems, this study holds particular relevance. The Nordic countries, while sharing many similarities in their educational philosophies, also exhibit differences. Despite the increasing influence of New Public Management principles in some countries, all Nordic nations maintain a tradition where teachers play a crucial role in interpreting curriculum and transforming it into teaching at the classroom level. This study's results contribute new insights pertinent across the Nordic countries. Highlighting how different principles at different policy levels can shape subject content and even offer space for resistance at the school level, which gives hope in a time when teachers' autonomy is decreasing due to mechanisms of goal- and result management.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Fostering Sustainable Textile Education through Cross-Cultural Collaboration: Insights from the TRACtion Project

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**Research topic/aim:** The paper presents outcomes of a two-year Creative Europe 'TRACtion' project focusing on developing sustainable and innovative responses to traditional textile artefacts and designs. The project team, comprising Finnish, Maltese, and Irish researchers, hoped to create an awareness of sustainable textile approaches and, specifically, consideration of the processes and resources required to make clothing. The selected textile artefacts were from a pre-fast fashion era and were a long-term investment rather than a throwaway hobby. The chosen artefacts included East Karelian women's traditional folk garments, the Maltese Għonnella, and Irish lace costumes.

**Theoretical framework:** The study used object analysis (Taylor, 2013), specifically Mida and Kim's "learning to look" (2015) approach, which involved perception, reflection, and interpretation.

**Methodology/research design:** The perception phase of the project involved the technical examination of costumes and the recreation of patterns and designs using two- and three-dimensional strategies, such as physical illustrations and technical drawings, digitisation and vectorisation of patterns and motifs, X-ray technology for the analysis of construction details, and photogrammetry to recreate costumes and capture innate forms and textures. Following the data acquisition process, the team engaged in reflection and the interpretation of the data set.

**Findings:** All studied costumes used sustainable materials. The creators adopted a zero-waste design philosophy and a focus on sufficiency. In Malta, even the colourful selvedge was included in the design to avoid wasting silk or cotton fabric. Additionally, the analysis revealed subtle repair strategies. Used shirts were cut up and used in the Karelian "Rekko" shirts, and the hemline of an Irish wedding dress was mended with an embroidered handkerchief.

The findings of the object analyses were used in workshops to support the development of creative, innovative and sustainable responses. Participants developed notebook responses, paper and fabric prints, lace designs, accessories, jewellery, photography, installation clay pieces, garments, and interactive textiles, including music inspired by a costume motif. Another interesting finding was that examining traditional textile artefacts enabled the achievement of more affective outcomes, such as an appreciation for hand-made and traditional items and empathy or an emotional response to textiles and material cultural items (Dolan and Holloway, 2016). Participants developed an empathy for the procedures and materials used to construct garments. Developing empathy can lead to attitudinal change and a sense of care. The project developed hope for a more sustainable world and forgotten craft traditions.

**Relevance to Nordic educational research:** The project involved a research-driven educational inquiry between a Nordic partner and international collaborators.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Sustainability and Fast fashion: Tackling Wicked Problems through Visual Storytelling

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In an era of rapid environmental degradation and cultural shifts around sustainability, fast fashion has emerged as a poignant example of a wicked problem (Rittel and Webber, 1973) — complex, multifaceted issues without straightforward solutions. This paper proposes a reflective and interactive exploration of how visual art and creative writing can be a powerful medium for examining, understanding, and challenging the unsustainable practices of the fast fashion industry. Ayers, Bryant, and Missimer's (2020) findings indicate that reflective pedagogy and customer engagement are instrumental in advancing sustainable practices. Interdisciplinary approaches are important as Wals (2010) notes, wicked problems are interwoven with broader systemic issues. As suggested by Alford and Head (2017), addressing wicked problems requires collaboration. Ayers, Bryant, and Missimer's (2020) findings indicate that reflective pedagogy and customer engagement are instrumental in advancing sustainable practices.

The presentation tells about a case study that is based on an immersive two-day workshop where participants explored the complex and interconnected challenges of sustainability, wicked problems, through the powerful mediums of visual storytelling and poetry. Using collage, painting, drawing and photography attendees learned how to communicate these intricate issues creatively and compellingly.

The research is framed within the UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) emphasises equipping learners with the skills, values, and knowledge to promote sustainability through a focus on four key pillars: being environmentally sound, socially equitable, culturally sensitive, and economically just. These pillars guide the ESD's approach in preparing individuals and communities to make choices that protect the environment, support social justice, respect cultural diversity, and contribute to economic fairness.

By the end of the workshop, participants gained a deeper understanding of sustainability and the nature of wicked problems. They became proficient in using creative ways to create compelling visual stories. Developed the skills to communicate complex sustainability issues to diverse audiences effectively through words and images.

Through the interdisciplinary learning, we uncovered how artistic engagement enabled a deeper understanding of sustainability issues, provoking critical thought, and fostering empathy that can inspire meaningful action. This was a transformative experience where creativity met sustainability, and participants learned to use the power of visual storytelling to address some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

This paper will be aligned with the theme of creativity as a vehicle for social and environmental responsibility. By focusing on fast fashion this presentation highlights the critical need for innovative educational methods that deepen understanding and inspire sustainable practices. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for using art to address sustainability in ways that are both thought-provoking and impactful.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

What about the arts! A scoping review of previous research on art forms in L1 and literature education in Finland

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This paper addresses how the school subject of first language (L1) and literature in Finland has been considered an art subject. The multidisciplinary subject has a broad mission in school and its nature as an art subject has tended to be overshadowed by, for example, a strong focus on literacy skills (e.g., Green & Erixon, 2020). This paper aims to identify and review previous research on art forms in the L1 subject, both in primary and secondary education, in Finland during the 21st century. The research questions are: (1) When, where, and in which languages has previous research on art forms in the L1 and literature subject been published? (2) Which art forms and research interests within the subject have been studied in previous research? (3) Has previous research discussed the subject as an art subject and if so how? The review is methodologically conducted as a scoping review (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), aiming to create a synthesis of the extent, scope, and nature of previous research on art forms in the L1 and literature subject. This review study encompasses 60 studies, with half of them published recently in the 2020s. The results indicate, unsurprisingly, a main interest in literature, both individually and in combination with other art forms (e.g., drama, dance, and film), and that the interest in studying literature in the context of L1 has increased remarkably during the last five years. Other art forms identified among the reviewed studies are drama, film, and creative writing. The review also identified art forms that are not mentioned in the national core curricula for the L1 and literature subject, such as dance, which suggests a tendency towards a more interdisciplinary approach. Another main result is that the subject has rarely been explicitly discussed as an art subject, but the established place and role of literature suggests an implicit assumption of the subject's artistic nature. Based on the review's findings, there seems to be a positive momentum, with an increasing research interest in the subject's art forms and, by extension, the subject as an art subject within the framework of Finnish research. As such, the subject appears to be an unarticulated art subject. This study contributes to Nordic educational research by discussing the artistic dimensions of the L1 subject, aligning with similar ongoing discussions in other Nordic countries. It underscores the need for further exploration of how the L1 subject is and should be articulated as an art subject.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

“Somewhat more than mere genitalia” – Teaching at the crossroads of craft education and the knowledge area of sexuality, consent and relationships

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The knowledge area of sexuality, consent, and relationships should be characterized by student participation and integrated with the school's mission of promoting core values. The teaching can also be organized as subject-integrated within individual subjects, as well as cross-curricular through collaborations and events such as theme days. However, a review by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2018) shows deficiencies in subject-integrated work due to uncertainty about how to approach the area. Research suggests that including practical and aesthetic aspects can enhance engagement in sexuality education, creating a space and activity for addressing challenging topics. There is a productive connection to the subject of crafts, which is characterized by work processes where students use their own ideas to craft objects with different expressions and functions. The crafts classroom, with its spatial design and workshop-based nature, creates conditions that, according to researchers, promote collaboration, community, and independence.

This paper explores teaching at the intersection of the knowledge area of sexuality, consent, and relationships and the subject of crafts in lower secondary school. More specifically, it develops an understanding of subject-integrated teaching through embodied, material, and aesthetic processes in a cross-curricular context. The study is based on a craft teacher's experiences from a teaching sequence in grade 9, where students designed and carved symbols related to sexuality, consent, and relationships in wood. The study's methodology is based on the concept of practice-oriented interviews, a method that seeks to illuminate and analyze narrative examples from teaching experiences from an educational understanding perspective.

The study is based on a concrete subject-integrated teaching situation where aspects of aesthetics, materiality, and embodiment are prominent. To highlight these aspects in the teacher's narrative, we draw theoretically from an educational perspective on teaching based on Gert Biesta, Ruhi Tyson, and Helen Knutes.

The results highlight the impact of subject-integrated teaching and underscore student participation as pivotal, both in sexuality education and crafts. Another insight was the teacher's ease in integrating the topic into craft education, where the craft's focus on the process was contributory. The theme opened up the crafts classroom for existential exploration, fostered discussions, and created a more nurturing classroom environment.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Dilemmas in the field of tension between school, 'folkbildning' and culture: Swedish culture school constructed from the perspective of culture school leaders

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The research topic concerns specific conditions and forms of leadership from the perspective of Swedish culture school leaders. It is part of a larger project that also includes folk high school principals with the same aim to explore leadership.

The theoretical framework used in this study is discourse theory (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Billig, 1988, 2005) for survey data and the narrative approach for interview data (Polkinghorne, 1995; Elliott, 2005).

The research design includes semi-structured web surveys and group interviews via Zoom conducted in 2023-24. Of 277 culture school leaders, 114 responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 41.16 percent. Eight of these participated in group interviews, totaling 1,5 hours, split into three groups. The survey questions were both multiple-choice and open-ended, for example: "Most important mission of the culture school," "What potential opportunities and obstacles do you experience in your job?" or "What support do you have?" The group interview questions delved deeper into the survey questions, such as: "What are the conditions for leading the culture school?", "How much control can the culture school tolerate?" and "What is the most important future issue?"

Interview data has not yet been analyzed, while survey data has been partially analyzed. Through a discursively oriented analysis (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) guided by the concepts of interpretive repertoires and Billig's (1988, 2005) ideological dilemmas, culture school leaders' discursive constructions of the mission of culture school, management practice, and future issues have been crystallized, as have the ideological dilemmas that these constructions point to.

A preliminary conclusion highlights the ideological dilemmas that emerge in the analysis. One such dilemma can be formulated as 'culture school in a field of tension between civic education versus education with predetermined goals.' Another dilemma can be described as 'culture school in a field of tension between art and cultural education versus social meeting place', and yet another as 'culture school in a field of tension between locally free versus nationally conditional'. These dilemmas might, reversed, also have something to say about what Swedish culture school is perceived as, why it exists, and what lies ahead from the perspective of culture school leaders

The relevance for Nordic educational research is considered high because the Swedish culture school is a special form of school with more or less similar examples in the other Nordic countries. While the importance of culture school leaders for how the heritage of the culture school should be translated into practical activities is emphasized (Lindgren & Söderman, 2024), there is a lack of comprehensive research on that topic. For that reason, empirical research is of importance.



Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Drama pedagogy and literature didactics – educational design research in L1-teaching in upper secondary school

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This intervention study is within literature didactics and drama pedagogy in L1-teaching (Swedish) at upper secondary school. The purpose is to investigate drama pedagogical methods to develop students' interpretations of the content and form of the literature read. An educational design will be developed, Educational Design Research, at two high schools in Sweden together with teachers and students. The teaching is planned based on the new subject plans in Swedish, GY25, and is framed by *bildung* theory (f. ex. Gert Biesta) and sociocultural theory (John Dewey). Examples of drama-pedagogical methods that may be used in the design are embodiment, dramatizations, statues, improvisations, physical character work, role-taking and role-playing (Hallgren, 2018).

Preliminary research questions are:

What characterizes literature didactics and drama pedagogy as activities? Are there connections, and if so which ones?

How could embodiment and role-playing be used as tools to develop students' interpretations of literature at upper secondary school?

How could students' knowledge of the form of literature, f. ex. dramaturgy, be developed through drama pedagogy in literature teaching?

How can drama-pedagogical methods in literature teaching be justified based on a *bildung* perspective?

The study is expected to formulate didactics with dual purposes: Firstly to develop students' ability to interpret texts and use narrative technical concepts, partly to open up their experiences and identification through literary imaginary worlds (Langer, 2005). In today's society education is increasingly shaped by instrumental purposes (Biesta, 2017a), learning goals are expected to be measurable and aesthetic subjects are no longer compulsory in Swedish upper secondary school. At the same time, the concept of *bildung* is spelled out clearly in the new syllabus for the Swedish subject (GY25). To educate students to be democratic citizens of the future, *adults in the world*, focus is needed both on qualification, socialization and subjectification (Biesta, 2017b). In this assignment, drama pedagogy can play an important role in literature didactics in L1-teaching (Swedish subject).

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\*L1 = first language

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Matter(ing) in playing with yarn: materialization of content in the subject of Arts and Craft in primary school

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In the current curriculum for Norway primary education, children's play is held up as necessary for well-being, creativity and meaningful learning (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020b). It is a common understanding in schools that play is something you do during free time, or as a warm-up for teaching. In this paper, it is examined how playing with yarn can be content of the school subject Arts and Crafts. To find answers, field notes from observation of students in third grade playing with skeins made of long finger-knitted strips, are analyzed and discussed. Events from this play are diffractive analyzed using Karen Barad's term matter(ing) (Barad, 2007, p. 151) and discussed with Arne Trageton's theory of play as central to children's sensory cognition (Trageton, 1995) and selected art theory (Abakanowicz, 2023; Bourriaud, 2007; Vicuña, 2017). Art theory helps us to see that the fine product made in arts and crafts, can be *a duration* that teacher and students experience together, an encounter where collective production of significant knowledge or professional content takes place. A difference is created in the understanding of subject content if one acknowledges the slow sense of material that is acquired through touching materials in play, values the interaction with soft objects and accepts that the interaction with the soft objects gave the students a sense of space and an experience of relationship with the woven forms and surroundings.

This paper presentation contributes to the conference theme *Pedagogy of Hope: Gratitude, Diversity, and Sustainability in Education* through challenging ready-made answers and assumptions about what education is for. It is in the call stated that market economy values are gaining more and more grounds in education, this affects what kind of subject content is prioritized and accepted in schools. This paper refers to the connection between children's play and contemporary art and argues that play has value in education, maybe it can raise questions about flourishing and vulnerability and promote a sense of empathy and belonging amongst people living in a world where we are not alone.

## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Early childhood teacher education inspired by contemporary art's practice and theory

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This paper presentation is about an ongoing research project on cross-aesthetic art education in early childhood teacher education. In this research project we want to investigate how contemporary art's performative practices can explain and enrich teaching. The goal is to promote art and culture's contribution to education for sustainable development. (<https://fn.no/om-fn/fns-baerekraftsmaal/god-utdanning>).

By applying our own performing artistic competence in teaching, we have created connections to the practices and theory of contemporary art. The students were invited to participate in our performative aesthetic expressions, and afterwards challenged to develop their own expressions in response. We have filmed and photographed these expressions, as our data material. Theoretically, we anchor the investigation in research into the sustainability potential of knowledge and learning in art education (Neumann et. al. 2020; Illeris, 2012, 2016, 2017; Illeris et. al. 2022). These potentials are about how aesthetic experience, reflection, togetherness and subjectivation is developed in interaction with one's environment. We also base our work on UNESCO's key competences for sustainability, where anticipatory competence, collaboration competence and self-awareness competence are proposed as relevant (UNESCO, 2017, p. 10). Our project of letting contemporary art's performative practices inspire teaching can contribute to creating future visions, learning from and understanding each other, evaluating one's own actions and dealing with one's own emotions, which are contained in these skills. These competences raise "a sense of empathy and belonging amongst people living in a world where we are not alone, raising questions about flourishing and vulnerability" as asked for in the theme of the conference. We also address how sustainability can be about the interrelation of social realms and how education can be a promising tool for hope and change.

We argue that a performative approach to creative practice makes students better equipped to take care of art subjects in kindergarten, because such a form of practice is close to children's play and forms of expression.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

MUSPRO–Music, Sports and Prosocial behavior. The preliminary results from a longitudinal study focusing on the effects of music playschool on 4-year-old children’s social and cognitive development.

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*Aims MUSPRO – music, sports, and prosocial behavior* investigates the effect of two years’ participation in regular music activities on children’s social-emotional and cognitive development. Here we present some cross-sectional results based on the first data collection, as well as preliminary results from the first year of the follow-up.

*Theoretical framework* According to social bonding theory of music, the evolutionary meaning of music lies in its ability to strengthen the coherence within large human communities (Savage et al., 2021). In line with this, previous research suggests that music-induced synchrony reinforces cooperation and helpfulness in individuals (Cirelli et al., 2014). In addition, regular group-based music activities have been found to support children’s inhibition skills and working memory (Jaschke et al., 2018; Roden et al., 2012), as well as their language development (Linnavalli et al., 2018).

*Research design* Four-year-old children (N = 115) are block-randomized in music, physical education (PE), and control groups, and followed for two academic years. The music and PE sessions are planned by the experts of the research group and provided by trained teachers, in kindergarten premises. In the baseline, we measured children’s social and cognitive abilities and music perception skills, and the teachers evaluated children’s social-emotional development. Parents reported children’s prior attendance in music playschool, their own music background, and the amount of music activities at home. According to parental reports, 32 Finnish-speaking children had attended music playschool by the time the baseline measures were conducted. The measurements are repeated in first and second spring after the first autumn.

*Results* Previous attendance in music playschool was associated with better verbal working memory. Neither the prior participation in music playschool, the amount of music activities at home, or parents’ music background was linked with children’s music perception skills. The first year of music intervention is not expected to have impact children’s social-emotional or cognitive development, but the preliminary results of the one-year longitudinal data will be discussed.

*Relevance to Nordic educational research* In an era where the value of art education is under scrutiny, it is crucial to demonstrate the benefits that high-quality music education can provide to young children. Beyond teaching musical concepts and offering the joy of collective music-making and self-expression, music education has the potential to enhance children’s social-emotional and cognitive development.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Navigating Challenges in Craft Education in Early Childhood Education and Care

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Given the dynamic nature of society, it is increasingly important to foster creativity in children, and craft activities serve as a vital medium for this expression. In the Nordic countries, including Finland, craft education has a long tradition in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Craft involves transforming ideas into tangible objects through various manual and intellectual processes, offering versatile learning opportunities (Anttila, 1993; Kojonkoski-Rännäli, 1995; Lindfors, 1991; Porko-Hudd et al., 2018). Craft promotes children's development of essential life skills, social interaction, and problem-solving (Carlsen, 2015; Yliveronen, 2019).

This study is based on theories of creativity and early childhood education activities, emphasizing the role of crafts in cognitive and social development. It also considers the guidelines and recommendations outlined in the ECEC curriculum (EDUFI, 2022). The aim of this study is to explore the challenges faced by teachers when offering craft education in ECEC and to link these challenges to potential opportunities. The research question is: What challenges do teachers identify in craft education in ECEC?

Data collection was conducted in autumn 2023 via a comprehensive web-based questionnaire sent to 95 practice ECEC centres affiliated with Åbo Akademi. The questionnaire, which was answered by 54 participants, included open-ended questions about teachers' perceptions of the challenges associated with craft education. The collected data were analysed thematically to identify common themes and variations in the reported challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

In the preliminary results, we identified six main themes: a) there is a lack of time for offering craft education, b) the spaces are not suitable for craft education, c) children's readiness for craft education, d) teachers' lack of competencies for craft education, e) insufficient knowledge regarding materials, f) lack of appropriate tools.

The results indicate that several aspects make craft education challenging; time, space, children, staff, materials, and tools. These challenges underscore the need for additional support and resources to effectively integrate crafts into ECEC.

This study is particularly relevant to Nordic educational research as it addresses the practical challenges of integrating craft education in ECEC, which is an important part of the Nordic educational model. By understanding these challenges, the study contributes to the ongoing discussion on promoting creativity and holistic development in ECE within a Nordic context. The results also provide insights for policymakers and educators on how to improve the implementation of craft education and ensure it remains a vital part of the curriculum.

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Empowering Teachers for the Use of Music in Education

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This presentation discusses the research project "Empowering Teachers for the Use of Music in Education," part of the Academy of Finland's Centre of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body, and Brain. The project includes three sub-studies, which will be introduced along with the expected results of sub-studies 1 and 2. The project's aims are to explore students' conceptualization of their roles as music educators, identify strategies to enhance their competence, collect and disseminate research and teaching materials on integrating music in education, and compare the knowledge, skills, perceptions, and attitudes of Finnish, Swedish, and Estonian student teachers towards music education.

Studies show that student teachers often feel unqualified to teach music (Juvonen, 2008; Suomi, 2019). The musical knowledge and skills of student teachers prior to university studies are often limited, and the resources allocated to music education in teacher education programmes are now a fraction of what they were a few decades ago (Suomi, 2019). Given the scarcity of resources for music education in teacher education programmes, the quality of the programmes is essential for improving teacher qualifications.

Sub-study 1 investigates the perceptions of student teachers regarding their roles as music educators. Participants are students enrolled in a compulsory music education course at the University of Helsinki (estimated N = 200). Data will be collected from students' post-course self-assessments, focusing on their musical background, learning process, and future development as music educators. Qualitative thematic analysis will be employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the students' musical development.

Sub-study 2 will focus on creating and disseminating a large database of materials to support their empowerment as music educators. The resource bank consists of previous research and teaching materials. The resource bank is organised by age group (infants, school age, adolescents) and by music use (music as a school subject, music as a teaching method in other subjects, music as a tool for special education, the well-being effects of music, long-term musical agency and self-expression through music).

Sub-study 3 examines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of student teachers and teachers (estimated N = 300) regarding the benefits of music education and its integrative application in the school environments of Finland, Estonia, and Sweden. This analysis is conducted through questionnaires and employs quantitative comparison methods.

The project will provide information on strategies that could be used to support the optimal development of student teachers' music education skills. The resource bank will be made available through a website and a MOOC to enable wide dissemination and use.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Drawing as a way of constructing participation and agency in primary school

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The Finnish school culture values the process in which children grow up as active agents and experience participation in the learning community. This inclusive approach plays an important role in the present national curriculum for the basic education. However, research shows that conception of participation varies by context (e.g. Schaaf, 2022) and often its implementation is complicated to assess in practice (e.g. Kiilakoski & Tervahartiala, 2015). In this study, inclusive practices are discussed in the context of Visual Arts as a school subject. The purpose of this study is to explore drawing as a way of constructing participation and agency in primary school.

This study focuses on the fifth and sixth graders' conceptions on drawing as an activity. The data was collected in spring 2022 related to My Ateneum project, in which the Ateneum Art Museum expanded its regional accessibility and fostered children's sense of participation by implementing an art learning programme with online workshops for four hundred primary school classes from different parts of Finland in years 2021-22. One of the activities during the programme was drawing in different environments. The data was collected by using an online feedback questionnaire in the Ateneum Art Museum's website. The students were asked what they remembered most about the programme and why. Approximately 45% out of 1294 students' open-ended responses addressed their own art making experiences during the project. Most of those responses handled drawing. Those open-ended responses on drawing as an activity were analysed qualitatively by using phenomenographic analysis (Marton & Booth, 1997). This analysis focused on the children's reasons for remembering the drawing.

The results showed that drawing enabled active, positive engagement for the students in several ways. Drawing was described as a joyful activity, where you could, among other things, act yourself, use your head, use your creativity, choose ways to act, learn new things that interest you, and concentrate in peace. Based on these preliminary findings, drawing seems to be a valuable pedagogical choice in order to foster children's participation and agency in primary school.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

### Pedagogical Hope in a More Practical School: Aesthetic Approaches for Inclusive Learning Environments in a Nordic Context

Susanne Sakariassen

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The recent evolution of policy regarding primary education in Norway emphasizes the integration of practical and exploratory teaching methods to enhance student motivation, resilience and learning (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2024). This pedagogical shift, while not entirely novel, has been a focus of both practicing educators and teacher training programs in Norway for some time (Utdanningsforbundet, 2023). The newly implemented Norwegian curriculum (LK20) explicitly supports this shift by promoting teaching and learning that are both practical and exploratory, incorporating elements of arts and culture across various school subjects (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). This ongoing research project aims to explore how a more practical school with a focus on aesthetic approaches can contribute to creating inclusive learning environments for a diverse student group in a Nordic context. The project is based on the ongoing debate about the role of schools in a society characterized by increased diversity and rapid change. The question is: *How can a more practical school in Norway, emphasizing aesthetic approaches, contribute to managing diversity and creating inclusive learning environments?*

The study includes observation of teaching, interviews with teachers and students and document analysis of curricula and teaching materials. Key concepts are *aesthetic expressions as a universal language* where art, music, and drama can function as forms of communication that transcend linguistic and cultural barriers (Østern et al., 2024). Further key concepts are *diversity* and *inclusion* where aesthetic approaches offer varied learning activities to promote unity and inclusion (Graham, 2023; Kristoffersen, 2020).

Preliminary findings from a review of the Norwegian white paper *Meld. St. 34 (2023-2024) A more practical school- better learning, motivation and well-being in grades 5.-10.* (author translation) suggest that there is potential for using aesthetic approaches to create more inclusive learning environments in a more practical school. The project is about pedagogical hope by examining how schools can contribute to creating a more just and inclusive future for students. The study is relevant to Nordic educational research because it explores how Norwegian schools work to integrate practical and aesthetic approaches in teaching with respect to inclusion and diversity. The research project will contribute to new knowledge on how practical schools with emphasis on aesthetic approaches can help realize the pedagogical hope of inclusion and equality for students.

Key words: Aesthetic Teaching Methods, Inclusion, Practical Education, Diversity, Norwegian Primary Education

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Multispecies dance in gallery space – Art educational school workshops with Cosmopolitan Chickens at Kunsthall 3,14

Heidi Kukkonen

Kunsthall 3,14, Norway

In this project, the art educator and researcher Heidi Kukkonen develops workshops in a contemporary art exhibition featuring live animals at Kunsthall 3,14, a non-profit art gallery in Bergen. Since 1999, the Belgian artist Koen Vanmechelen has been exploring biocultural diversity by crossbreeding chickens around the world in *the Cosmopolitan Chicken Project*. In the fall 2024, Norwegian jærhøns will be crossed with the generation #28 of the Cosmopolitan Chicken, and audiences will encounter the newest generation of CCP chickens at Kunsthall 3,14 (Kunsthall 3,14 2024).

In school workshops taking place in November 2024, Kukkonen explores human-animal relationships and ethical questions with the Cosmopolitan Chickens and 7–12-year-old children. The project is aligned with posthumanist philosophies (Aloi 2011, 2018), and post approaches in museum and gallery education (Hackett et al. 2018, Kukkonen 2023, 2024; MacRae et al. 2017), a red thread in Kunsthall 3,14's school program and Kukkonen's research. The workshops explore human-animal relations by combining dialogue-based practices with dancing. We study the body language of chickens and humans and invite the children to join the embodied explorations on the way. Can we – chickens and humans – find a common language through dance? In addition to observing the chickens in the gallery space, we turn the gaze around and wonder how the chickens see and understand us (*animal gaze*). How to open the gallery space for multispecies encounters in ethical and meaningful ways?

The purpose of the project is to activate the children's senses and philosophical wonderings about human-animal relations through dance and dialogue. At the same time the exhibition space is opened up for chickens, chicks and eggs. The theory-practice in the context of an exhibition featuring live animals provokes constantly big ethical and philosophical questions. In the article, Kukkonen researches the process through multispecies ethnography (Ameli 2022) in six workshops with school groups. Kukkonen will observe the children's engagement, the chickens and her own educator-role in a continuous critical dialogue with posthumanist philosophies.

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## Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

“I ran away from school to the theatre to become myself” But what happens when theatre goes to school?  
Introducing a theatre pedagogy-based pilot workshop to approach antisemitism in public education

Nóra Varga

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In 2022, I received a letter from the parents of one of my foreign-born students, informing me that they were leaving the country due to the challenges their child faced at school and the lack of support from the institution in providing a safer environment for all students. The student had been a target of persistent antisemitic bullying.

Bullying and victimization are not ‘typical’ adolescent behaviors but are influenced by the social environment (Due, 2009). Studies indicate that hate speech and hate crimes have significantly increased in Finland in recent years (Äystö, 2019), and several Nordic countries have researched the experience of antisemitism in recent years (Czibalmos & Pataricza, 2024; Mattson, Andersson, & Sagel, 2024), especially after October 7, 2023, and Israel’s subsequent war in Gaza.

In the research, the definition of antisemitism follows the terminology of UNESCO (2020) but relies on the lived experiences of interviewed Jewish citizens of Finland (Czibalmos & Pataricza, 2024). The research uses theatre pedagogies as an umbrella term for all educational work that uses elements of theatre creation, focusing on individual and communal development aesthetically and socially rather than on the outcome (Cziboly & Bethlenfalvy, 2024).

After defining, mapping, and comparing the possibilities of theatre pedagogical genres and analyzing theatre pedagogical projects enhancing democratic values, I examined the possibilities of creating an impactful art pedagogy-based workshop model of three sessions to combat antisemitism in the classroom. The workshops focus on the students’ experiences, allowing them to build new knowledge that is reflective and informed by post-structural sensitivities, relying on multiplicity and uncertainty (Lather, 2001).

Engaged pedagogy and critical pedagogies make participants reflective of their own socio-political situation, making them more conscious of their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement when discussing sensitive topics such as victimization, bullying, racism, and antisemitism. One premise of the research is that art can activate emotional engagement (Eisner, 2008); empathy can open new cognitive registers through creativity (Zaidel, 2010).

In what ways could theatre pedagogy engage adolescent students? How can a three-session theatre pedagogical workshop influence teenagers’ views on antisemitism? The research offers an answer to these questions by: I. Examining the implications of the applied theatre elements (such as drama, forum theatre, TIE). II. Introducing the approach of the workshop from an antisemitism studies perspective. III. Analyzing the results of the workshop based on interviews and questionnaires completed by the participants.

Public education has a crucial role in shaping the worldview of students and equipping them with the knowledge needed to be able to stand up in a community for democratic values. As Finnish society becomes more diverse, and hatred spreads against different communities easily via social media, it is extremely important for educators and institutions to act on empowering their students’ democratic values.

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Pathway of hope: Educational potentials of informal craft gatherings

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University of Iceland, Iceland

We live in times of radical change. Cultural diversity is the new normal and identities are fluid. Many experience fear for loss of the known and uncertainty of what will take its place. Holding steadfastly to the past is not an option for time cannot go backwards. Courage is critical for without it there is no hope for coping. Education has long been the beam of light in challenging times. That also seems to be the case in the current situation as inclusion and mutual integration are the focus of formal education. Considering the disparity in access to formal education beyond general education, there might be reasons to think critically about perspectives on different forms of education and different types of knowledge. For example, does the typical hierarchy of knowledge constrain inclusion? Could we gain hope for inclusion through a change in perspectives on the value and role of different types of knowledge?

This qualitative study was conducted in Iceland in 2024 amongst participants in four social gatherings focusing on craft practices and craft knowledge. The purpose of the research was to shed a light on what educational potentials and roles crafts and craft knowledge might hold in contemporary society. The study aimed to gain insight into the ideas and attitudes of participants of different cultural backgrounds toward the educational potential of participating in craft gatherings. Data was collected through participatory observation, field notes and individual interviews. During data collection and thematic analysis, constant comparison method was conducted.

Preliminary findings indicate that participating in craft gatherings can have multiple educational potentials for inclusion and social integration. The education taking place seems to exceed learning about methods and materials in crafts. Additional benefits are learning on a peer level about one another and gaining empathy and understanding that enable mutual social integration beyond assimilation in a typical one-way process of formal education.

In light of those findings, I argue the importance of acknowledging and including informal education and personal knowledge as means towards an equal and just society. Also, the very nature of craft knowledge, being embodied and best communicated through active participation, may hold promising potential as a pathway of hope for inclusion through informal education in the contemporary Nordic context.

Transcription of video-recorded classroom interaction: Exploring visual communication alongside teachers in practice-based research

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This study explores multimodal transcription of video recordings in collaboration with teachers researching their practice. The data comes from six participatory workshops in which art and craft teachers – together with researchers – explore the potential of digital line drawings based on frame grabs (from the teachers' video data of their own classroom situation) while making analytical decisions aiming to get closer to the data. Duranti's (2006) two (1-2) critical questions (1) *What kinds of entities are transcriptions?* and (2) *What are the consequences of thinking about them in one way rather than another?* have served to provide perspective on transcription and guide the theoretical framework (p. 302). Ochs' (1979) theoretical assumption that transcriptions are *products of choice* is can be said to be a basic starting point, since transcription always is a creative process involving multiple choices relating to construction, shape and design (Aarsand & Sparrman, 2021; Albert et al., 2019). A key point is not to treat transcription as a "word process", instead embracing the multimodal potential of the data (Murphy, 2023); notably visual communication in the form of line drawings. By analysing drawing as a visual method in practice-based research, the paper addresses a largely unanalysed phenomena since: (a) teachers tend not to ever have used drawings as part of analytical work and (b) there is a clear lack of visual methods within the growing field of practice-based research. Through data from workshops, the paper advances understanding of digital line drawing as a method in qualitative research *together* with teachers and highlight the importance of visual analysis and contribute to a methodological discussion of organising data session together with teachers and its visual outcome when analysing classroom interaction. The scientific contribution of the paper consists of empirical examples of visual transcripts, and a critical evaluation of their methodological and epistemic role in practice-based research.

Key words: practice-based research, transcription; multimodality; arts and crafts

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

What Shall we Do With the Children? *Teaching Dance as Practicing the Art of Leaving them Kids Alone*

Paul Moerman

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*Research topic*

“We don’t need no education. We don’t need no thought control. Teacher! Leave them kids alone! All in all, you’re just another brick in the wall”, a child choir sang with Pink Floyd in the late seventies, calling for a ban on caning. Is there still a need to tear down walls around school? To let in air and preserve young people’s true integrity, subjectivity and freedom of initiative?

This paper probes to which extent teaching the arts, in particular dance, can be seen as a practice of non-control.

*Theoretical framework*

A take on teaching dance in its own right is advanced, allowing children and students to engage in mere movement exploration and improvisation: to indulge in the doing and undergoing of kinaesthetics (Stinson 2016). Thus opening space for the unpredictable, the aesthetic and the non-cognitive, the not-yet-known and the unknowable, all part of art making and art experiencing, is brought forward as possibly an equally vital part of education, notably in terms of what Biesta (2021) emphasizes as education’s existential remit: to provide space for new beginnings, for true dialogue with a world of others and the other, ultimately for the encounter with oneself in and with the world.

*Methodology/research design: secondary source reflection into teaching dance as part of an aesthetic education concept*

Teaching dance-as-dance, it is argued, preserving the autonomy of art as activity with an end in itself (Arendt 1956) inscribes itself in an aesthetics of resistance: to objectifying the subject-body (Manchev 2011); to utilitarian claims on the arts in education and to overall politics of rationality in education. Instead, the paper calls for a discussion of a concept of an aesthetic education. Letting oneself be moved by movement, be affected by what comes to us through the senses (Biesta 2017, Roth 2011) is tentatively advanced as a model of ‘education as trying to be in dialogue with the world’ (Biesta 2021, 2017), resisting alienation as loss of meaningful relationships with others (Jaeggi 2016), promoting Amor Mundi (Arendt 1987) and existing in resonance with the world (Rosa 2019).

*Expected results*

The paper highlights aesthetic, ethical and existential aspects of teaching dance, in an effort to answer the question what to do with the children, asked by Biesta (see 2021). The paper rephrases the question, to which extent teaching dance, catering for unforeseeable (kin)aesthetic experiencing (Stinson 2016, 1990), providing space for initiative and response to movement, in a blend of agency and vulnerability, also creates space in school for young individuals to act upon their freedom and ‘break into the world’ as subjects of their own lives (Biesta 2021).

*Relevance to Nordic educational research*

A contribution to a deeper understanding of the relevance of the arts, specifically dance, in/as education. A contribution to conceiving an aesthetic education.

# Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Professional development project on exploring with mathematics in pre-schools

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how participation in courses on young children's mathematics learning impacted the work of preschool teachers in two pre-schools. The focus was on how they created a learning community and what support was necessary to promote the professionalism and cooperation of preschool teachers (Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2018). The goal was to give pre-school teachers the opportunity to strengthen themselves as professionals in analyzing young children's ideas about mathematics.

The content of the course, *Mathematics in pre-school* is from [Skolverket in Sweden](#). It is composed by a group of researchers at Malmö University in collaboration with Luleå University of Technology and the Swedish Mathematical Center in Gothenburg. It is based on their study of the work of preschool teachers who worked with children to study the mathematical topics that people in all cultures deal with according to the research of the American mathematician Alan J. Bishop. These elements are: *Acting, Explaining, Placing, Designing, Measuring and Counting* (Bishop, 1988b). Two participants in each pre-school lead the project within their pre-school (Levin and Schrum, 2017) and they attend the course.

The study is based on action research where data is collected regularly, reflected on and the processing used to improve the work (McNiff and Whitehead, 2012). Data was collected from teacher educators' notes and reflections, learning stories and pictures from pre-schools and during meetings with teachers educators in the pre-schools and throughout the course. At the final meeting, participants reported what they had learned from the project and then answered a short electronic survey.

The pre-school teachers actively participated and succeeded in creating a learning community in the pre-schools. Course days, where the pre-school teachers, who lead the project, met and teachers educator's visits to the pre-schools provided good support. Introducing the project well at the beginning to everyone in the pre-schools seems to have been important, as well as lowering the threshold for mathematics. The learning stories were motivating and by having them visible enabled the teachers to see and get good ideas for the work with the children that could easily be used in the future. The project gave many teachers a chance to see mathematics all around them, to see the mathematics that is already in their work and gave them the tools to promote mathematics and make it visible and tangible in their daily work.

Nordic collaboration in the field of mathematics education and teachers' community building is important. This project is our contribution within the field of pre-school teaching.

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pre-school, learning communities, action research, mathematics learning, school development



### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

To exist in the world without being the centre

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1) To exist in the world without being its centre, contrasts with the individual focus often emphasized in teaching and learning today. However, there is no contradiction between a world-centred education and a subject's personal learning. Instead, it concerns how teachers create space for the existential orientation of education in their daily work, encouraging children to exist as subjects of their own lives rather than objects. The aim of this study is to closely follow what happens during a year-long tree-project in two preschool classes. The intention is to highlight the children's encounters with the trees and the teachers' didactic strategies while working with an explorative approach. By mapping the explorative process, the teaching and learning processes as well as the relationships that occur, become visible (Halvars, 2021).

2) *Learning as a relational field of potentiality*, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical ideas, incorporating concepts like *event*, *intensity* and *potentiality* (Dahlberg & Elfström, 2014). The concepts are used to frame and delimit a problem area and direct the attention to teaching, cooperative learning and collective meaning-making. In the relational field, relationships and connections emerge through the exploration that take place during the tree-project.

*The Ethics of the Other*, a levinasian concept, is used to further scrutinize educational issues that arise around sustainability and ecology during the project. For Levinas, *ethics understood as responsibility* is fundamental to human existence. Responsibility is not a choice; it is something we encounter (Levinas, 1969).

How teachers create space for the existential orientation of education in their daily work also involve didactic issues. Directing someone's attention to something is a basic educational and relational gesture (Biesta, 2021). It is not about controlling the child but about awakening them to the potentiality of their own subjectivity. *Interruption*, *suspension* and *sustenance* can help visualize the teacher's strategies for awakening a child's desire to exist in the world.

3) The study is an ethnographic study where I followed two groups with 56 six-year-olds and their six teachers, mapping what happened during their year in preschool class. The data has been generated through participant observations, focus groups and stimulated recall. The children's aesthetic works and the concluding exhibition with additional walks are part of the data generating.

4) The teaching and learning processes appear in the mapping. The teachers follow and challenge the children's questions, starting from a more anthropocentric perspective expanding towards a more ecological worldview, where the subject is no longer at the centre of the world.

5) In an anthropocene era, it is high time to learn more about and reflect on how work with ecology and sustainability issues can be done with the youngest children without becoming normative.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

The large preschool cloakroom – a space where hope, gratitude and diversity are challenged

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This paper will present and highlight findings of an ongoing PhD project that aims to produce knowledge about the timespatial organization of large preschool units, with a focus on the dressing and undressing practices in the preschool cloakroom. In Sweden, and elsewhere, when building new preschools, larger buildings are often built (Boverket, 2020). Previous research shows that when the building becomes larger more time will be spent in transitions from one space to another, than in smaller buildings (Brandi-Hansen, 2015). Previous research also highlights the cloakroom as a space where children and adults private and public spheres intersect (Markström, 2005). This space is understood, as a space in-between the indoor and the outdoor, and in a Nordic climate the season changes. These changes may affect the timespatial activities and the organization regarding going outdoor or indoor. The aim of this paper is to generate knowledge about how the seasons influence the timespatial organization of the dressing and undressing practices, both through educators planning and through children's present activities. The overall study employs ethnographic methods and combines them with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The fieldwork, which consisted of participant observations, interviews and walking tours, took place in two large preschools in urban milieus in Sweden, with 18 preschool educators, 73 caregivers and 52 one to six-year-old children. The philosophical underpinnings of the study are informed by Lefebvres (1991) social production of space, and Schatzkis (2002, 2010) practice theory, which both rely on a relational approach and that humans interact with and through contact with material entities, and that spaces transform through actions. The results show how the weather is co-constructing the timespatial organization. Since all children enrolled in the preschools of the study have one cloakroom to share, the weather conditions impact on strategies for going in or out. When the weather is harsh, educators prefer to stay indoor because of the strain on their bodies to dress all children, and that the youngest children are having a hard time moving around in their outerwear, if the yard is full of ice. The cloakroom becomes crowded very fast, especially when everyone needs to go in at the same time, when it starts to rain or if the weather is too cold. The result shows that since not everyone can enter through one door all at once, the size and dimensions of the large both enables and disables pedagogical practices in new ways for experienced educators. It is of essence for Nordic educational research to present empirical studies regarding larger preschool buildings and how the size of the building affects the everyday lives of children and adults.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Drivers for sustainability education – Early Childhood Education and Care student teachers' sources of hope and action competence

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During the past decade, the sustainability crises have increasingly become visible within our everyday lives. Hope has been found to contribute to pro-environmental behaviours (Chawla, 2020) and to resilience (Senger, 2023). However, previous research shows that eco-anxiety is growing among children and youth, and that lack of hope is a potential barrier to making change (Pihkala, 2020). Agenda 2030 depicts education as pivotal in supporting necessary transformation towards a sustainable world and early childhood education and care (ECEC) is considered an especially vital arena for addressing sustainability issues (Engdahl & Furu, 2022; Elliott, Årlemalm-Hagsér & Davis, 2020) as well as resilience (Furu et al., 2023). Thus, ECEC teachers are at the core of both handling the current unsustainable situation and creating a positive change and hope is hence potentially part of their professionalism regarding ECEfS. The aim of this study was to explore what the sources of hope and action competence are among future ECEC teachers. Our results are based on a survey conducted among 50 ECEC student teachers in Sweden and Finland in Spring 2024. In our presentation we discuss six emerging themes of drivers in relation to the concepts of hope and resilience, using Paulo Freires "Pedagogy of Hope" as a theoretical lens. Further, we argue that ECEC teacher education should not only address didactical aspects of ECEfS but also emotional, bodily, and ethical aspects to contribute to hope and action competence among student teachers in the Nordic region.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Walking through semiotic landscape with multilingual children: a way to explore participation and engagement

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The aim of this paper is to explore how kindergarten semiotic landscapes encourages interaction and dialogue among multilingual children in Norwegian kindergartens, and whether the children perceive that they can affect and identify with the semiotic landscape. Semiotic landscapes are public spaces with visible inscriptions such as objects, pictures and texts made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010). Participation is considered an important value in Nordic ECEC, and the Norwegian framework for kindergartens state children's possibility to contribute to the community as crucial. To ensure that kindergarten is a place to develop equality and social belonging, semiotic landscapes should reflect identification and belonging for all children regardless of linguistic and cultural background.

Practitioners in Norwegian kindergartens are, like other Nordic countries, given responsibility to actively promote and develop the multilingual children's language skills (Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). Duran (2015) puts forward that when learners have the desire to participate, they voluntarily use the language necessary to engage in the given context, which includes various sociocultural elements. In light of Duran's theories about agency, we explored how the children perceived linguistic and cultural diversity in the kindergarten semiotic landscape.

Data was collected using walking interviews, which are structured interviews conducted while on the move through the environment of interest (Evans & Jones, 2011), in our research project facilitating dialogues between four multilingual children, two researchers, and the environment. The dialogues helped us to focus on what engaged the children, and what they considered important in the semiotic landscape. We will discuss how they perceive their possibilities to affect it with all their semiotic resources.

We found that instructional materials with a clear instructional purpose only appealed to the children to a limited degree. We also found that polyphonic dialogues, which represented a pluralistic world consisting of multiple voices, encouraged dialogues, and took place in areas and rooms that were not intently facilitated for language learning and play.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Researching Special Education in Preschools in the Nordic Countries: a Literature Review

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Research on special education in preschool is limited, and the Swedish Curriculum for preschool does not specify the role of special education in this context (Swedish School Inspectorate, 2017). This gap highlights the need for greater attention to special education, especially considering that sustainability in education calls for societies to value education as a means to foster a more equal and just world. To address this issue, we propose a study that is a literature review comparing how the Nordic countries work with special education in preschool settings. A similar review was conducted with a focus on the years 2006-2014 (Palla, 2019). Our aim is to continue along this line by reviewing research from 2014-2024. However, our focus is specifically on which areas research address as special education in preschool settings in the Nordic countries. Special education in preschool encompasses a variety of interpretations and applications. Thus, it is important to examine the meanings of special education and to determine whether, and in what ways, these meanings vary across different contexts.

The aim of the study is to establish an overview of how research address special education in preschools in a Nordic context. The research questions are:

What is understood as special education in preschool settings in the Nordic countries?

Which differences and similarities can be discerned regarding what is seen as special education in the different countries?

We will use the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) method (Page et al., 2021) for the literature review, thereby increasing the potential of replicating the study.

We expect to find research on special education in all of the Nordic countries that will address similar and different areas in relation to special education in preschools. Based on this we see possibilities to discuss how preschools either promote or prevent inclusive environments that address children's diverse needs, and how preschools may contribute to more equitable educational opportunities.

This literature review comparing how Nordic countries approach special education in preschool settings is relevant for Nordic Educational Research because of its focus on the Nordic countries and its potential of establishing an overview of existing research as well as identifying research gaps.

We hope to in the future start a collaboration project working with researchers in the Nordic countries to further explore this topic.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

For a pedagogy of hope: W/o/a/ndering, Anarchism, and Storytelling ...as pockets of imaginations (2024).

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#### Research aim:

The study investigates the transformative and ethical potential of anarchism, w/o/a/ndering, and storytelling within ECE. It critiques the neo-liberal model's impact on educational practices, which prioritize competition and quantifiable outcomes over meaningful human connections. I explore how anarchist principles can foster educational pockets that promote freedom, creativity, and critical engagement, offering educators a way to resist and reclaim their agency in the classroom. The dissertation itself it could be read as a pedagogy of hope, and I developed a reflection to this question: What is my role as an educator in early childhood education? This question is intertwined with what Lorenzoni (2023) states "But how do we manage this enormous power we wield over children who find themselves with us without having chosen it?"

#### Theoretical framework:

The study is grounded in the phenomenological philosophy of Mortari (2006) who emphasizes a reflective and open-ended approach to education. Anarchist educational theory articulated by Ward's (2018) concept of "pockets of anarchism" highlights the potential for micro-political spaces of resistance within traditional educational systems. Freire's (2014) provides further insights into how educators can facilitate empowerment and disrupt entrenched power structures.

#### Methodology design:

An autoethnographic approach was employed, intertwining personal experiences with theoretical reflections to explore and reframe educational practices within a socio-political context (Ellis, 2015). This method allowed me to critically engage with my own role as an educator, while also reflecting on broader societal and institutional pressures that shape ECE. Moreover, the thesis itself with its autoethnographic approach is an attempt to challenge and resist, creating another way to intend the idea of a dissertation, which doesn't seek uniformity of production but an alternative way to seek good research.

#### Expected findings:

The research suggests that anarchist frameworks, when combined with the use of storytelling, can create spaces of resistance within the constraints of the current neo-liberal educational system. Storytelling emerges as a pedagogical tool that facilitates philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, and genuine connections between children and educators. By embracing w/o/a/ndering, educators can foster educational relationships, promoting more equitable, inclusive, democratic and sustainable learning environments.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research:

This research contributes to Nordic educational discourse by challenging the prevailing neo-liberal trends in education and advocating for a more relational and democratic approach to education. Moreover, through anarchism and insights from less known philosophers in the Nordic, it is possible to broaden the philosophical

landscape. The dissertation aligns with the Nordic emphasis on inclusive and holistic educational practices. Finally, with a more creative way of writing is possible to add layers and nuance to research within education.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### The micro-politics of children's engagements with sticks

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In Nordic research on childhood and early childhood education, children's agency and participation are cross-cutting concerns. In this paper, we wish to contribute to research discussions of children's participation in the context of nature-related educational activities through an exploration of the relational micro-politics (Kokko et al., 2024) of children's engagements with sticks on playgrounds and in forests.

The paper is theoretically inspired by phenomenological (Ingold, 2011), post-phenomenological (Verbeek, 2005), and new materialist perspectives (Coole & Frost, 2010), and more specifically by studies of children's experiences of place and landscape (Clark, 2010), of children's material relations (e.g. Rautio, 2013; Malafouris, 2016) and of the micro-politics of children's everyday actions in educational settings (Kokko et al. 2024; Jørgensen 2021).

The analysis is based on fieldnotes from observations and video recordings of children engaging with natural landscapes, beings, materials and weather in the context of early childhood science, nature and sustainability education. The empirical material has been collected as part of the NAVADA project (2023-2028), an ongoing design-based R&D project evolving around cooperations between researchers and Danish early childhood education institutions. In collaboration with researchers, pedagogical design and develop, experiment with and evaluate new designs for play- and learning environments. In many designs, educators experiment with 'letting go of adult control' in educational situations, allowing more space and time for children's explorations and for the agency of non-human nature.

Collective analysis of situations arising from these ambitions brought attention to children's embodied and emplaced engagements with materials, objects and tools in outdoor environments, and to the role of sticks in these relationships. In dialogue with other studies of children and sticks (e.g. Harwood & Collier, 2017; Jensen & Heiden, 2024) we explore the relational micro-politics emerging in young children's embodied engagements with sticks.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

What is important in life? The role of social relationships in building existential resilience in young children

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Resilience is essential for maintaining well-being during challenging life situations. It is supported by an individual's worldview, which shapes how one perceives adversity and finds meaning in life (Frankl, 1983; Wong, 2012). As global challenges cause anxiety in children, it is crucial to explore how they address existential concerns and what is crucial in supporting their resilience. The present study investigates what young children ( $n=21$ ) value in life in terms of their own perspectives (Sommer et al., 2010), framed by the Finnish Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and worldview education contexts. By examining 5–7-year-old children's perceptions of "being in the world" (Heidegger, 1962), this study seeks to elucidate the elements essential in existential resilience in young children and highlight what is most meaningful to them. This area of societal ECEC worldview education is, at present, critically under-researched and under-implemented (Kuusisto, 2022). Additionally, the study presents methodological insights on using digital storytelling and life-history interviews (Goodson et al., 2016) to engage children as central participants in research.

The findings highlight the significance of social relationships in fostering a sense of existence, positioning the children's need for connection and belonging as their fundamental way of experiencing life. Indeed, regardless of their diverse worldviews or beliefs about life, their perspectives highlight that the meaning of life and existential resilience are cultivated through the experiences of being meaningful to others. Furthermore, the data reveal that social relationships serve as connecting factors between the spheres of children's everyday existence. The vital importance of these relationships in shaping their "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962) can also be seen as a protective factor against adversities, hardships, and anxieties - also of existential nature - in their lives, thus functioning as a resource (e.g. Koirikivi et al., 2021) supporting their existential resilience.

The findings further accentuate the importance of supporting children's social relationships (see also e.g. Syrjämäki, 2019) and their capabilities to understand and appreciate others with diverse worldviews in the ECEC, both in Finland and beyond. Moreover, the present study offers insights into digital storytelling as a means to capture children's voices in diverse ECEC settings.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Education for Sustainability at Eco- and Non-Eco-Certified Preschools in Sweden

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#### Research topic/aim

Raising awareness about the planet's critical condition is not enough to change our behaviours or values or practices. A more meaningful education is needed to equip our future generation to address the complex challenges of today and the future (Wals et al., 2024). Reorienting early childhood education (ECE) towards sustainability has been on the Agenda 2030 for Sustainability (United Nation, 2015), which is also integrated in the curriculum in Sweden. Sustainability is about taking action to save our planet, sharing responsibilities, and having solidarity with generations, genders, communities, and countries. This paper presents the findings of a project that aims to contribute to evidence-informed development of pedagogical practices that facilitate children's meaningful learning for sustainability at preschools. The project explores and compares: children's knowledge and views of sustainability; teachers' views, and teaching practices of sustainability; and principals' views and actions on sustainability at eco- and non-eco-certified preschools. In this paper, 'eco-certified preschool' refers to those preschools that work explicitly with sustainability.

#### Theoretical framework

Since this project consists of three studies, several theoretical perspectives are used. For example, when it comes to sustainability, an integrated approach was applied from a holistic perspective, in which environmental, social and economic dimensions are interconnected. This project also uses Bandura's (1986) social learning theory and Bruner's (1960) learning theory when developing research tools and instruments for children as well as interpreting and discussing the findings. Wals and Mathie's (2022) Whole School Approach (WSA) to sustainability was used as a theoretical framework while exploring principals' views and actions on sustainability in the operations of eco- and non-eco-certified preschools.

#### Methodology/research design

This project employs a mixed methods approach (Creswell and Clark 2011) that allows for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data through semi-structured interviews, questionnaire surveys, observations, and policy document analysis. Data have been collected from children (n=403), preschool teachers (n= 585), and principals (n=50) from 25 eco- and 25 non-eco-certified preschools through two-stage cluster random sampling. Content analyses were applied. Quantitative data were subject to Orthogonal Projections to Latent Structures Discriminatory Analysis. Swedish Ethical Review Authority did not have any objection (2020-00005).

#### Expected results/findings

An analysis of the curriculum for preschool Lpfö 18 indicated that sustainability was explicitly integrated from a holistic perspective (Borg et al. 2022). The findings of principals' data support the fact that principals at eco-certified preschools have a more nuanced and multifaceted view of sustainability in their leadership practice, indicating that eco-certification plays an important role in making a difference (Article, in review).

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The findings of this paper are relevant to Nordic educational research since preschool education in Sweden and other Nordic countries share some common views, such as ECE as a foundation for a life-long learning, children's rights to participation, and democracy, and their national policies have integrated sustainability. The project provides insights about the role of eco-certification in children's learning for sustainability and support the development of evidence-informed pedagogical practices at preschool both in Sweden and internationally.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Possibilities for sustainable encounters at different types of preschool playgrounds

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Preschools in the Nordic countries have during the last years undertaken changes in terms of size and design of indoor- as well as outdoor facilities. The newly built preschools are often larger in size and number of children, but also stricter and less green in the outdoor design. In relation to aspects of Sustainability and Agenda 2030, these changes might be problematic since less greenery reduces children's possibilities of establishing relational contact with nature (cf. Chawla, 2015; Häggström & Schmidt, 2020) but also for health-promoting aspects (Mårtensson et al. 2011). Taking a transdisciplinary approach on the issue have given the opportunity to study aspects of children's outdoor stay in relation to experiencing nature, physical activity, play and learning. A guiding theoretical perspective for this four-year project is the socio-material, emphasizing human- more than human intra-actions as a vital aspect of understanding the impact of physical environments in practice. In the project we have conducted four main studies with the 21 participating preschools in Sweden using a variation of methods and approaches: Quantitative and qualitative mapping of the characteristics of the playgrounds, interviews with teachers, observations of outdoor activities, walk-and talk interviews with children, accelerometer data and observations of physical activity, and group interviews with representatives from different professions. The results reveal a variety of preschool designs and how different types of outdoor environments affect teacher's norms and approaches to children's outdoor play play (Manni, Annerbäck, Löfgren, Mårtensson, & Fröberg, 2024). A green and varied outdoor playground also correlate with higher levels of physical activity, as well as with children's own choice to play and learn in nature. In the presentation we will discuss how the physical environment intra-act in different ways with human activity also in preschool, in more, or less, sustainable ways.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Pre service teachers' experiences of cultural awareness in Early Learning settings.

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As our neighbourhoods become more multi-cultural, so do our Early Learning settings. Increasing numbers of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are being taught and cared for by increasing numbers of adults, also from diverse backgrounds. This research records and examines practices of cultural awareness in Early Learning settings, while also critiquing those practices. It aims to identify practices where cultural safety is prioritized and also to identify those physical, emotional and psychological spaces where lack of cultural awareness is detrimental to children and adults. The study is undertaken within a conceptual framework of post-humanist understandings of children's relational learning and the importance of place; Indigenous ways of knowing; and historical-cultural theory. Fifty preservice teachers in our Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, are currently being surveyed. The survey asks them about their own experiences as preservice teachers, and about the cultural awareness (or lack of it) that they observe when on placement. By looking at the preservice teachers' experiences and their accounts of cultural awareness in their placement settings, in relation to each other, we can also identify the preservice teachers' own cultural awareness and the way this influences what they see and interpret. A selection of preservice teachers will then be interviewed, and the data from interviews and surveys will be compared with data gathered using the same tools in Karlstad, Sweden. This presentation will focus on the survey responses from Australia as part of the on-going study.

This study is significant for Nordic educational research in three ways:

This is part of a larger study being undertaken with Karlstad University, with the intention of comparing and contrasting experiences of preservice teachers in order to highlight differences and similarities in the ways that we understand and respond to cultural diversity

Values around diversity are formed by very young children and so they will often carry their experiences, and what they see and absorb in their care and education environments, into later childhood and adulthood. If we want tolerant and hopeful societies, we need to develop the value of embracing difference, rather than tolerating it. As researchers, we also need to identify when we are failing to do this, so we can strategize for success.

Nordic societies are becoming increasingly multi-cultural. In Early Childhood courses at Victoria University about 80% of our 8000 students were born outside Australia, and speak English as an additional language. More than 50 nationalities are represented in our post graduate course. Just over 30% of all Australians are immigrants; 48% of Australian-born citizens have at least one parent born overseas. A disproportionate number of people with diverse backgrounds work in preschools. Yet our preservice teachers frequently return from placement with stories of racism – experienced by themselves, the children, their colleagues, or some families. By sharing our preservice teachers' experiences and understandings, we can highlight some of the pitfalls and challenges of working in multicultural environments over time.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### The significance of the narrative in early number learning - picture book reading with toddlers

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Picture book reading is by tradition a common activity in early childhood education in the Nordic countries, known to have potential to facilitate learning of concepts, such as numbers. One potential is that many representations can be used and emphasized when reading, for example the verbal use of words, pictures, props and gestures that accompany the story in the book. For young children, however, neither number nor representations may have any obvious mathematical meaning (Duval, 2006). Thus, as all communication about numbers include representations, teaching early numeracy is a complex endeavor. In this study, we address this complexity by investigating when and how variations within and between representations may facilitate children's learning of numbers in book reading activities. A specially designed picture book was developed, based on theoretical principles for how to learn the meaning of novel concepts (Variation theory, see Marton, 2015) and principles for making the mathematical content meaningful for the children (see Freudenthal, 1968; Palmér & Björklund, 2023). Three preschool teachers and 27 children aged 1-3 years participated in the study. For this analysis, 35 video recorded reading sessions using this specially designed picture book were analysed in terms of how modes of representations were used. The results show that different modes of representation provide opportunities to facilitate toddlers' learning of numbers, but in slightly different ways. In addition, the narrative, in which the mathematics is embedded, seemed to be key for sustainability in the interaction necessary for exploring the meaning of numbers. In sum, to utilize the potential for mathematical learning, a designated use of different modes of representation in combination with a purposive narrative is important in picture book reading sessions. This has significant implications for early childhood education in the Nordic countries where children's interests, initiatives and child-centered activities including book reading are central to the preschool practices.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### From Self-Regulation to Inclusion: Experiences of Mindfulness Practice in Finnish Primary Education

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Research indicates that challenges with self-regulation and attention may negatively impact students' social relationships, potentially resulting in developmental issues, including loneliness, bullying, and disengagement from school. In contrast, mindfulness practice has demonstrated potential to enhance students' well-being, social competence, and academic performance. This study therefore aims to examine the extent to which mindfulness may improve first graders' self-regulation skills and foster a sense of belonging and connection within the classroom community.

At the core of these benefits is neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to reorganize and form new connections, which plays a central role in learning and adaptation. Specifically, mindfulness practice has been shown to support neuroplasticity, particularly in neural networks associated with attention, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. As children engage in mindfulness, they strengthen neural pathways that foster self-regulation and resilience. This adaptability of young brains suggests that introducing mindfulness in early education may foster both cognitive and emotional growth, equipping students with skills that support learning and social inclusion.

To explore these effects, this mixed-methods doctoral research, situated within the field of special education, addresses two primary questions: (1) How does systematic mindfulness practice influence the self-regulation skills of first-grade students? (2) How do improvements in self-regulation, facilitated by regular mindfulness practice, affect first graders' experiences of inclusion within the classroom? By investigating these questions, the study seeks to advance innovative pedagogical approaches that employ mindfulness as a tool for enhancing self-regulation, as well as social and emotional learning, in early education.

This investigation involved an intervention developed and implemented in four first-grade classes at a Finnish primary school in 2023. The eight-week mindfulness program was designed to cultivate students' self-regulation and social skills. Preliminary findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in students' self-regulation over the intervention period, with observed positive impacts on their sense of inclusion within the classroom community. This presentation will address the methodology, key outcomes, and implications of these findings.

In alignment with Nordic educational values and the conference theme, this research focuses on creating inclusive and supportive learning environments. By emphasizing self-efficacy and resilience, it seeks to equip young students with essential competencies for navigating life's challenges. Specifically, the study explores mindfulness-based pedagogical approaches to enhance agency in early education, underscoring the transformative role of education in fostering a just and sustainable society. Ultimately, it promotes values of hope, inclusion, and long-term societal impact.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Room for imagination in narrative play: Teachers' contribution and children's perspectives

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Narrative play is a fundamental activity for children, offering them opportunities to develop narrative competence and imagination—skills essential for their ability to exercise agency. In recent years, views on adult involvement in children's play have shifted, increasingly being acknowledged as a pedagogical opportunity, not least in Sweden. It has also been shown crucial that adults have the ability to respond sensitively to children's initiatives and contribute in ways that expand and enrich the play experience, while withholding children's creativity and spontaneous improvisation when they are left with their own devices (e.g., Duranti & Black, 2011). The *Play-Responsive Early Childhood Education and Care* framework approaches play in early childhood education from this perspective, providing analytical tools to explore interactions between participants. This means focusing on concepts such as intersubjectivity, alterity, metacommunication, and agency.

A current project (Imagination in Play-Responsive Early Childhood Education and Care – Reclaiming the child's perspective) specifically examines how narrative play unfolds in preschool contexts and explores strategies for its support and expansion. Four preschool teachers are during one year provided further education in narrative play and children's imagination. They also use video to document play activities in their everyday practice. The video data are analyzed in collaboration with the researchers, using Sociocultural-Informed Interaction Analysis. An overarching aim is to identify general characteristics of narrative play and interaction. A preliminary result indicates that narrative play is structured around *imagined spaces* (Heller, 2021), *roles*, and *events*, with both children and teachers actively initiating and intertwining these elements in a shared imaginative process. A typical example constitutes the children imagining a space (e.g., a hospital, a house) and roles (e.g., doctor and patient, house owner and visitor), but the play lacks pretended events that drive the narrative. A contribution by the teacher then becomes to initiate a kind of incident (or problem), that challenges (and altering) the collective understanding and development of the play, which must be appropriated by the children. That teachers are able to challenge children in play in this way is significant for enhancing children's imaginative abilities. Children's imagination is not only highlighted in the curriculum for Swedish preschool, but also in the different Nordic countries' counterparts.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Spontaneous anthropomorphism as an ecological-ethical arena in ECEC: The case of the ants, the leaves and the whale

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This paper seeks to understand kindergarten children's ethical reflections connected to their lived lives in an outdoor educational setting on the Norwegian island Bragdøya. It is inspired and driven by an experienced staff members comment after an ethically demanding encounter between a group of children and a colony of ants: "*I think this is very difficult - What is the right thing to do? I know they mean well.*"

The theoretical approach is rooted in Lysakers (2020) perspectives on 'ecological sensibility', Orrs (1992) concept of 'ecological literacy', and Gebhard et al.'s (2003) notion of 'enlightened anthropomorphism'.

The overall research project informing this paper followed a kindergarten group almost daily going by boat to the small island Bragdøya. Fieldwork was connected to all four seasons. Whilst the project mobilizes and explores both 'visual ethnography' (Pink, 2005), 'post-qualitative visual analysis' (Menning et al. ,2021) as well as 'embodied inquiry' (Snowber, 2016), the paper mainly draws on observational notes and conversations with children and staff from the latter. Analysis is driven by Jackson and Mazzeis (2013) concept of 'thinking with theory'. Ethical considerations have been supported by signed consent from staff and parents, as well as a focus on a situational approach to the children's consent.

Through examining three instances of spontaneous anthropomorphism – “the ants”, “the leaves” and “the whale” - the paper explores the ethical dilemmas and possibilities connected to kindergarten children's everyday encounters with nature. Analysis shows that they can lead to a 'misunderstood care', which may cause distress for more-than-human agents. At the same time this care seems to promote deeply affectionate caretaking.

By virtue of this analysis, it is highlighted how this outdoor education context fosters complex moral and ethical reflections amongst children, and how it might be connected to their relationship with more-than-human agents. The paper furthermore suggests, how kindergarten-employees awareness of these potentially deep relations, as well as active support towards enlightened anthropomorphism, might be an appropriate way of tackling emerging ethical dilemmas.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Inner-city preschool's outdoor activities and urban densification – an (im-)possible combination?

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Nordic early childhood education and care have a long tradition of daily outdoor activities. However, due to urban densification and lack of child perspective in planning, preschool yards functional for daily outdoor activities are often lacking in contemporary large as well as smaller cities. In addition, urban outdoor spaces for play and recreation in general are shrinking. This lack of outdoor space was brought to a head during the Covid-19 pandemic when Swedish preschools were kept open but with an outdoor policy, recommending preschools to conduct as much as possible of daily activities outdoors. In this presentation we focus on how two inner-city preschools in Stockholm, without a preschool yard or with only an enclosure, handled this pandemic's 'outdoor policy'.

We draw on theories of mobility as interdependent and more-than-human (Cortéz Morales, 2021; Ekman Ladru & Gustafson, 2020), together with policy enactment theory (Ball, 1994; Ball et al., 2011), which implies that policies rather than being implemented are transformed into action (enacted) by preschool teachers and children in local and material contexts (Gustafson & Ekman Ladru 2020; forthcoming). Using a mobile ethnography (Cresswell 2012), with participant observations and interviews, we have followed the preschool's daily outdoor activities in – and between – different places.

Our in-depth analyses show how teachers and children collaborate in creating space for preschool activities in the dense city, and how this is done in competition with other preschool groups. The analysis shows the importance of taking local contextual conditions into consideration, for understanding preschools possibilities to time-spatially organize and conduct everyday outings in public space. The results show that when educational and urban planning do not provide for proper preschool yards, the responsibility for children's access to spaces for play, movement and place-attachment is transferred to preschool staff to handle in public space. Results that are vital to take in to consideration in developing sustainable early childhood education and care as well as in sustainable urban planning in all the Nordic countries.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Work tasks, emotions and time organisation - pedagogical leadership in early childhood education and care

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Research on pedagogical leadership in ECEC has gained a strong foothold in education research nationally and internationally (Ahtiainen et al., 2021; Birkeland et al., 2021). Considering the reforms that have taken place in ECEC in Finland, pedagogy has been strengthened in ECEC, which creates new demands on pedagogical leadership (Heikka et al., 2024). Many ECEC centre leader (leader) express that there is no time for pedagogical leadership because tasks related to economy and personnel take up much of their work time (Bøe et al., 2020; Eidevald & Palmgren, 2021; Siippainen et al., 2021). Collett et al. (2018) argue that administrative and bureaucratic tasks in educational organizations require much time at the expense of collaborative work, reflection, and mentorship.

The aim of the study was to identify and analyse leaders' work tasks within pedagogical leadership and their time organisation, as well as leaders' emotional states in different work tasks in ECEC. Further, the goal was to increase the understanding about how leaders distribute their time in relation to work tasks and the emotions different work tasks generate for them. This, in turn, contributes to a greater understanding of how leadership in ECEC can be developed and create conditions for a sustainable leadership.

The theoretical framework of the study builds on Schatzki's (2010) practice theory, which focuses on how social life is organised through different practices. The theory discusses time space – time and its relation to interpersonal interaction in social practices. Schatzki emphasises that it is through participation in practices, rather than through individual intentions, that humans understand and orientate themselves in the world.

For collecting data, the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) was used. This means capturing respondents' experiences and subjective feelings directly in their context (cf. Nielsen & Cleal, 2011). Studies in basic education have used ESM, but the method has not been utilised to any great extent in ECEC research. This study is therefore a new and unexplored methodological approach for research in ECEC. Respondents answer a few short questions at specific times via a phone application. ESM is a practice-oriented method used to study interpersonal events and actions in everyday activities by using real-time self-reporting (Myin-Germeys & Kuppens, 2022; Mölsä et al., 2022). The unique aspect of ESM is that respondents are in their everyday environment and provide information in real-time, reducing the risk of memory bias and increasing ecological validity. Measurements in this study was conducted using the m-Path application, with four measurement points per day, during workdays under two weeks autumn 2024. This is a pilot study where we in the results can see patterns in leaders' time organisation and emotional responses to different work tasks.

The study is a contribution to the understanding of pedagogical leadership in ECEC in the Nordic countries, because the leadership structure is similar in all countries. Today's leaders have a multifaceted work picture and this is not a question unique to Finland, but the same is discussed in all Nordic countries (Turani & Bloem, 2019).

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Developing sustainable ECEC-practices in nature kindergartens

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The aim is to examine how educators, pedagogues and students together, with nature as framework, can promote the development of sustainable learning environments in ECEC and children's connectedness to nature; locally and globally.

Previous research has shown that a sustainable educational practice direct towards children's well-being with inclusive communities, diversity, equality, friendships (Lysgaard & Simovska, 2015, Jordt Jørgensen & Dahl Madsen, 2020; Siraj-Blatchford & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2016).

The report (1987) *Our common future* formulates three dimensions of sustainability; social, economic and environmental, and in 2013 UNESCO adds a fourth dimension; good governance.

Our point of departure is the social dimension, but we take a wholeness perspective and include the ecological, economic and political perspectives as well.

The theoretical and methodological approach is cultural-historical, taking departure from the idea of children as active agents in dialectic relations with nature and culture (Hedegaard, 2008).

During 2023-2025 we collect the empirical material, beginning with workshops and reflections with the ECEC-staff, to gain insight into the pedagogical practice and values of the nature kindergartens (2023). During spring (2024) qualitative observations, interviews, and visual material are conducted and analyzed according to children's agency and belonging in outdoor contexts. Finally, during autumn (2024), 40 students initiate developmental projects in 10 kindergartens, focusing on inclusive pedagogies, supporting children's wellbeing.

Information sheets and consent forms were provided to all participants. Additionally, children were informed during visits to ensure their acceptance. Ethics were treated according to Danish ethical review-standards.

Preliminary findings reveal that new experiences and activities in nature, strengthen children's communities through shared physical, motor and sensory actions and increase immediate joy in being in nature. This project is a relatively small contribution for sustainable development, BUT it is an example of treading new paths in sustainability in ECEC; the educators implement sustainability pedagogy and didactics in teaching as a natural extension of societal local and global attention and demand for action; the students connect to opportunities to develop skills in relation to an unknown future as well as they get experienced in initiating development projects; preschool teachers are inspired through collaboration with preschool teacher education and particularly the students to develop sustainable pedagogical practices, situated in their specific context and conditions. The children gain experiences and become competent participants, alongside dedicated preschool teachers and preschool teacher students, who take responsibility to support children's competencies and readiness for the future

Keywords: Nature connectedness, sustainability, exploration, belonging, agency

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Shoots of change and dilemmas of Wild Pedagogies in early childhood education in Denmark

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How do early childhood pedagogies balance attention to children's play and learning processes with care and respect for the living world? In this paper, we explore and discuss this dilemma in the context of change processes arising when introducing wild pedagogies to pedagogical employees in Danish early childhood institutions.

The paper is theoretically inspired by studies on transgressive learning within the field of Environment and Sustainability Education research that have explored and discussed how micro-processes of socio-cultural change can hold potential to challenge status quo and highlight the role of historical and contextual roots (Chavez et al. 2017; Macintyre et al 2020). Hence, we explore how the philosophy of wild pedagogies, founded on the ambition to unfold education in ways that are intentional but do not exercise control over nature, the learners, or the outcomes (Jørgensen-Vittersø et al. 2022; Blenkinsop et al. 2022), speaks to cultural roots and to ongoing tensions in the context of Danish early childhood education (Broström 2022).

We draw analytical inspiration from the 'spiral model of change', as presented by Macintyre et al. (2020). The analysis is based on fieldnotes from observations, protocols from cooperating laboratory days, qualitative group interviews with pedagogical employees and video recordings of children in the context of early childhood science, nature and sustainability education. The empirical material has been collected as part of the NAVADA project (2023-2028), a large ongoing R&D project evolving around cooperations between researchers and 10 Danish early childhood education institutions, inspired by Design-Based-Research. In collaboration with researchers, pedagogical employees design, develop, experiment with and evaluate new designs for play- and learning environments.

In experiments ignited by wild pedagogies, we have identified three 'shoots of change', which have a potential for pushing status quo. Centering on altering the place of nature in early childhood education, changing the positioning of adults, and carving out time for more open approaches, these shoots are in close dialogue with both wild pedagogies and cultural roots of Nordic early childhood education.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Introducing two national languages in multilingual ECEC groups in Finland – ECEC Staff viewpoints

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The aim of this presentation is to discuss partly conflicting language education discourses regarding official languages in linguistically diverse child groups within early childhood education and care (ECEC). The question of how educational policies should best tackle multiple languages present in the society is tricky in all Nordic contexts (Hansell et al., 2024), but especially so in a country with two separated language tracks of ECEC, such as the officially bilingual, but in practice, multilingual Finland.

The analysis is based on a national survey data on supporting early language learning in the ECEC (Sopenen et al., 2024). By analysing qualitatively 389 ECEC staff responses to an open-ended question *Do you think second national language can be used in a group of children where some of the children are just getting to know Finnish or Swedish (for example, children who have just arrived in Finland)?* we seek to untangle *which* language related discourses are manifested in the staff responses, and to discuss *why* they are mentioned by the respondents. We identify both similarities and differences in the two language tracks of ECEC (Finnish and Swedish). We focus on two discourses: one that relates to the *language of the ECEC/schooling*, which is a second language (SL) for children with migrant background. The other relates to *teaching of the second national language* (SNL), an obligatory language subject for all children later at school. Both SL and SNL societal discourses include voiced concerns on *intergroup attitudes* and *learning outcomes*. These concerns have led to the political promotion of supporting the early learning of SNL already in ECEC (MINEDU, 2022). However, we argue that promoting the learning of SNL cannot be discussed without addressing even the SL discourse.

Overall, the results reveal the complexity of the matter. The reasonings vary between the staff in the two language tracks of schooling, but the results indicate that the overall low number of positive ECEC responses for introducing SNL in multilingual groups challenges any large-scale attempts to quickly establish and support learning of SNL in ECEC.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Developing inclusive early childhood education using a multivocal decision-making

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In Finland, inclusive early childhood education (ECE) and support for children is based on a strong value system of UN children's rights. However, decisions are often made in silos. The results suffer from a lack of transparency and a holistic approach, with minimal dialogue between institutional levels. As a result, decisions with the original inclusive values are not successful. In the theory of knowledge creation, Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) SECI Model (SECI) and Systems Intelligence (SI) (Hämäläinen & Saarinen, 2004) have been identified as key enablers of effective decision-making. The challenge is to learn to use these characteristics in processes. A holistic perspective and multivocal interaction are the key features of SI success that enrich the SECI Model. In this study we examined the impact of multivocality on decision-making processes in the context of ECE in Finland. In order to improve decision-making, the process was constructed from the elements of SI and multivocality in decision-making. Multivocality was created by the participants (n=10) of the two decision-making groups representing hierarchically or qualitatively differentiated roles in Finnish ECE, including politicians, officials from different institutional levels, teachers and guardians. In the two groups the participants contributed their own perspectives while at the same time gaining insights from different perspectives. The data were analysed according to the classification of the four stages of the SECI Model: socialization, externalization, combination, internalization, and according to the four SI leverages: mental change, perceptual change, individual behavioural change and change in the system. The results showed that multivocality enhances SI in decision-making by highlighting several different points of view. SI itself improves decision-making by implementing the holistic and multiple different viewpoints. Decisions are made on the basis of new, collectively generated and more comprehensive knowledge, which is crucial in large-scale societal decisions. We also found that when a consensus is reached on a goal, it becomes a hindering factor to decision-making. The results and information of the study are essential for the development and implementation of the systemic development of inclusive ECE.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

“Isn’t he so naughty?” – Teachers and Children in Preschool Co-constructing Engagement and Enchantment during Digital Read-Alouds

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Early education research has shown that read-alouds in preschool are important in many ways. Interactive read-alouds when children and teachers talk about the story, can improve learning by aiding children’s social and emotional development as well as their language, vocabulary and early literacy development (Dowdall et al., 2020). Teachers’ and children’s emotional engagement with the story is also crucial for learning during read-alouds (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2018). However, preschool teachers do not always make use of the didactic possibilities of read-alouds, but instead sometimes use this activity for disciplinary purposes (Damber, 2015).

Read-aloud activities using digital devices is a relatively new phenomenon in Swedish preschools. Studies have found no significant differences between traditional read-alouds and read-alouds using digital devices in relation to children’s learning, but that the possibilities of learning are contingent more on quality of content in interactive read-alouds rather than the medium (Kucirkova, 2019).

The aim of this paper is to investigate how and when teachers and children in preschool interact during digital read-aloud activities. Data consists of six video-recorded read-aloud sessions using digital devices (tablets and apps) from two preschools in Sweden, which have been analysed using discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Each read-aloud session lasted between 10-18 minutes. One preschool used a projector to show images from the digital book on a wall while the teacher read the story aloud, while the other used an app with a pre-recorded voice narrating the story as the images from the digital book were shown on the tablet.

Tentative results indicate that material, spatial and social factors influence interaction during digital read-alouds. Both children and teachers orient to the constraints of the digital media, for example by speaking quietly so as not to interrupt the pre-recorded voice reading the story. Teachers and children construct enchantment with the story by co-constructing affective stances as reactions to events and characters. Multimodal resources such as gestures, gaze and facial expressions are frequent, and are immediately responded to by both teachers and children, especially during read-alouds where a pre-recorded voice is used to narrate the story.

This study contributes to Nordic educational research on early education research about early literacy through investigating the relatively new phenomenon of digital read-alouds in Swedish preschools and its relation to children’s learning.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Early Listening Comprehension and Teacher Scaffolding of Storytelling Shape Children's Story Comprehension: Insights from Coaching of Dialogical Reading

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**Research aim.** The purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, we examine the extent to which children's story comprehension, evaluated in teacher guided individual storytelling setting, is associated with children's prior listening comprehension. Secondly, we examine possible variability in teacher scaffolding of children's storytelling and its role in story production/comprehension.

**Theoretical framework.** Shared reading approach such as dialogical reading is foundational in supporting children's early language skills. Intervention studies (Cabell et al., 2015; Lepola et al., 2022; Wasik et al., 2020) have revealed that creating more opportunities for all children to participate, talk and reflect about the story content, is beneficial for children's story comprehension. Lepola et al. (2022) showed that listening comprehension is determined not only by children's initial comprehension resources and cognitive engagement in shared reading, but teachers' open-ended questions also matter. Studies using dialogical reading approach have noted variability in early education teachers' scaffolding of children's story comprehension through different prompts and expansions as well as emotional feedback (Hindman & Wasik, 2019; Kajamies et al., 2016). Although the role of teacher-child conversation is studied in classroom and small group settings, aligned center and play activities, and non-academic situations (Dickinson et al., 2011), there is less knowledge about teacher scaffolding of children's individual storytelling.

**Methodology.** Data for this study are from a three-year long coaching of early education teachers to increase teacher – child conversation and support children's story comprehension. 48 children and nine early education teachers with diverse experience and positions participated. They followed a pedagogical model of 7-Minutes-to-Stories (Orvasto & Levola, 2010) featuring 29 stories read aloud and discussed once a week, first in a small group and then in an individual setting. Children's listening comprehension was assessed in the fall by a listening comprehension test (Vauras et al., 1995). Teachers videorecorded individual storytelling sessions in the spring. Teacher's and children's verbal turns were transcribed from videos and coded using *Initiation-Response-Follow-up* framework (Mascareño et al., 2017). Story comprehension was based on the number of propositions, inferences and references to story characters the children produced in storytelling. Coding of teacher scaffolding in storytelling was based on the amount and quality of their *initiations* (e.g., closed, open-ended, inferential) and *explorative follow-ups*, that is, questions and prompts to continue a dialogue (e.g., closed, open-ended, inferential), as well as praises ("well done", "great").

Results reveal diversity in children's story comprehension ( $M = 8.35$ ,  $SD = 4.99$ ,  $Min = 0$ ,  $Max = 23$ ) as well as variability in the amount and quality of teachers' scaffolding. Hierarchical regressions indicate that the level of children's story comprehension is determined not only by initial comprehension resources but teacher resilience in scaffolding child's storytelling through contingent follow-ups also contributes significantly to the prediction. We analyze and discuss potential teacher-level sources in children's story comprehension such as following (or not following) scripted examples and making own adaptations. The study has relevance to NERA research by highlighting importance of early education teachers in building dialogical spaces and hope with all children.



### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Establishing a sustainable alliance between theory and practice – results from an evidence-based universal early intervention aiming to support language development in multicultural preschools

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The presentation describes background and results of a project applying practice-embedded educational research, building on collaboration between academics and practitioners when implementing a shared reading intervention in early childhood education.

The project adopted a technical-eclectic theoretical framework which is suitable in early childhood special education, evidence-based interventions and professional development: theories on child development through proximal processes, the role of vocabulary in language development, implementation science, and practice-based coaching.

The intervention was based on the needs identified by practitioners that wanted to support effectively language development, and on knowledge from previous research. The method of dialogic book reading was selected, examined and piloted during a training period, over the course of several months. Then a cluster randomized controlled trial was carried out in nine preschools with 10 teachers and 85 children, of which 68 % were additional language learners. The trial was supported by interventionist preschool teachers with coaching by special educators. Reading session in small groups were carried out every day for five weeks.

The results showed that systematic reading practices aiming to interactive engagement with each child positively impacted language development. Dialogic reading promoted vocabulary growth. Children from non-Swedish-speaking backgrounds demonstrated progress comparable to their peers. Special educators, teachers and principals regarded the method as effective in stimulating language development, relations between teachers and children, and between children. The project's developed a three-step model, which has been implemented to strengthen practices within local organizations. The children's progress, evidenced by increased vocabulary and storytelling abilities, underscores that a strong alliance between theory and practice may drive research to remain curious and attuned to practitioners' relevant questions, leverage research outcomes, address methodological challenges, and collaboratively deliver culturally adapted interventions. Based on the positive evaluations from research, practice, and families, the method of dialogic book reading has been introduced in majority of units within the respective organizations, where expert teachers are mentoring unexperienced colleagues. Not only the children made progresses, but the teachers have been empowered in this process, becoming champions of rewarding pedagogical practices in their organizations.

This project provides a model of how internationally established evidence-based practices may be tested in research, adapted and introduced in early childhood education in Nordic countries, in partnership with educational professionals. It is also a call for embracing intervention designs in early childhood education research. Previous research from the field of early intervention may offer knowledge to the field of practice in our context, which contributes to give answers to present societal challenges and may be a step towards more equitable educational systems.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Exploring Children's Experiences of the Forest Through Hand Puppet Conversations in Swedish Preschools

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#### Research topic/aim

This presentation is based on a research project about preschool children's experiences of nature, specifically the forest. The project's goal is to understand how the forest becomes meaningful for children in preschool. We present a sub-study examining how using a hand puppet in conversations encourages children to share their experiences of the forest. Our research questions are:

What narratives of the forest emerge in the conversations?

In what ways do the forest appear as a meaningful place for the children?

How can hand puppets be used to enhance children's engagement and agency in conversations relating to their experiences of nature?

#### Theoretical framework

The research project is founded on the idea that people need the opportunity to develop a close and strong relationship with nature to develop a sense of responsibility for its care (Bennet, 2014). It also draws on the perspective of agency in early childhood studies (Bergnehr, 2019) and affordance theory (Gibson, 1986). To explore the children's relations with the forest, we use elements from The Mosaic Approach (Clark, 2017).

#### Methodology/research design

The empirical material consists of written submissions from pre-school teacher students, describing and reflecting on conversations with children using a hand puppet. We explore how children narrate their experiences and thoughts, with the puppet as a 'third-person' participant (Clark, 2017). We aim to identify themes (Riessman, 2008) that highlight the forest as a significant and meaningful place for the children.

#### Expected results/findings

Using the Mosaic Approach, we can reveal the complexity of children's relationships with nature in preschool. Preliminary results suggest the forest is seen as a dangerous place, yet important for protection, play, and learning about nature and science. Interacting with the hand puppet, children seem to become experts, explaining perceived key issues about being in the forest to the puppet. The puppet appears to reduce the power imbalance between children and adults and enhance the children's agency in the conversations.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The results of the present study will provide insights into the children's ways of relating to nature and how their relationship-building is framed within an educational context, making it highly relevant to Nordic educational research. Children's perspectives can enhance pedagogical practices, making learning environments more inclusive and responsive. This ensures that educational practices reflect children's lived experiences. As educators and researchers, we must ensure children's voices are heard and integrated into our practices.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Towards a compassion and responsibility - The forest pre-primary as a learning environment for wisdom

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#### Theoretical framework

This research explores forest environment as a learning environment for children aged 5 to 6 in pre-primary education to learn wisdom. Wisdom has been studied as part of adult development, and recently it has been found to be correlated with early childhood development as well (Ardelt et al., 2018). There is some evidence that even pre-primary aged children have their own understanding of wisdom as a concept (e.g. König & Glück, 2012; Asadi et al., 2019). Wisdom is understood here, based on the latest research, as a complex phenomenon, referring to integration of cognitive and socio-emotional capacities, and life philosophy towards ethical action for common good (Kallio & Tynjälä, 2025).

The study focuses on early forms of the mentioned dimensions of wisdom as cognition, emotions, ethics and actions. The study is linked to the idea of 'phrónēsis', "wisdom in practice" (Kristjansson et al., 2021), which refers to preliminary, outward signs of wise action.

#### Research design

The data was collected by observing and video recording in three groups of pre-primary children. The data was analysed using qualitative methods.

#### Preliminary findings

According to the preliminary results some of the dimensions of wisdom, such as compassion towards nature and humans, as well as practical outward wise action, begin to emerge in the everyday life of pre-primary education in a forest environment.

It seems possible that some of these various dimensions of wisdom can appear in children's daily plays, pedagogical learning activities and routines in a forest pre-primary environment organized by teachers and multiprofessional teams.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Connecting wisdom research with pre-primary learning in the everyday forest environment can increase the understanding of children's capacities for learning prerequisites of practical wisdom in forest environment. Also, it may strengthen both environmental and social sustainability education in the pre-primary context and widen it towards a planetary well-being.

*Keywords: wisdom, learning, children, forest, pre-primary*

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Early childhood education teachers' views on children's participation during transitions

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The participation of children in early childhood education and care is a critical aspect of fostering their development and ensuring that all children's voices are heard (Hayes, 2024; Watson & Newman, 2024). This paper delves into this phenomenon, with a particular emphasis on the perspectives of early childhood education teachers views during transitional periods within early years. By exploring how teachers facilitate and perceive children's participation, particularly the participation of children with special needs, this study aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities that present in these crucial moments of change.

The study is grounded in theories of child development and participatory pedagogy, emphasizing the role of teachers in facilitating children's involvement in decisions that affect them (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2011). These models function as the base for understanding how teachers provide and facilitate the possibility for all children to have their voices heard.

Using a thematic analysis with a deductive approach, data is analysed semantically and presented through the lens of critical realism (Braun & Clarke, 2022). By examining teachers' perspectives, this research offers valuable insights into the factors influencing children's engagement during transitions and suggests ways how teachers can enhance participatory practices in early childhood settings.

The findings suggest several challenges to children's participation during transitions, including a) inconsistent opportunities for participation b) variations based on the child's age c) the degree of challenge faced by the child and d) teachers' personal values and beliefs.

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by highlighting the importance of teacher attitudes and practices in promoting children's participation. It underscores the need for professional development and policy support to enhance participatory practices during transitions in early childhood settings. The discussion integrates previous research and offers implications for enhancing all children's participation during transitions within early childhood education and pre-primary education contexts.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### The Concept of "Play" in Swedish and Norwegian ECEC Curricula in the 1990s

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The purpose of this research is to explore the differences between Swedish and Norwegian ECEC curricula's concept of play in the 1990s. Although Scandinavian countries are said to have a social pedagogy tradition in ECEC (OECD, 2006; Kragh-Müller, 2017), one can find differences between the countries, for example in how they formulate the national curriculum. Swedish curriculum (Lpfö18) defines ECEC institutions as the first step of the school where development and learning should be promoted, whereas in Norwegian curriculum (Rammeplan 2017) it is emphasized that play, learning, care and education ("danning") should be seen holistically. How and when these differences occurred, and what these different paths implies in the age of "the story of neo-liberalism" (Moss, 2014) is the focus of the exploration.

As a theoretical framework, I will refer to Sutton-Smith's seven rhetorics of play to analyze the discourses in Swedish and Norwegian curricula (Sutton-Smith, 1997). These are rhetoric of play as progress, as fate, as power, as identity, as imaginary, of the self, and as frivolous. The concept of "pedagogical play research" or "play-pedagogy" (Øksnes, 2019), which are closely related to the rhetoric of play as progress would also be helpful.

This research undertakes content analysis of policy documents regarding play in ECEC at the national level in Sweden and Norway in the 1990s. This period was selected to investigate the change in the play discourse in Sweden, and thus a potential branch period of the two countries. In Sweden, it is said that the concept of learning is introduced in the curriculum of 1998, and play was presented as a means to an end (Lindgren, 2002).

This research is based on the idea of curriculum theory (Läroplansteori), in which different types of steering instruments or an educational system as a whole could be considered as curriculum (Folke-Fichtelius, 2008). Documents includes national curriculum in 1998 (Sweden) and 1996 (Norway), laws and regulations, and documents such as SOUs and NOUs. Sections and phrases about play are identified and examined against Sutton-Smith's rhetorics and compared across countries.

To begin with, the word "play" were counted in each of the curriculum in the 90s, which resulted in 13 (Sweden) and 240 (Norway) times. This was 1.08 (Sweden) and 1.72 (Norway) times per page, since the two curricula differ in terms of the volume, however, still represent a certain quantitative difference. Phrases and formulation around the word "play" will further be qualitatively analyzed.

Scandinavian countries are often seen as one region in ECEC research internationally, where social pedagogy has a strong tradition, in contrast to the school-readiness approach in Anglo-Saxon countries. However, the global trend of commodification is expanding across both liberal and social democratic welfare states (Vandenbroeck et al., 2023) and transforming Scandinavian ECEC as well. Comparing the differences between Sweden and Norway, this research will contribute to understanding these transformations more closely, and finding an alternative path an ECEC policy can take.

Vandenbroeck, M, Lehrer, J. & Mitchell, L. (2023) *The Decommodification of Early Childhood Education and Care: Resisting neoliberalism*. Routledge.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Children's encounters with social class in play and class-evasive staff

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This study aims to show how social class influences children's interactions and experiences in the ECEC setting. By examining these dynamics, we can better understand the impact of social class on children's development and the critical role ECEC plays in continuing or reducing social inequalities. Research indicates that children with varying levels of social capital navigate experiences with social class differently during play in ECEC environments. For example, children from middle and upper middle-class backgrounds may leverage their resources to assert dominance in play scenarios, while those from a lower social class backgrounds may experience exclusion or marginalization (Donner et al., 2022).

This qualitative study includes data from observations in 18 daycare centres and interviews with 74 of staff members at ECEC in Swedish-speaking Finland. The observations included informal discussions with the children during organised activities and free play during one month at each daycare centre. The data was analysed through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

The preliminary results show that staff take a class-evasive approach, while working class children must carefully navigate their friendship due to a lack of economic capital.

This study is important in the Nordic educational context as ignoring social class, or being class-evasive, combined with changes toward privatisation can increase existing inequalities and challenge the traditional Nordic commitment to social equality (Alm & Odenbring, 2019). Therefore, staff needs to be aware of the social class hierarchies that manifest in play and to actively foster an inclusive environment that recognizes and values diverse social class backgrounds.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

The making of quality and legitimacy: Imaginaries of quality work with a software application in Swedish preschools

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#### Abstract

Swedish preschool profession has come to experience political desires (Digitaliseringskommissionen, 2016) and growing demands (#skolDigiplan, 2019) on digitalizing quality work. Consequently, preschool practitioners try to interpret these desires of digitalization in changed working methods, while having limited resources and increased documentation by (imagined) support from software applications. These political desires of digitalizing preschool education, makes EdTech entrepreneurs involved in efforts to co-produce solutions for preschool education. Consequently, this study aims to explore and contribute with knowledge in how a software application intended for quality work is co-produced by an EdTech company and an attached reference group. The study uses the framework of sociotechnological imaginaries (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015) and is designed as a qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) single case study (Simons, 2009), reporting on how a software application for quality work in preschools is designed and co-produced. Data includes seven semi-structured interviews from system representatives in an EdTech company and a reference group from a private preschool organization. Data draws on audio recordings comprised a total time of seven hours and thirty one minutes, in 67 transcribed pages (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017), using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2019). Findings point to the Edtech company and their reference group shared interpretations of quality, emphasizing preschool education content with curriculum aims, children's individual learning and preparing children for their future in school. Another trajectory points to quality work as legitimate both inside and outside preschool organization and becomes referred as performance. This research has relevance to Nordic educational research because it addresses political desires about digitalizing preschool education and highlights social events involving an EdTech company and a reference group which combines professional perspectives and expertise design and function in an application that subsequently *makes quality*. Similar educational challenges of digitalizing early childhood education address Nordic education and comes to challenge the Nordic traditions with roots in established work of Educare (Einarsdottir et al., 2015; Löfdahl & Folke-Fichtelius, 2014).

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Place, time, and content of teaching in preschool

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#### Research topic/aim

This paper is about teaching in preschool. It is based on an exploratory study of teaching practices in six preschools, framed within an “all-day” perspective. This perspective posits that teaching can occur in various contexts and at multiple times and locations throughout the day. The primary research questions are: I) What spatial, temporal, and content-related patterns emerge in teaching throughout the entire day in preschool? II) How do time, place, and content interact throughout the entire day in preschool?

#### Theoretical framework

The paper is based on a socio-material understanding of how teaching unfolds in time and space. We draw on Barad's (2007) work and the idea that teaching emerges when entanglements of material (including the physical space), teachers, and children engage for some time with a certain topic. To better understand how teaching emerges throughout the day we also draw from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) idea of teaching as rhizomatic processes.

#### Methodological design

The data is generated in six preschools, where participant observations were carried out during two full days per preschool. The collected data consists of field notes from the observations and from conversations with the teachers.

#### Expected conclusions/findings

The analysis of the collected data resulted in four forms of teaching and how these emerge based on time, place, and teaching content. The four forms are that teaching is (1) cohesive in time, space, and content, (2) cohesive in time but extended in space and content, (3) spread over time, space, and content, and (4) intertwined through time, space, and content.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In theory and in line with Nordic ECEC curricula, teaching and learning can take place across all preschool premises, such as, the outdoor courtyard, foyer, lunchroom, and areas for free play. Yet, the all-day perspective is underexplored in Nordic research. By exploring how time, place, and teaching content emerge and intertwine with each other throughout the whole preschool day, the study contributes knowledge about how the Nordic holistic view of teaching and learning in ECEC can be maintained and developed in practice.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Defining a pedagogy of hope in an escalating climate and environmental crisis in preschool.

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Stockholm University, Sweden

Maria Ojala distinguishes between two kinds of hope: a hope that excludes negative feelings and frames passivity and a hope that is more flexibly grounded in negative feelings and frames action. That teaching for sustainability should aim at framing hope seems obvious as hope can for instance counteract the climate and environment anxiety that can naturally emerge when those questions are addressed. In the Swedish curriculum for preschool it stands for instance clearly that preschool should frame “a faith in the future”. However which kind of hope should be framed has pedagogical implications: is the hope that is framed really contributing to raising environmental consciousness if we mean by that that awareness leads to action? And these pedagogical implications are political: are children encouraged to become active and contribute to the solutions individually, locally, collectively or to remain passive?

Based on a review of literature from 2010 to 2024 on pedagogic strategies that contribute to build children’s relation to animals in preschool, the paper discusses how the biodiversity crisis is addressed, the pathways to sustainability that are assumed and the different feelings that emerge in the articles in particular in relation to the biodiversity crisis/Anthropocene. The review shows that many studies tend to focus on positive feelings with exclusion of the negative feelings but also describes how certain studies do address negative feelings, how they do it and what are the pedagogical and political consequences of the inclusion of these negative feelings.

The paper concludes that hope in pedagogy is political and that teaching for sustainability needs to embrace a political pedagogy of hope. The formulation of the Swedish curriculum for preschool is discussed in relation to above mentioned results and conclusion.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

Children's embodied expressions of empathy, along with teachers' responses, hold a significant role in ECEC settings.

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Children's embodied expressions of empathy, along with teachers' responses, hold a significant role in ECEC settings.

In Finland, ECE considers children active learners, prioritizing child-centered pedagogy, and holistic development (FNAE, 2022). In child-centered pedagogy, teachers' awareness of embodied expressions is essential (Neil, 2017). Embodied learning consists of body language, gestures, facial expressions, and tactile interactions, beyond cognitive factors (Kosmas & Zaphiris, 2018; Gallagher, 2015). While recent Nordic research has focused on embodied learning in language education (ELLA, 2024; Jusslin et al., 2022), its role in young children's holistic learning, especially regarding empathy, remains underexplored.

This study aims to examine children's embodied expressions of empathy in ECE activities and teachers' responses to these expressions. RQ: How do children use embodied expressions to show empathy? How do teachers recognize and respond to these expressions?

Embodied expressions stem from interactions between the body, others, and the environment, combining physical actions with cognitive functions like reasoning and reflection (Kangas et al., 2024). Supporting embodied responsiveness fosters empathy and holistic development, with teacher-child relationships playing a key role (Xiang et al., 2022). Empathy is vital for prosocial behavior, intergroup relations, and overall development (Masten, 2010).

Data were collected over two weeks from two groups of 3- to 5-year-olds and a teacher at two ECEC centers in Finland, using video recordings, field notes, and an observation scheme adapted from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). Embodied expressions of empathy (body language, gestures, facial expressions) in child-teacher interactions were analyzed through thematic content analysis.

Expected findings will provide insights into how embodied learning emerges in ECEC, emphasizing the role of teacher responsiveness in fostering children's empathy. By examining children's embodied expressions and teacher responses, this study supports a child-centered approach that enhances empathy. Results will inform ECEC practice, advancing sensory, emotional, and cognitive development and offering guidance for integrating embodied learning into daily activities aligned with child-centered Nordic curricula.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Translanguaging among toddlers

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Research topic/aim: Translanguaging in early childhood education, Social justice

With my research I want to facilitate diversity and sustainability, which will bring hope for managing multilingualism and diversity in the future. With this paper I want to explore the youngest emerging multilinguals in a Swedish preschool setting. The youngest children in ECE (1-2 y.o.) may not be expressing themselves verbally yet, or at least not in the majority language expected in a preschool setting. Nevertheless, we need to pay attention to what they communicate with their bodies through gestures, sounds, body positions as well as with aesthetics (dancing, drawing and so on) (Garcá & Li 2014; Harju & Åkerblom 2020; Kangas, Sundstedt, Kaihoviirta & Harju-Luukkainen 2024).

#### Theoretical framework

Drawing on my own thesis “Conditions for translanguaging in a superdiverse preschool – A constructivist grounded theory” (Novosel 2024) I will use translanguaging from a wider view on language. I discovered a difference between older (3-5 years) and younger (1-2 years) preschoolers (Novosel 2024) partly in how they perform translanguaging but mainly in how they were enabled or limited in their translanguaging. The older children were expected to use verbal language and when they expressed themselves in another mode or used a word that was not understood by the pedagogue their communication was ignored, corrected or interrupted.

#### Methodology/research design

The aim is to analyse prior collected data (Novosel 2024) from a superdiverse preschool in a Swedish suburb. The children had different family languages and were all emerging multilinguals as they were new to the Swedish language. Therefore I have been taking a broader view on languages and languaging. The results show that children translanguage by using their entire repertoire of verbal and non-verbal communication.

#### Expected results/findings

In this paper I will describe why it is important to pay attention to everything the children express, their full repertoire of verbal and nonverbal expressions, as well as in what ways we can enhance the children’s communication, language development and multicultural identity formation in accordance with the stipulated aims of the preschool curriculum (1998).

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The empirical data in my prior research is obtained in a Swedish preschool and the article I am currently writing on will be a chapter in a Norwegian anthology written for the ECEC students.

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Children's belonging through participation in transitional spaces: A case of a bilingual preschool in Sweden

Olga Anatoli

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This paper concerns 1–5-year-old children who learn to speak in two or more languages during their preschool years in Sweden. The aim of the study is to investigate opportunities for children's participation and influence, and how these manifest outside of teacher-led structured learning activities in a bilingual Swedish–English preschool. The study builds on the ethnomethodologically-grounded theory of co-operative action (Goodwin, 2018), arguing that learning is a collaborative multimodal process. The study highlights children's agential role in bilingual socialization and the relevance of mundane care-oriented practices (e.g., dressing, cleaning) for children's belonging.

For very young children, institutions of early childhood education and care (ECEC) are among their first social encounters outside of their homes. Children's physical, psychological, social, and linguistic development occurs in interactions with adults and other children within this complex learning ecology. Recently, ECEC research has called for further exploration of the teacher–child interaction and children's peer interactions that extend beyond structured educational activities, pointing out the pedagogical potential of transitional spaces (Nordberg, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2024). From the teachers' perspective, transitions typically represent "liminal spaces between the events typically thought of as 'real' teaching and learning" (Myers et al., 2023: 1). From the children's perspective, however, "[e]pisodes with an interval or a transition character and moments when the children seem to be doing nothing at all are as relevant as focused episodes with a clear structure and plot" (Strandell, 1997: 451). In Sweden, the holistic preschool curriculum emphasizes children's autonomy and the importance of communicative competence, and this study sets out to explore children's participation in transitional spaces.

The data were collected through ethnographic fieldwork and consist of approx. 80 hours of video-recordings of naturally-occurring interactions. Multimodal conversation analysis was used. The analysis reveals how transitional spaces in ECEC offer children opportunities for initiating new interactions and activities with teachers and other children, as well as for demonstrating their understanding of teachers' instructions and the growing independence in accomplishing practical tasks. The findings support previous research on belonging as "a joint accomplishment" (Björk-Willén, 2022: 292).

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### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

The strength of hopeless hope, between the past and the present.

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#### Research Topic/Aim

We live our stories, and when we tell them to others, they become the stories of our lives. They stay and continue with us and become a part of who we were, who we are, and who we are becoming. This is when the stories grow and become stories to live by (Okri 1997). Our lived experiences are always alive, they stay and grow to shape who we are and who we are becoming. That is why, learning to live in hope is usually shaped by our childhood experiences (Puplampu, Caine, Clandinin 2020). Acknowledging the power of hope between the past and the present, this paper explores education during times of armed conflict. It clarifies how past desires for learning during crisis and despair can contribute to creating experiences of hope that stay with children and grow in them to make them the adults they become. A story of a mother who lived in the armed conflict during her childhood will demonstrate how stories of hope continued to live in her even though when they were hopeless and entangled with stories of suffering.

#### Theoretical Framework

This work draws from a PhD thesis that studied childhood learning experiences of children during the 1973 – 1990 armed conflict in Lebanon. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) as a methodology was used to understand children's learning experiences during the times of conflict. Guided by the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) as a conceptual framework, the paper will explore an educational journey between the past and the present. It will highlight the importance of relational learning (Dubnewick et al. 2019) in uncertain times.

#### Methodological Design

Connelly and Clandinin (1998) caught my attention when they created Narrative Inquiry as a methodology. They explained how thinking of lived stories is a helpful way to better understand ourselves and others. They wrote 'Thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been and where we are going. In this view people live lives and tell stories of those lives' (p. 149). Three Australian-Lebanese adults who undertook their early childhood, primary and/or secondary education during times of armed conflict in Lebanon are participants for this study.

#### Expected Conclusions/Findings

Reflections on the conversations with one participant highlighted the importance of hope in past experiences, even when hope is mixed with suffering. Drawing from Haval (2004) about understanding of hope, an in-depth analysis of living with hope was created. Witnessing current armed conflicts generated in different parts of the world, this research had proved important in understanding children living, growing and maturing in hope, even when hope is hopeless.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

Understanding refugee children who arrive from various parts of the world is important for the Nordic education. It supports teachers in understanding students' past lived stories to provide valuable and relevant learning experiences. It offers insight into how present encounters affect children's future and the people they become.



### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

The stories leaders tell when they talk about leadership

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Research topic/aim:

The research question guiding this study is: “What stories of leadership does early childhood education leaders tell when reflecting upon enacted leadership of organizational change?”

Theoretical framework

Theoretical perspectives on leadership of organizational change and development have changed drastically the last decades, moving from an emphasis on individual characteristics to relational and collective aspects of leadership. However, while research paradigms and theories change, practitioners might use discourses from several paradigms when they attempt to make sense of their role as leaders and the relationships cultivated between themselves and colleagues in their enactment of development work. In this study we use narrative inquiry to study ECE leaders’ personal experiences with leading development projects. Narratives shared across time and situation move in different directions simultaneously. By using a narrative approach to leaderships, we get a glimpse of stories directed inwards – the experience of being a leader; stories directed outwards – experiences of leading others; and stories moving both backward and forward in time.

Methodology/research design

Data in the study is based on individual and focus group interviews with ECE leaders. We are in the initial phase of conducting interviews, but we aim to conduct three focus interviews with a total of 12 ECE leaders, with individual follow-up interviews after two months. The interviews will be analyzed with the use of narrative analysis, focusing on not only the actual words used in the interviews, but how the leaders construct narratives of leadership. Specifically, how they express what they consider successful leadership, the feelings expressed, what motivates them, and the language used when they describe situations experiencing progress, resistance or regression,

Expected results/findings

We all have stories to tell based on our own individual experiences, but they are often framed by grand societal narrative. While grand theoretical narratives about leaderships often are characterized by an internal consistency, the different narrative used in our own stories are often based on both contradictory and fragmented pieces of grand narratives retold and personalized. The results of this study will be based on our effort to tease out some of these small and personalized stories of leadership.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The themes illuminated in this presentation are of relevance to Nordic educational research for several reasons. First, partnerships and collaboration between universities and the practice field to strengthen the quality of both ECE and early childhood teacher education is an aim for universities in Norway, and beyond. An increased understanding of narratives of leadership leaders use would be for teacher educators in early childhood teacher education to adapt the educational program for pre-service teachers accordingly, for practitioners working in the field and for educators collaborating with in-service ECE leaders and teachers.

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### Pedagogical Documentation and STEAM in Early Childhood Education

Kristín Dýrfjörð

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##### Research Topic/Aim:

This study examines the role of pedagogical documentation in early childhood education as a tool for integrating STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) through child-led, hands-on learning experiences. It aims to investigate how such an approach can foster hope, sustainability, and critical thinking among preschool children. The study explores how documenting children's processes and reflections supports a deeper understanding of sustainability, social responsibility, and empathy—qualities essential for fostering a hopeful, equitable future.

##### Theoretical Framework:

The study is grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theories and Reggio Emilia's approach to child-centred education, particularly the role of pedagogical documentation as a method for capturing and analysing learning processes. These theories are complemented by a critical perspective on neoliberal pressures within early childhood education, exploring how child-led, creative practices challenge standardized curricula and market-driven approaches. The study positions STEAM within a *Pedagogy of Hope* framework as Paulo Freire (1994) advocates, emphasizing education's role in shaping socially responsible and critically aware citizens.

##### Methodology/Research Design:

Using a qualitative case study and pedagogical documentation (Edwards et al., 2012; Rinaldi, 2006), this research draws on data from documented STEAM activities within two Icelandic preschool settings. Data sources include photographs, teacher notes, and recordings of children's reflections, analysed through pedagogical documentation methods to capture both individual and collaborative learning. Participatory observations provide rich, context-sensitive insights into how STEAM activities unfold and are documented in practice.

##### Expected Results/Findings:

Findings indicate that pedagogical documentation of STEAM activities fosters critical thinking, empathy, and an early understanding of sustainability. Children engage in reflective practices that prompt awareness of environmental and social issues while teachers gain insights into children's learning journey. Pedagogical documentation further supports teachers' professional development, promoting reflective practices and dialogue within the teaching community, which is critical for sustaining hope and resilience in educational settings.

##### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research:

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by highlighting an alternative approach to standardized curricula through child-led STEAM integration, aligning with Nordic values of democratic, inclusive education. Additionally, it challenges the neoliberal focus on market-driven metrics (Moss, 2014), advocating a new story that prioritizes hope, gratitude, and social justice—values relevant across the Nordic countries' educational landscapes.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (Eds.). (2012). *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Experience in Transformation*. Praeger.

Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Bloomsbury press.

Moss, P. (2014). *Transformative Change and Real Utopias in Early Childhood Education*. Routledge

Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In Dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, Researching and Learning*. This book discusses the importance of documentation in creating a reflective and participatory educational environment.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press

# Network: 4. Justice through Education

## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### Envisioning Green Urban Utopias: Co-creating Cities of Hope through Youth-Driven Workshops

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In late modernity, young people navigate a complex political landscape shaped by global capitalism and consumerism while also playing a key role in climate action. As both consumers and defenders of the future, they bear a dual responsibility: their consumption patterns impact global environmental challenges, yet many are increasingly adopting sustainable lifestyles. This paper examines how youth can actively engage in envisioning and co-creating green urban futures through participatory workshops. Set against the backdrop of neoliberal urban planning—which often marginalizes youth and deepens inequalities, especially for those with migrant backgrounds—the study presents a conceptual model for youth-driven urban utopia workshops. These workshops empower young people to connect their lived experiences with broader environmental and political issues, collectively reimagining sustainable urban futures.

Drawing on Ernst Bloch's idea of "utopia as process," where hope drives change through historical praxis, and Ruth Levitas's concept of "utopia as method," the framework incorporates feminist utopian theories to center inclusivity and reconfigure urban power dynamics. Adopting a geo-social perspective, the study explores how young people's everyday urban experiences shape their environmental identities and political agency. This interdisciplinary approach highlights youth's potential to engage critically with neoliberal urban realities and consumerism by imagining alternative green futures. Although theoretical, the paper outlines a participatory action research (PAR)-based process for youth-driven workshops, structured into four phases: 1) Facing Urban Phenomena, 2) Unlearning the Past, 3) Reframing Present Activism, and 4) Envisioning Green Urban Futures.

These workshops use young people's geo-social experiences as a foundation for collective imagination, involving speculative design and critical reflection to help youth confront consumerism's contradictions and assert themselves as environmental citizens capable of shaping sustainable cities. The workshops aim to channel young people's concerns into actionable visions for green urban futures, fostering collective agency, creativity, and critical thinking. By promoting experiential, place-based pedagogy, this model supports broader integration of youth voices in sustainability efforts, offering insights into youth-driven urban transformation and sustainability education that can be adapted across different urban contexts.

Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope* (Vol. 1-3). MIT Press.

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Palgrave Macmillan. Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope* (Vol. 1-3). MIT Press.

#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

Education for sustainable development, (in)justice and the global biopolitical divide

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Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is recurrently depicted as an enterprise that unites humanity in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable world. But how is this enterprise pursued on a planet that is enormously unequal? This presentation explores how ESD is unpacked in different socio-economic contexts around the world and how inequality is managed in the global educational quest for sustainable development. The presentation, which broadly reflects the conference theme's concern with justice and sustainability in education, draws on a soon completed research project funded by the Swedish Research Council; the results of which are summarized in the recent book *Education for Sustainable Development in an Unequal World: Biopolitics, Differentiation and Affirmative Alternatives* published at Bristol University Press.

The project employs Foucauldian theory of biopolitics and develops a comparative biopolitical approach. Biopolitical theory places focus on the government of life at the level of populations, while the comparative approach enables the analysis of how different populations are approached and governed as ESD is implemented around the world. Extensive fieldwork was conducted in a high-income country (Sweden), a middle-income country (South Africa) and two low-income countries (Rwanda and Uganda). Global ESD events and policies were also explored. The data comprises semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, policy documents and other printed and audiovisual material. Interviews were conducted with close to 200 informants, including teachers, students, principals, policymakers, government officials, IGOs and NGOs.

The findings demonstrate that the global ESD enterprise conveys a peculiar combination of unity and separation wherein humanity is jointly invited and responsabilized in the quest for sustainability, yet biopolitically divided in terms of lifestyles and responsibilities. Populations dwelling in low-income settings are typically educated for sustainable development within the parameters of a subsistence lifestyle. ESD thus seek to promote self-reliant and petty entrepreneurial mindsets so that poor people can solve sustainability problems in their immediate surroundings and make the most of limited resources to meet basic needs. Populations residing in high-income settings, on the other hand, are educated to contribute to sustainable development within the parameters of resource intensive and consumerist lifestyles. They operate with an entirely different set of entitlements whereby preferences, choice, and even pleasure become mobilized as governing techniques. Sustainability problems are typically located at a more abstract level and ESD largely revolves around promoting 'responsible' mass consumer choices and awareness of the hardship of 'others' living elsewhere. The implication of this depoliticized sensitivity to local 'realities', without due considerations to the relations between them, is that inequality becomes accommodated, normalized and arguably even (re)produced.

Ultimately the presentation advocates for an affirmation of equality and life within a critical and situated ESD. These affirmative educational alternatives are relevant to Nordic researchers and practitioners of ESD who wants to avoid slipping into a biopolitics of inequality which maintains the divide between rich and poor.

#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

What is out there for me? An ethnographic study of class, ethnicity and transitions from lower to upper secondary education in urban Swedish contexts.

Mohammad Ammar Syed

Department of Education and Special Education, Sweden

##### Aim:

The aim of this study is to gain deeper understanding of how aspects of class and ethnicity manifest within different school contexts. More specifically, the study seeks to illuminate the intersection of class and ethnicity in relation to transitions from lower to upper secondary education, as a social phenomena within pupils' everyday lives in different school contexts.

##### Research Question:

How do class and ethnicity manifest in different school contexts, in youths navigating their transition from lower to upper secondary education?

##### Theoretical framework:

By adopting Bourdieu's theoretical concepts; capital, habitus, and field, the analysis focus on how class and ethnicity are manifested within three different school contexts, in an urban environment, during transition from lower to upper-secondary education. Although both class and ethnicity can be analytically distinguished, they often interact and overlap. Therefore, Bourdieu's framework is utilized in this study to offer a deeper understanding of how these phenomena manifest in practice. Moreover, Bourdieu's theoretical framework provides a robust ground in order to comply with the aims of the study, thus has a strong basehold within previous educational research concerning class, ethnicity and educational transitions.

##### Methodology:

An ethnographic approach is employed in the study, incorporating observations and interviews conducted at three lower secondary schools in an urban area of Sweden, which can also be perceived as different contexts. In prior research on class and ethnicity, ethnography has been widely recognized as a valuable and frequently employed methodology. Thus, the primary intention by enforcing ethnographical approach is to gain closer proximity to the students and their daily experiences, allowing for an in-depth and rich understanding of their interactions and transitions.

##### Preliminary results:

The study discusses how class and ethnicity manifest across three different school contexts in an urban environment, and how aspect of class and ethnicity influence youths navigation from upper to lower secondary education. The study is a work-in-progress, however, preliminary findings suggest that class and ethnicity play significant roles within each context. These factors manifest differently depending on the individuals' habitus, field, and capital, highlighting the complex interactions between social factors and youth transitions. The manifestation of both class and ethnicity is thus evident, though it is deeply contingent on contextual variations, as illustrated by the distinct environments of the school-contexts.

##### Relevance to Nordic educational research:

Social reproduction occurs in a variety of school contexts, manifested by class and ethnicity. In other words, both class and ethnicity function as driving forces that create possibilities or limitations for youths navigating their transition from lower to upper secondary education, which is a common phenomenon of relevance in all Nordic countries.

## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### Grounded Youth - Building Futures in Declining Regions

Jenni Tikkanen<sup>1</sup>, Siyka Kovacheva<sup>2</sup>, Helder Ferraz<sup>3</sup>, Johannes Löffler<sup>4</sup>

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Across Europe, economically and demographically declining regions offer fewer and more limited educational and occupational opportunities for young people. These opportunities are often restricted further for young people in vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged life situations, as the vulnerabilities are connected to and impacted by their limited resources and capacities. While many young people move from declining to more thriving regions in search for better and more versatile educational and labour market opportunities, some choose or are forced to stay. In this presentation, we focus on this latter group of young people in four declining regions across Europe: Kainuu in Finland, Gabrovo in Bulgaria, Halle in Germany, and Tâmega e Sousa in Portugal. The study draws from theorisations of life course research (e.g., Mortimer & Shanahan, 2003) and opportunity structures (Roberts, 2009) together with the critical perspective of spatial justice (Soja, 2013).

We conducted narrative biographical interviews with young people in vulnerable and multi-disadvantaged life situations who live and plan to stay in declining regions (age 18–30; N = 30) in early 2024 within a European research project ‘Constructing Learning Outcomes in Europe: A multi-level analysis of (under)achievement in the life course’. With qualitative content analysis, which enables us to address not only manifest content but also the themes and core ideas found in texts including contextual information and latent content (Drisko & Maschi, 2015), and illustrative case studies, we analyse how these young people make biographical sense of the surrounding opportunity structures, and how they exercise their agency in building and navigating their educational and labour market trajectories in the challenging spatial conditions. Thus, we are particularly interested in the ways young people staying in declining regions address the limited structures of educational and occupational opportunities: while some may actively try to expand their learning and employment opportunities, others are likely adapt more passively to the local conditions and opportunities, for example, by lowering their educational aspirations.

The issues addressed by the study are highly relevant also from a Nordic perspective that goes beyond Finland, as regional disparities and inequalities are persistent challenges across the Nordic countries (e.g., Beach et al., 2018; Norlén et al., 2024) affecting young people's opportunities to participate in education and work in a personally meaningful way.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

##### Changing everyday life of rural pupils: a systematic literature review

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University of Turku, Finland

Equal educational opportunities in rural areas have become significant topic within a context of changing demographic structures and economic cuts (eg. Julkunen 2024). This is a topical trend especially in Nordic countries. According to an assessment by the Association of Finnish Cities and Municipalities (2024), the decreasing number of pupils affects especially small rural schools.

Previous studies on rural schools have focused on pedagogical solutions (eg. Roberts 2013), school closures (eg. Haynes 2023) and schools' relations with its immediate community (Tedre & Pöysä 2015). Students' perspectives have been less studied (Fargas-Malet & Bagley 2022): previous studies have predominantly focused on school staff or other school related actors.

In this presentation, we will focus on everyday life in rural schools and how it has been studied in the European context. Our study is part of Primary Schools Amidst Rural Transition: Oral History of Village Schools -project funded by the Kone Foundation 2024–2027. We conducted our search in Ebsco, Google Scholar ja Finna and our search included keywords in Finnish, Swedish and English.

Thematically, the studies include analysis of pedagogical solutions and teacher's perspectives, distances to school and educational opportunities to access education. Our study shows that researchers have analysed some particular features that are attached to specifically rural schools, including relation to near-by community, multigrade classes and school closures. Our study identifies three themes in the earlier work on rural schools: 1) studies that emphasize resources embedded in rural contexts in everyday experiences, 2) school life against norms and 3) studies that emphasize the unequal features in rural schools in everyday school life. Analysis of previous studies show that rural school context may both produce and hinder educational equality in the everyday life of pupils.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

Surveillance capitalism forging teachers' work. An ethnographic study of absence monitoring practices in a Finnish lower secondary school

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This presentation scrutinizes the intertwining of platformization of education and teachers' work regarding the supervision of pupils' attendance at school – here referred to as absence monitoring practices. The digital communication and documentation platform at the center of the monitoring of absences in Finland, Wilma (provided by the private multinational corporation Visma) is in use in nearly all Finnish educational institutions, from early childhood education to secondary education. Still, Wilma's role is underexplored in educational research, especially from participant perspectives.

As we focus on the interplay between the platformization of society (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) and individual teachers navigating their daily tasks, we draw on insights from infrastructure studies (Larkin, 2013; Star, 1999). Educational institutions are to an increasing degree managed by data infrastructures which control a flow of data between different users. We regard platformization to be made possible in part by the rise of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). This development is characterized by companies collecting large amounts of data to make profit, especially from dependent populations without any meaningful consent, entailing power shifts from the state to large corporations.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at a lower secondary school, by making the invisible visible (Star, 1999), we home in on entanglements of Wilma usage and teachers' everyday work. We have followed the work of two lower secondary teachers' work during three full school weeks. Additionally, we have conducted interviews with these teachers, the principal, the municipality's superintendent and two secretaries working at the school. Furthermore, our analysis considers documents such as the personnel handbook and a project report on school absences.

Our preliminary results show how teachers' absence monitoring practices rely on Wilma as an obvious part of the teacher's work. Teachers' absence monitoring practices revolve around keeping tabs of where students' bodies are at specific points in time and space, justified by arguments of care for the students and preventing wrongdoings. Wilma is here mainly used for e.g. registering remarks about students' individual misdemeanors and processing reasons for absences. What is worth noting in Wilma is decided by the teacher in the context, but the remarks that are registered in the infrastructuralized platform are widely decontextualized – in stark contrast with the teachers' otherwise holistic views on their work.

A scrutiny of current platformization tendencies in education should be of interest in all the Nordic countries, and beyond. The Finnish case of Visma's Wilma is especially compelling, as a private, multinational corporation has been able to establish a de facto monopoly position without hardly any critical debate.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

##### Revisiting the Nordic Basic Schools of the 1970's as Meeting Places for Pupils with Diverse Social Backgrounds

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This paper examines narratives of everyday life at lower secondary schools in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark in the 1970's, shortly after the common basic school was established in the Nordic countries. The reform aimed at bringing together children from various social backgrounds in modern school buildings but there is limited research on how the new school model as a social and material construct was experienced by the pupils and how the model shaped the schools as social spaces. In this study, we aim to shed light on how the pupils of the 1970s, now in their 50s and 60s, in hindsight narrate their everyday life at four Nordic lower secondary schools in the interplay of material and social aspects of schooling. We ask 1. how the pedagogical, material and social implementation of the Nordic basic school as an educational model turned out from the pupils' perspective and 2. how the spatial practices of schooling contributed to inclusion or exclusion as narrated by the former pupils.

Theoretically, we aim to conceptualize the idea of common basic schools as meeting places for pupils from diverse social backgrounds. For this purpose, we draw from the notions of space and place developed in the field of human geography and especially Doreen Massey's (2005) concept of *throwntogetherness*. Moreover, we seek theoretical notions to understand the workings of power and control mediated through the schools buildings and their contribution to the social difference constructed among and between the pupils (see Blackwell & Yaneva 2024).

The data consist of go-along interviews conducted with 33 participants in their previous schools in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark and life history interviews with the same participants. The interviews were analyzed in a framework informed by narrative analysis with a life history approach (Goodson 2013) together with the notions of space informed by our theoretical approach.

In their storytelling, partly constructed through the engagement with the physical environment of their previous schools, narratives of social inclusion and exclusion often became place-bound and were strongly influenced by the spatial practices created in the interplay of school architecture and pedagogical practices. Such practices were for instance the spatial organization of the school building into smaller units and the spatial isolation of special classes. The results contribute to understanding of what the lived experiences of the social relations established in the local school have meant for the pupils of the 70's across the lifespan, providing socio-historical insight into the development of the Nordic basic school as a political and an educational project.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

A study of compensatory assignment (equity in education) through the Swedish superintendent's discretion and power.

##### Jabil Seven

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The issue of compensatory assignment is prioritised by the Nordic countries (Pröitz, et.al 2023). The OECD (2023) have once again pointed out the negative trend regarding the compensatory assignment and equity in education in Sweden. The superintendent has a central function in terms of using his/her discretion to implement the intentions of the regulations regarding, for example, the compensatory assignment, as the superintendent is a central actor in the governing and is designated by the state to have overall responsibility for education (Prop 2017/18: 182).

Research questions:

What aspects affect the Swedish superintendent's discretion in terms of the compensatory assignment?

What activities does the Swedish superintendent take based on his/her discretion to influence the compensatory assignment in a positive direction?

The theoretical point of departure is theory of discretion. Discretion has two different aspects, the structural one, which is recognised in that it limits and enables the discretion for the actor through laws, economic conditions, unspoken norms and taken for granted notions that together create the structure (Giddens, 1984). The structure contributes to predictability and to some extent clarity in the organisation. The second aspect is the superintendent's agency, in this context to be understood as a person who influences their environment with their actions, exercise of power, statements or written text (Bandura, 2018). In this case, manifested through the superintendent's discretion in relation to relevant actors.

The empirical data consists of interviews with superintendent's. The interviews have been read inductively to identify general patterns in the material. A transition to a deductive method was then carried out, where the material was coded based on the various areas that emerged from the inductive review of the material. The different areas are derived based on the theoretical framework, which is based on discretion. The empirical material has a given system based on the given framework that is based on the theoretical approaches. Thus, the coding has been a theoretical framework that has been applied to the interviews (Cohen et.al. 2018)

The results indicate that structural aspects such as finances, historical contexts and taken for granted notions within the organisation influence the superintendent's discretion. Furthermore, the results also show that the issue of the compensatory assignment tends to be complex to manage because of the superintendent's capacity to achieve results that are directly attributed to the superintendent's agency and his/her conception of the compensatory assignment.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

The construction of epistemic and ethical values in environment and sustainability education: schools in sparsely populated areas

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#### Research Topic/Aim

The main aim of this paper is to identify and discuss students' and neighboring local actor's joint value construction within a nature-local actor-student relational matrix.

Considering present eco-social-cultural challenges (Fettes & Blenkinsop, 2023) and planetary boundaries (Oziewicz, 2022) the construction of epistemic and ethical values is key for education as social leverage for a sustainable future (Jickling et. al 2018). It is crucial to understand the practical processes involved in this effect. Hence, scrutinizing how students, nature and local actors collaborate in value construction within the context of ESE is key. Drawing on results from a practice-based research project with three small schools in sparsely populated areas in the middle of Sweden, the paper addresses ESE at the crossroads of formal education and social learning.

#### Theoretical Framework

The paper draws on insights from theorizing the question of the interdependence between epistemic and ethical values in moral philosophy (Norton & Norton 2007, Dewey 1944), pedagogical research (Östman & Almqvist, 2010), and environmental ethics research (Rolston III, 1987). The paper focuses on interactions between students, neighboring local actors, and nature *as partners* (Merchant 1996) and addresses an *empirical question* focusing on value-construction in particular socio-geographical locations. The paper also builds on categorial Bildung-theory and critical constructive didactics (Klafki, 2010)

#### Methodology/Research Design

The study design is *abductive* (Wilhelmsson & Damber, 2022), which enables flexible choices of theoretical framework to avoid one-sided analysis and uncritical explanations to study, understand, and explain the construction of epistemic and ethical values in complex ESE practices. *Practitioner inquiry* is used as methodology enabling teaching as the place of investigation (see Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Finally, an environmental ethical conceptual framework for empirical research on ESE (Kronlid & Öhman 2012) is used. The empirical material are teacher's reflexive texts and interview transcripts.

#### Expected Results/Findings:

The research questions are: What epistemic and ethical values are constructed in the socio-geographical location of rural schools? How are epistemic and ethical values constructed in collaboration between local actors, students, and nature? To what extent do such values enable constructive critique of the intrinsic – instrumental value dichotomy in environmental ethics and ESE research. Expected findings are insights into (a) how socio-geographical locations are engaged in value construction, (b) which values that are being constructed, and (c) how formal ESE and social learning interact in a local actor-student-nature relational matrix.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

Research that focuses on small schools in sparsely populated communities is uncommon. Research concerning the potential of the local natural environment as an *equally important partner* in education is scarce. Finally, interdisciplinary research combining ESE, environmental ethics and philosophy of education are expected to produce results that are specific for the Nordic context.

## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### Theorization of educational spaces in transnational teacher education

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This paper is a contribution to the spatial theorization of learning environment design in teacher education, examining how university students develop an understanding of the interconnections between language policies, educational practices, school design, and spatial practices and ideologies.

Traditionally, space has been seen as a container in which social actions occur, a perspective widely used in fields like geography, urban planning, and architecture (Löw et al., 2024). Since the 1970s, the conceptualization of space has evolved, with spaces now seen as parts of networks (Löw et al., 2024). This shift provides a productive framework for studying school environments, where students and staff interact across various spaces – home, urban areas, public spaces, schools, and even distinct zones within buildings.

Research data come from an intervention aimed at enhancing the spatial awareness of future educators to support the creation of inclusive, identity-safe learning environments. Grounded in European and Finnish language policy frameworks that advocate for multilingualism (EC, 2019; FNAE, 2014) and the scenario of co-located schools with different assigned languages of instruction (From, 2023), this intervention highlighted the inherent challenges and contradictions in policy implementation. These contradictions stem from efforts to support linguistic diversity while simultaneously applying protective measures to maintain parallel monolingual educational tracks through language separation (From, 2023).

55 participants of the transnational teacher education course “Multilingual Learning Environments” gave consent for the research use of their submitted assignments. This study focuses on the course unit “Language Policy, Spatiality, and Power in Multilingual Education”. The tasks of this unit challenged students to design and narrate multilingual school environments that balanced shared and separate spaces to manage multilingualism and intergroup exchange.

Methodologically, the study employs multimodal discourse analysis, integrating visual data (student designed floor plans) and text (students’ explanatory narratives of the floor plans) to interpret space as both a material and symbolic construct (Heinrich, 2024).

Findings indicate that by merging visual layouts with reflective narratives, students linked their language-policy experiences with professional practices, recognizing the socio-political implications of educational spaces. This task highlighted the complexities of embedding pedagogical and policy elements within physical spaces, an often-overlooked aspect in educational research. Consequently, the study underscores the importance of spatial conceptualizations in enhancing understanding of the relationships among space, language, and education, cultivating critical spatial awareness in future educators. Additionally, this research demonstrates how a Nordic language policy context can foster exploration and skill development in transnational teacher education.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

##### Academic capitalism in Nordic higher education: the case of tuition fees in Finnish open university education

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In the environment of academic capitalism, higher education institutions are forced to seek new sources of funding as public funding becomes scarce. This has been found to lead to increased competition between institutions, the hierarchization of the system, and inequality in educational opportunities (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004). Tuition fees charged from the students are one feature of academic capitalism. In Finnish education policy, tuition fee free higher education has been considered a cornerstone of equal opportunities. However, exceptions have included tuition fees for students from outside the EU and EEA countries, as well as fees for students taking open university courses.

This presentation examines the policy regarding fees in open higher education. Finnish open university education is a form of higher education offering basic university courses that are open to everyone but do not lead to degrees. It functions as a flexible study opportunity (Isopahkala-Bouret & Haltia 2024), providing courses that can serve as further education, recreational activity, and in some cases as a route to degree studies. In 2024, the amendment regulating the open university fees was changed and the maximum fee per credit point was increased from 15 euros to 45 euros. The increase was justified by the possibility of higher education institutions to develop and enlarge their open university education but also by the opportunity to compensate for the cuts suggested for the basic funding of higher education institutions.

The presentation analyzes the policy memorandum related to the fee regulation and the statements given by various stakeholders (n=64). The method of interpretive policy analysis is applied to the data (Yanow 2007). The analysis examines how different actors view the fees and the future of open higher education in the new situation, and how this is reflected in the operational environment of higher education institutions and the relationships between actors. Through the analysis, four topics were identified where the relationships between actors are subject to negotiation: 1) the opening of new opportunities for higher education institutions, 2) the operational capabilities of higher education institutions in the new situation, 3) the reshaping of lifelong learning opportunities, and 4) the reshaping of the open university pathway to degree studies. Together, these factors can be interpreted through the lens of academic capitalism. The presentation suggests that the negotiations and the changes in the relationships between actors reflect a broader paradigm shift in the higher education policy climate in Finland, away from egalitarian principles with providing equal opportunities for all, towards academic capitalism, with students being viewed as a source of income for higher education institutions.

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## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### Teenage researchers: participatory ethnography on hybrid sociality with 8-9 grade students

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In the context of Nordic societies' rapid transformations, basic education is crucial for fostering an inclusive society (Frønes et al, 2021). This project examines the evolution of the 'One school for all' principle in four Nordic secondary schools from the 1970s to today, highlighting the shift to hybrid socialities where students seamlessly blend online and offline lives (Sahlström et al, 2019; Trentin, 2016). Our research adopts a participatory approach, engaging students (aged 14-15) through citizen science methods to explore the role of digital technologies in their social interactions (Haklay et al, 2021; Robinson et al, 2024). By involving students in documenting and interpreting their digital communication, this study seeks to develop a deeper engagement and a more equal dialogue between researchers and participants, complementing and enhancing traditional video or digital ethnographic methods. Preliminary findings emphasize the continued importance of schools as meeting places despite blurred boundaries between school and home due to digital technologies. The participatory, co-creative citizen science approach faces challenges, including methodological adjustments to different contexts and the dilemma of balancing established research, participant, and educational agendas (Emanuelsson & Sahlström, 2008). Despite these challenges, engaging participants in research promises to bridge the gap between academia and participants' lives. Our participatory approach provided unique insights into students' daily lives and screen-mediated interactions, revealing how schools and families increasingly overlap through digital platforms. Engaging students as co-researchers enabled more ethical and nuanced access to these hybrid spaces, highlighting the continued importance of schools for diverse peer connections amidst evolving social dynamics (Robinson et al, 2024; Tauginienė et al, 2024). The approach also raises questions about the potential for socially biased voluntary participation. This paper contributes to the discussion on the complexities and potential pitfalls of participatory, citizen engaging research methods in education.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

The power of evaluation in vocational education and training – How employer sector and teachers view the grading process

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The aim of this paper is to analyse evaluation processes in vocational education and training (VET): how grading system is put into action and described by vocational teachers and employers and what kind of power dynamics appear. The interview data includes eight vocational teachers and eleven employers or entrepreneurs from two fields: technical field (three teachers and five employers) and service industry (five teachers and six employers). I interviewed them in the mid-size Finnish municipality during the semester 2023-24 as a part of my PhD research.

Michel Foucault (1977) describes a network of power as a constantly shifting formation where the power is occasionally gained, then lost, taken or given away. I argue the power to evaluate is formally given to employer sector whereas teachers are the ones with wholesome understanding of the evaluation system defined in the curricula. In VET evaluation processes, competences are described in the curricula, delivered to workplaces by vocational teachers and put into action by employers. Competency-based evaluation has been criticised as too shattered since it focuses on certain skills instead of wholesome educational aims (Rosenblad 2023).

Historically, VET in Finland has changed from reproducing labour workforce to a secondary education which qualifies graduates to apply to tertiary education. However, since from the beginning of including qualifying studies to VET, the central aim has still mainly been to provide capable and skilled workers (Lehtisalo & Raivola 1999). Teachers voice their doubt on how numeral evaluation of practical skills benefits students since the grades are set by employer sector, sometimes by a mid-manager who has not even worked with the student they evaluate. Employers and entrepreneurs often find evaluation time-consuming and pointless, but also criticise criteria as too demanding for teenage kids without previous work experience.

Voiced views, doubts and concerns are analysed with discursive analysis (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen 2016) to reveal the shifts in the network of power. Discourses include for example helplessness and acknowledging societal segregation's influence on students. I argue the evaluation of training periods does not give all the students reliable grades since some employers pay more attention to training students than others and many of them mention they want to encourage students with good grades. Unequal grading gives students false ideas of their competence. These findings can be included to discussions of Nordic VET research but also to raise questions on what are the aims of evaluation and how much power teachers hold.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

##### Sámifying and decolonizing education – Pedagogies of hope and desire

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This presentation on Sámifying and decolonizing education suggests firstly that a conversation on pedagogies of hope in the context of research on education in the Nordic countries must include Sámi perspectives. My research highlights pedagogies of hope and desire as pathways to sustainable Sámi and global societal as well as planetary futures. Tuck and Ree (2013) define desire as something possessed by themselves [the Indigenous] and that narratives [or pedagogies] of desire work in countering damage narratives attributed to them by their possessors. It is not merely a focus on the positive, but a manifest to survivance despite the damage, and includes the acknowledgement of suffering due to modernity/colonialism and capitalism.

Further theoretical foundations of my research are embedded in decolonial thought understood in as gift-giving (Kuokkanen 2005) and unveiling white/Nordic innocence and racism in Finland ((Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2016; Kuokkanen 2022). Methodologically my research draws from both Indigenous and posthuman -based research methods such as *braiding* (Jimmy, Andreotti & Stein 2019) and *thinking with theory* (Jackson & Mazzei 2022). In these, my positionality as non-Indigenous/Sámi and white is in a constant reflexive process.

I have identified in dialogue with theory and data four domains of Sámifying and decolonizing education in Finland: policy-making, academia and teacher training programs, curriculum planning, classrooms (pre-primary and primary levels). These four domains are explored in the different articles of my doctoral thesis. My main data consists of 16 in-dept interviews with Sámi education experts, including teachers, parents and education researchers, and from being part of the Ketterä Korkeakoulu (2018-2021) Sámi teacher education pilot program.

My research suggests in line with e.g. Sultana (2022) and Simpson (2021) that an ethics of mutual care needs to be developed within research as well as education to work toward healing and sustainable futures for Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. This indicates that the work of decolonizing these different domains of education is to be carried out not only by those most affected by modernity/coloniality but also by allies, accomplices, white Nordics. My research produces indications for steps to take in a process of decolonizing education in the Nordics, particularly in Finland.

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## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### Recruitment Challenges and Supporting Children in Early Childhood Education

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Segregation of early childhood education and care (ECEC) teachers, their recruitment challenges, and how these influence the daily work is a timely topic across the Nordic countries (e.g. Kosunen, Saari, Huilla & Hienonen 2024; Fjellborg & Forsberg 2023; OECD 2019). Recruitment challenges for ECEC teachers have emerged as a significant issue in public discourse in recent years also in Finland. The lack of qualified and stable personnel hampers the successful execution of work and increases turnover, thereby creating and perpetuating negative cycles (Kosunen & Bernelius 2024). Previous research on teacher segregation has shown that recruiting early childhood educators is particularly challenging on a national scale across the country in Finland (Kosunen et al. 2024). However, the development of recruitment difficulties and their influence on supporting children's well-being and learning has not been examined in Finland before.

In this study, we analyze recruitment challenges of ECEC teachers from 2016 to 2023 using statistical survey data, and explore how these challenges manifest in supporting children's well-being and learning through qualitative interview data.

Theoretically we draw from research on area, school and teacher segregation (e.g. Tammaru et al. 2021). Socio-economic and ethnic segregation between different areas feeds into school segregation. This in turn might contribute to segregation of (i.e. lack of or lack of qualified) teachers, which appears differently in different areas and schools. We analyze quantitatively (N=618, centres that experienced recruitment difficulties, N=1517 total) how recruitment challenges appear in different areas across Finland and in affluent and disadvantaged areas, and how the difficulties are related to qualifications of employees. With the interview data (N=31) we analyze how ECEC teachers describe how recruitment challenges influence supporting well-being and learning of children.

Our findings indicate that recruitment difficulties have increased during the study period. The development manifests differently across various regions: Helsinki metropolitan area faces the biggest recruitment challenges. Eastern-Finland and rural areas experienced most difficulties with applicants' qualifications. In interviews, staff turnover and qualifications were particularly perceived negatively in larger cities, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Supporting children's well-being and learning became difficult due to staff turnover and when centres needed to lean extensively on (unqualified) substitutes.

## Network: 4. Justice through Education

### School Segregation Through Teachers' Eyes: A Discourse Analysis of Finnish Classrooms

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#### Research topic

This study explores teachers' perceptions and reflections on school segregation in their everyday work in the context of different schools and their classrooms. Our research question is: How is school segregation made visible in teachers' discourses about their daily work? Our interest is in the variations of the phenomena in schools of different sizes in different parts of Finland.

#### Theoretical framework

School segregation refers to the situation where schools within the same city or area become differentiated, for example, based on the socioeconomic background or home language of their students. This regional segregation of schools has been a focus of interest and concern in educational research in Finland (see e.g. Huilla 2021, Kosunen, Seppänen & Bernelius 2016, Bernelius 2015). Previous research has approached segregation in schools from various perspectives. It has covered the perspective of students' (Peltola 2024; Luoma 2024), school management's (Huilla & Juvonen 2024), and parents (Kosunen 2016). Teachers' perspective in the field of school segregation has not yet been illuminated in terms of qualitative research.

#### Research design

Our study is based on 67 interviews of the comprehensive schoolteachers in Finland, where 23 interviewees are subject teachers and 44 are class teachers. Interviewees work in schools of varying size, location, and student demographics: some schools are in urban and some rural areas, and the working conditions are influenced based on whether the school is located in the centre of a city or in a village in the outskirts of a small town.

We apply critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001, 2012), which examines the connection between language and social life. The discourses produced in the interviews are seen as social constructions that create and shape reality. Discourses are not independent of the surrounding social and historical context; rather, speech constructs and shapes reality while reflecting past experiences and future expectations. (Fairclough 2012.)

#### Preliminary Results

The perceptions of school segregation shared in teacher interviews were constructed around three discursive dimensions: social, material, and mental. The first one relates to teachers' perceptions of how segregation-related phenomena are experienced in the everyday life of schools. This social space is shaped by factors connected to both material and mental dimensions. Discourse of segregation as a material dimension covers descriptions of the school as a physical space in which teachers work within highly varied environments across different schools and levels of basic education. Schools resources (i.e. classroom facilities, group sizes) and location create different conditions for teachers' work. The final, mental dimension, involves teachers' descriptions of how factors such as students' backgrounds or personal circumstances are taken into consideration in their teaching work.

Teachers' discourses reveal that school segregation is not merely a structural issue of resource allocation or geographic distribution. It is a layered and lived phenomenon that is constructed in social interactions, material conditions, and mental frameworks of daily school lives and in classrooms.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This is challenging the idea of the Nordic welfare model. Segregated schools are a current issue in other Nordic countries as well.

#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

‘Return capital’ in mobility imaginaries of students in rural and regional areas in Finland

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Studying students in regional and rural areas have gained prominence in Nordic countries alongside decreasing population trends and urbanization. Due to limited study and work opportunities, youth may experience mobility imperative (Farrugia, 2015), while also guidance counselling practices can support leaving (Rosvall, 2020). According to Adams and Komu (2022), in areas where there is a strong outward mobility trend, it may create a culture of *moving*. In this study, we suggest and develop ‘return capital’ concept that is developed on the work on Bourdieu’s (1993) capitals. Previous studies refer to for instance mobility capital (eg. Nugin, 2019) or city capital (Tolonen, Aapola-Kari, Lahtinen & Wrede-Jäntti, 2021) that conceptualize resources to mobility outwards from youth’s current residence. Here, we turn our lens towards returning back to childhood residence in youth’s imaginaries for future.

We ask how much and how youth in general upper secondary schools in rural and regional areas discuss returning to their current living areas. Our analysis is based on two research projects. First research project is analysing remote and border area youth’s school paths and future plans, which consist of 26 narrative interviews with general upper secondary school students from archipelago area and eastern border area. Second project is Academy of Finland funded *Shadows* project that analyses rural and regional students’ mobility to higher education in Finland. The data consist of 35 ethnographic interviews in general upper secondary school in southern part of Finland. We analyze our data with theory informed content analysis and develop the conceptualization of return mobility. Our preliminary findings suggest that students vary in how much and what kind of return capital they have and can imagine. Return capital is shaped by the current and expected social, economic and cultural resources of the students, families and area of residence. We also find that many of the students did not perceive themselves having an agency in shaping their current places in future to enable their return.

#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

Lingering histories of school spaces – Temporalities and (dis)continuities in the discourses on school architecture during two major educational reforms in Finland

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School buildings are ultimately an expression of evolving educational philosophies and societal values, not simply a physical adaptation to curriculum requirements. From this standpoint, this paper aims to analyze discourses on the pedagogical and societal ideals and purposes of school architecture during the two major education reforms in Finland. The basic education reform during the 1970s and the revision of the national core curriculum in 2014. The basic education reform during the 1970s was a transformative shift in the country's education system, which replaced the dual-track system with a common comprehensive school for all pupils regardless of their social background. In 2014, the revision of the national core curriculum brought about significant changes in the educational framework, highlighting skills regarded as essential in contemporary society. Both reforms also carried implications for school architecture and provoked debate in the professional fields of architecture and education.

To examine the pedagogical and societal values embedded in and the role assigned to school buildings in implementing the reforms, we ask: In the discourses concerning school architecture in the 1970's and 2010's, 1. What are presented as the core aims of schooling and 2. What are constructed as the problems that school buildings are intended to address? For these purposes, we examined two key professional publications: *Opettaja* (The Teacher) and *Arkkitehti* (The Architect). Our data consist of 75 articles in *Opettaja* between 1970 and 2024, and 125 articles published in *Arkkitehti* between 1960 and 2024. The data was analyzed with discourse analysis informed by our theoretical framework, seeking to trace the historical (dis)continuities and temporalities of discourses concerning school buildings.

In line with earlier research, our preliminary analyses suggest that understanding the present (and the future), requires sensitivity to notice what lingers in the political debates regardless of time (e.g., Bourdieu, 1999; Saari, 2024) making visible how educational discourses change or stay over time, how they create temporality, and how they adapt to new contexts in the era of globalization, as Lingard (2021) writes. The discourses around school construction also appear to follow the rhetoric of 'human capital' throughout the data. In connection to both reforms, open and flexible school buildings are expected to provide solutions for pupils' individual needs. However, this goal is no longer framed through a state-driven reform but is instead connected to the rhetoric of global market economies, presenting a lack of historical awareness and disconnection from the idea of education as promoting social equality. The results of this study will be relevant for Nordic countries facing similar changes in their educational systems.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

Exploring critical cultural literacy through arts in education in a decolonial perspective: Preliminary (meta)methodological reflections from the field

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#### Research topic/aim

This paper discusses initial methodological reflections from the EU Horizon project EXPECT\_Art. The project explores critical cultural literacy through arts in education, building on the assumption that formal and non-formal arts education can be a vehicle for social change.

#### Theoretical framework

The paper draws on a decolonial perspective (Mignolo 2009; Dei 2016), particularly on the notion of “decolonizing education”, which “includes a search for an anti-colonial curriculum that allows us to re-engage questions of pedagogies, classroom instruction, teaching materials, including texts and other non-texts that may include: social events, oral cultural stories, and arts-informed pedagogies” (Dei, 2016, p. 37-38).

#### Methodology/research design

The project employs a Community-Based Research design (Boyd, 2014) in 12 case studies, conducted in Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain. The design includes ample time and space for methodological (meta)reflectivity informed by notions of critical ethnography and reflection (Anderson & Irvine, 1993). Each case study involves fieldwork in a school and local community that includes participant observations and interviews, and surveys with children and adults. The paper’s reflection revolves around key incidents (Jensen & Hobel, 2020) generated from fieldnotes.

#### Expected results/findings

The paper offers initial reflections on doing community-based research by revising the decolonial implications of all of the most important aspects of the project’s initial phase, such as research ethics, positionalities of researchers, teachers, children in schools and research participants in local communities, consent form practices, knowledge constructions in the school and the project, and power imbalances between participants in the research project.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In Denmark as a Nordic country, arts education has been shaped by the German tradition of Bildung and a Nordic tradition of craftsmanship. Importantly, Denmark like the other Nordic countries “never went through a critique of colonialism” and “Nordic democracy does not yet include everybody living in the Nordic countries. Even the local minority cultures are not well represented in the national [arts] curricula” (Kallio-Tavin, 2019, p. 591). This makes Denmark an important context for exploring the potential of decolonization of arts and education.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

“Breaking with the past: Making sense of the new educational spaces of Estonia’s state gymnasias”

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In 2012, the Estonian national government developed a State Upper Secondary School network. In this policy, municipal governments agreed to grant the state control over creating, funding, and managing a new upper secondary school so that students in each county have equal, local opportunities for high quality schooling. According to this plan, achieved in 2023, every county has at least one state upper secondary school (currently 28 schools). The state accomplished this, in part, by building (or renovating) a new school building.

In our presentation, we share the ways major actors in this policy, including architects, teachers, and students, make sense of this break with past forms of Soviet-designed educational space and the ways they experience newly constructed schools. While providing a national overview, we focus primarily on two schools in northeastern Estonia. Estonia offers an important case to understand both spatial strategies to facilitate access to high quality education, as well as the experiences of these new school spaces over time.

Theories about identity and space inform our research. Understanding educational space as identity- and value-carrying (De Raedt, 2014 & Uduku, 2015) guides our attention to the ways school architecture and material culture shape visions of “new” educational forms and the resulting experiences in these new buildings. A defining aspect of the state gymnasias network is that these are *new* schools in *new* buildings. Scholars recognize the political power embedded in historic and contemporary school design and impressions of “old and new” learning spaces. Given the centrality of school design and construction as one of the hallmarks of these new secondary schools, the link between identity, architecture, and belonging is key.

The findings we share are a slice from a longitudinal, comparative ethnographic project running from 2023 to 2026. We incorporate semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, directors, and architects, long-term participant observation at school sites, and document analysis.

In our first year and half of fieldwork, we have found that the new state gymnasias carry an ideological and material break with the former Soviet-era schools. Interview data attest that the school design, particularly the newer elements (e.g., common spaces, use of glass, teachers’ rooms, etc.) contribute to the creation of novel educational environments including those to promote Estonian-language learning. These buildings are not, however, understood as carrying a particular identity – democratic, Estonian, European. Most importantly, these new design elements and spaces shape relationships within the school community but have minimal influence on pedagogical directions.

Estonian educational design and pedagogy is deeply rooted in and influenced by its northern European neighbors particularly Finland. With the country’s recent high PISA rankings and branding as “education Estonia,” it now seeks to serve as a regional – Nordic and Baltic – model of education commitment and innovation.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

Modern-colonial habit-of-being in Finnish teacher education and social work education and alternative responses to global challenges

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We are witnessing global polycrises that pose an existential threat to the survival of humans, other species, and our planet. These crises are changing societal values in new and unpredictable ways, having myriad consequences to schools and social services, as well as to teachers, students, social workers, and service users.

Due to neoliberalisation of education, higher education programs have been made more accountable for providing responses to economic needs of the future. Developing working life skills (21<sup>st</sup> century skills) has become a central pillar of education and the objectives are increasingly built around competence-based models. (Andreotti, 2010; Priesley & Biesta & 2013; Willbergh, 201; Wolff et al., 2024.) Competences-based structuring of educational objectives is also visible in teacher education and social work education in Finland (see e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture; Metsäpelto ym., 2022; Lähteinen ym., 2017).

We ask, how are Finnish teacher education and social work education equipped with responding to global tumultuous changes? We approach this question through two metaphors constructed by Vanessa Andreotti and her colleagues: i) Tree model that describes how methodological, epistemological, and ontological problematizations and responses to global challenges differ from each other, and ii) metaphor of the House of Modernity that provides a systemic approach analyze how the origins of the problems, the processes sustain them and the responses trying to overcome those problems are framed by modern-colonial habit-of-being. (Andreotti et al., 2018.) We discuss the two metaphors in the light of previous studies and policies of teacher education and social work education in Finland.

We argue that in teacher education and social work education in Finland uncertain and unpredictable future is typically framed as a problem to be solved with competences or by producing new knowledge. The solutions are focused on actions on methodological and epistemological level, but they do not go to ontological level and to the roots of the problems that lay in the modern-colonial way of existing. We also consider alternative responses to global challenges.

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#### Network: 4. Justice through Education

##### Forging Pathways to Higher Education and Adulthood: Intersectional Life-Course Perspectives on Non-Access to Higher Education

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The transition from youth to adulthood is often shaped by expectations of a linear progression, such as moving directly from upper secondary school to higher education (HE). However, in Finland, access to HE is highly competitive, and many applicants face multiple application cycles or must navigate alternative pathways to achieve admission. As a result, the transition from upper secondary education to HE is rarely straightforward, with only one-third of graduates gaining direct entry in the year following graduation, making non-access a common experience. Recent reforms in Finnish HE admissions aim to streamline these transitions and reduce the number of gap years. Despite these efforts, individual life paths often diverge from these expectations, resulting in more unpredictable and non-linear trajectories.

In this qualitative, longitudinal study, I examine how Finnish general upper secondary education students transition to higher education and adulthood from a life course perspective. I investigate the experiences of young people who completed their general upper secondary studies between 2017–2020 and planned to apply to HE. I analyze the process of seeking HE admission and explore the diverse educational pathways that emerge for these young people from various backgrounds. Particular attention is given to transitions when immediate access to higher education is not achieved, exploring how young people navigate gap years, reapply, and reshape their educational strategies and aspirations during subsequent application cycles. The study applies an intersectional framework to examine how educational inequalities intersect with social class, gender, and migration background to shape young people's educational and life paths.

The data for this longitudinal study includes ethnographic interviews conducted general upper secondary school students (N=50) between 2017–2020. The young people, now aged 20 to 27, represent a range of diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Follow-up qualitative interviews are currently being conducted with the same group of young people to examine their educational paths and admission seeking to HE, experiences of possible gap years and transitions into adulthood.

Preliminary findings indicate that repeated application attempts and non-linear trajectories are common experiences for many young people. The study highlights how young people navigate societal expectations of educational success and linear transitions while confronting systemic barriers, shedding light on the strategies employed by the students who have been excluded from higher education.

This research contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing themes of equity, access, and social justice. By focusing on the rather underexplored experiences of non-access and gap years, it provides valuable insights into the complexities of educational transitions within the Nordic welfare context.

# Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### Wandering a theoretical pathway

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Torbjørn Ekelund (2020), in his book *In Praise of Paths*, reminds us that paths “point forward toward the journey’s goal but also behind us to all who have traveled this same path before us, including those who created the first track” (p. 14) and that “no single person is responsible for a path; instead, it is the sum of the actions of numerous people over...time. As such, paths are like stories” (p. 186). This is a description that resonates deeply with us, in terms of how we have worked together and with others, over thirty years, to grow and develop the Pirie–Kieren Dynamical Theory for the Growth of Mathematical Understanding (Pirie & Kieren, 1994). In this paper we will share some of our theoretical elaborations, but our focus will be describing the process through which the theory has been sustained and grown — telling the story of our wandering a theoretical path. Our story also expresses gratitude to Susan Pirie and Tom Kieren for their significant contribution to the field and for inviting us to walk this pathway with them.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The PK Theory (and associated model) provides a way to describe and map the growth of mathematical understanding as a levelled but non-linear, recursive process. It emphasizes the embedding of localised ways of thinking mathematically within more formal actions and sees acts of generalising and formalising as being recursively connected to less sophisticated understandings.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

Our engagement with the PK Theory over the past few decades has taken the form of a learning study—a longitudinal exploration of the intertwining of theory and practice using multiple datasets and lenses at a range of educational level (See Martin & Towers, 2016). While we see our research as a coherent program, it is also a non-linear path which, if visually represented, would not look dissimilar to a trace of growing understanding on the PK Model.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

While our path is unique, both to ourselves and to a particular theory, we offer the metaphor of wandering a pathway as one that may be relevant to other researchers seeking to engage with, elaborate, and evolve their own theoretical thinking.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

We note that Ekelund is a Norwegian author and that our work is used in the Nordic context, e.g. Ryve, et al. (2013).

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Curriculum ideologies in the Norwegian curriculum: the case of the Norwegian subject

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Curriculum ideologies in the Norwegian curriculum: the case of the Norwegian subject

No curriculum is neutral; both historically and internationally varied views of knowledge can be related to different curriculum models or ideologies (Deng & Luke, 2008). Knowledge in curricula also has different purposes. These involve schools, teachers and students, as well as society at large, lifelong learning, the workplace and higher education. In this study, I explore the case of Norway to investigate the kinds of curriculum ideologies that prevail in the curriculum document of the Norwegian subject from 2020.

As a starting point and theoretical framework, I relate the Norwegian case to four curriculum ideologies (Deng & Luke, 2008; Sundberg, 2023): 1) *scholar academic ideology*, 2) *social efficiency ideology*, 3) *learner-centred ideology* and 4) *social reconstruction ideology*. The focus is on the curriculum as text, and the analytical approach is content analysis.

Preliminary analysis revealed that all four ideologies are present in the curriculum document of the Norwegian subject (2020). However, scholar academic ideology is less prominent than the social efficiency, learner-centred and social reconstruction ideologies. At the forefront are the learner-centred and social reconstruction ideologies, which are expressed in several curriculum categories, including Relevance and central values, Interdisciplinary topics, Core elements and Assessment.

Two questions will be addressed in light of these preliminary findings. The first question concerns how a curriculum text that contains many different views of knowledge works for teachers to select content knowledge in a school subject. Second, how can “hybrid” curricula, which combine different curriculum models into one curriculum text, serve as policy-steering instruments?

This exploration of knowledge perspectives in the curriculum from various angles and theoretical approaches provides new insights for Nordic educational research. It also contributes to a broader discussion of curricula in the Nordic countries and the international arena.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Cultivating deeper interdisciplinary teacher-teacher dialogue to support sustainability and climate change education in Curriculum for Wales

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This paper reports early findings from a large-scale project funded by Templeton World Charity Foundation exploring the place and nature of substantive, teacher-teacher dialogue in a time of intensive curriculum development in Wales. Curriculum for Wales, introduced to all schools from 2023, specifically encourages both disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. Previous studies have shown that teachers can have disparate understandings of the purpose of other subjects on the school curriculum or limited relationships other subject departments (Woolley et al., 2023). If a curriculum is to be interdisciplinary, teachers from diverse disciplines need opportunities to come together and discuss different approaches to knowledge in order for pupils to have a coherent curriculum experience. Within current debates on the place of knowledge in the curriculum (Muller & Young, 2019; Niemela, 2020), less is known about how knowledge works across disciplinary boundaries. Rigorous interdisciplinary education is of increasing interest in educational contexts such as Wales, Finland and Norway (OECD, 2019). Priestly and Biesta (2013) have pointed to the emergence of a “new curriculum” across Europe, including Nordic countries, which has emphasised the autonomy of schools and teachers in making the curriculum.

This paper reports on the innovative research design of a large-scale project, with a survey, micro-study and macro-study over three years to explore the frequency and nature of substantive teacher-teacher dialogue and the impact a professional learning programme might have on teacher-teacher dialogue. The project has a particular focus on dialogue around sustainability and climate change as this topic is agreed by many to be transdisciplinary (McKenzie and Benavot, 2024). In this paper we hope to be able to share initial findings from our survey, with over 700 participants from across Wales. The research question underpinning the survey is, *What experience do teachers in Wales have of substantive disciplinary and interdisciplinary teacher-teacher dialogue?* The survey has four parts, exploring frequency and nature of dialogue in subjects, Areas of Learning and Experience (a particular unit of Curriculum for Wales) and across the school. The survey also asks specific questions about the nature and extent of conversations about sustainability and climate change. This paper will be of interest to those interested in curriculum reform, teacher development or climate change and sustainability education.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### Enactments of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Educational Practice: Power Dynamics and Contextual Variations

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#### Research Topic/Aim

This study investigates the enactment of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a legal framework within various school contexts. Focus is on exploring implications of different interpretations for power dynamics among stakeholders, including actors in local authorities, schools and families.

#### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this research is grounded in the concepts code, classification and framing (Bernstein, 2000), which are employed to analyse the meanings and understandings attributed to the CRC. Classification pertains to the delineation of boundaries between the CRC and other texts or frameworks (the “what” of CRC), while framing involves how legitimate communication is produced (the “how” of CRC). A particular combination of classification and framing represents a particular code. This theoretical approach allows for an exploration of the CRC as a weakly classified and framed object, which opens for diverse interpretations (codes) with implications for power dynamics among stakeholders, including actors in local authorities, schools and families

#### Methodology/Research Design

The analysis builds on data collected from various case schools, to identify patterns in the interpretation of the CRC. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews, the research aims to uncover different “codes” that shape how the CRC is enacted. We have conducted interviews with teachers, principals and superintendents at five different schools, representing varying contexts with regards to socio-economic status, immigration, etc.

#### Expected Results/Findings

Preliminary results indicate that the CRC manifests in different forms across educational contexts. Initial findings suggest the existence of at least three distinct interpretations: (1) the CRC as a tool for individual child development, (2) as a mechanism for organizational change within schools, and (3) as a means for empowering children as political subjects. Notably, these interpretations influence the power relations between actors in local authorities, schools and families. For instance, one interpretation positions the school as a protective entity, using the CRC to delineate boundaries towards families to safeguard children's rights. In contrast, another interpretation emphasizes children's agency, framing the CRC to challenge both school and family authority. These findings reveal the complex interplay of socio-economic factors, institutional leadership, and local contexts in shaping the enactment of the CRC.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This research contributes to Nordic educational scholarship by providing empirical insights into the implications of the CRC as a legal instrument in education. It addresses critical questions regarding equity and the distribution of power among children, families, and educational institutions, aligning with ongoing debates about the legal and pedagogical interpretations of children's rights in the Nordic context. By examining the local interpretations of the CRC, this study offers valuable perspectives for policymakers, educators, and researchers committed to advancing children's rights within education systems.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### The use of crisis in legitimizing curriculum reform - the case of Sweden

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Over the years it has been stated repeatedly that the Swedish school is, for a variety of reasons, in crisis (Landahl, et al., 2021). Sometimes the crisis reflects changes that are occurring in the surrounding society, while at other times it is rather the result of a discursive construct among politicians (Wiklund, 2006). As pointed out by the Swedish National Agency for Education (2022), the trend of political crisis signalling has recently increased, with “crisis” being attributed to a wide range of topics within different educational policy areas. At the moment, ‘crisis’ is frequently used among politicians in relation to the development of a new national curriculum for the Swedish compulsory school. Thus, the aim of this study is to critically examine the ways in which this crisis discourse is ideationally constructed and communicated by politicians to legitimize a new curriculum reform.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Theoretically, this study positions itself in a tradition of policy research that focuses on the role of ideas and discourse in policy and politics (Béland & Cox, 2011). Within this tradition ideas are seen to constitute the foundations of institutions since they provide guides for human action. More precisely, I draw on the discursive institutionalism of Vivien Schmidt (Schmidt, 2011; Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016), who expands upon the different kinds of ideational and discursive power.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The study is based on an analysis of political statements in the mass media that discussed a crisis in relation to the Swedish school and its curriculum. The statements were scrutinized and then categorized in relation to Carstensen and Schmidt’s (2016) differentiated understanding of the power of ideas—that is, *power through ideas*, *power over ideas* and *power in ideas*.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The study contributes to the understanding of the political use of crisis as a legitimation strategy in curriculum reforms. Since crisis implies an extensive reduction both in terms of complexity and time, thus constituting an extreme policy context, the study will also shed light on the usefulness of crisis as a discursive legitimation strategy in educational reforms.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Since the study uses a Nordic country to point to a phenomenon familiar to several other Nordic countries, the Nordic relevance is high.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### School-Based Curriculum Development in the Name of "Place": Reflections on the Taiwanese Experience

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The purpose of this study is to explore school-based curriculum development named after "place" from the perspective of place-based curriculum theory, with a focus on the experience in Taiwan. The study has four research purposes: (1) the philosophy and design of school-based local curriculum, (2) the selection and determination of knowledge in school-based local curriculum, (3) the factors influencing the change and continuity of themes in school-based local curriculum, and (4) the existing issues in the development of school-based local curriculum.

To achieve this purpose, the study also delves into important issues in curriculum development. Place-based curriculum theory serves as the theoretical framework, encompassing four main elements. First, it emphasizes constructing a dynamic view of the curriculum through deep local engagement. Second, it involves designing learning experiences based on "place" to foster life-based learning processes. Third, students are encouraged to engage in a dialogue between local experiences and subject knowledge. Fourth, schools should connect with local organizations or stakeholders to collaboratively develop a place-based curriculum.

This study collects and analyzes data through literature review and interviews. For the interviews, both individual and focus group interviews are conducted, primarily using a semi-structured approach and purposive sampling. Participants include principals, directors, and teachers from schools in northern, central, and southern Taiwan that have been actively involved in the development of school-based local curricula. A total of ten schools and sixteen participants are involved in the study.

Through analysis of the research data, the study identifies the following developmental characteristics of school-based curricula in Taiwan focused on "place": (1) with shifts in curriculum policy, the content of local curricula has become increasingly comprehensive and systematic; (2) the shaping of local curricula results from the interplay between Taiwan's social changes and key individuals; (3) through the efforts of various members, diverse design approaches have emerged within local curricula, including orientations based on local knowledge, learning processes, subject integration, and social action. Based on these developmental characteristics, the study further conducts a comprehensive analysis of key curriculum issues, including curriculum models and perspectives, the selection and determination of curriculum knowledge, sustainability of curriculum development, and its limitations. Finally, conclusions and insights are provided based on the research findings.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### Mediating curriculum work through curriculum support materials in Norway and Lithuania

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National curricula developments, such as competence-based content, interdisciplinary learning, and digital formats, are presented as opportunities to prepare learners for a complex future. These advancements transform the curriculum into a sophisticated tool that sets requirements for teachers' pedagogical work. To aid teachers in navigating this complexity, national curriculum makers provide support materials, digital instruments, and training. However, as Hopmann (2023) asserts, such mediating activities intrude upon teachers' autonomy in planning their teaching. This paper explores how curriculum support materials shape expectations for teachers' curriculum work.

Based on sociomaterial approach curriculum support materials are viewed as mediators that shape the meaning of the curriculum and influence curriculum work, rather than merely conveying information to teachers (Latour, 2005). In this context, websites containing both the Norwegian and Lithuanian curricula, along with their support materials, direct teachers toward a specific interpretation of the curriculum and defined modes of work with the curriculum in teaching.

This paper examines two cases: the 2020 Norwegian curriculum and the Lithuanian curriculum from 2023. Both curricula are digitized and presented on national websites with accompanying support materials. A comprehensive walkthrough of these websites was conducted to gather all forms of curriculum support and guidance, including instructions, informational articles, videos, training course materials, and teaching resources. The collected examples were analyzed to investigate how they mediate teachers' curriculum work.

The tentative results of the analysis indicate that curriculum support materials serve a dual function. They act both as instructive manuals for navigating digital curricula and as educational resources promoting teachers' pedagogical development. Instructive manuals guide teachers through the digital features of the national curriculum, setting the expectation for teachers to develop digital competence and confidence as curriculum policy users. Training materials, such as competence packs in the Norwegian curriculum and national and EU-organized online courses in Lithuania, further constitute curriculum support. These resources mediate curriculum work as a continuous professional development process for teachers. Additionally, the Lithuanian curriculum website provides 7,550 digital teaching resources that are sorted and suggested by AI algorithms, whereas support materials for Norwegian teachers focus on limited topics such as social learning, gender and sexuality, and war. This contrast highlights significant national differences in approaching teachers' pedagogic autonomy in curriculum work. These findings demonstrate how national authorities govern teachers' autonomous curriculum work through various means: digital instructions, expectations for professional development, and teaching resources.

This study illustrates how national curriculum policies, when digitized and supplemented with support materials, establish expectations for teachers to engage with the curriculum both digitally and through ongoing professional development. This research not only extends the scope of Nordic curriculum studies but also introduces new insights from the Lithuanian context, highlighting the interplay between digital transformation and curriculum work practices.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

“Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language”: Wittgenstein and Science Education

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Over the past few years, we have been reading Ludwig Wittgenstein’s work closely and considering its possible implications for educational practices. In this paper, we set out a way to talk about science education that builds on the perspective of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. Our main concern here is with the question: how can science education learn from Wittgenstein? Our more general, abiding concern is to draw a broad, philosophically fruitful, picture of learning and teaching science.

Science education researchers’ interest in taking up ideas from Wittgenstein has been steadily growing, and there has been, as well, a longstanding interest in Wittgenstein in other educational disciplines. To better appreciate how Wittgenstein’s work has influenced science education we conduct an analysis of associated scholarly literature over past years, 1987-2024. This was obtained from:

Key word literature searches using the term “Wittgenstein” to locate relevant articles in seven science education electronic journal archives (*Science Education*; *International Journal of Science Education*; *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *Studies in Science Education*, *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, *Science and Education*, *Research in Science Education*) and

Google Scholar searches using the combined terms “Wittgenstein”, “Science” and “Education”.

Over 200 journal articles were identified, and we sort these into those in which Wittgenstein is given a minimal, passing reference, and provide some brief examples. We focus on a much smaller group (under 30) of articles in which Wittgenstein’s philosophies are centre to the discussions. For instance, an expanding group of Nordic science education scholars has been developing for 20 years what they call “practical epistemological analysis” based largely on Wittgenstein’s notion of “standing fast” in language (from Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*). Another group have drawn extensively on Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblances” (from Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* and the *Blue and Brown Books*) to explore the nature of science.

We consider and organize this work in terms of *what* various authors have taken up from Wittgenstein: including Language as Use, Grammatical investigations, Language-Games, Family Resemblances; Standing Firm and *Weltbild*. Our paper offers reflections on the various ways in which these authors enlist Wittgenstein’s perspectives and the extent to which these readings are faithful to Wittgenstein, and various openings that they offer.

Our conclusion celebrates the creative ways in which Wittgenstein’s ideas have inspired and become drawn into science education. We also note a reluctance to take on the full import of what Wittgenstein is doing. The resulting *decentring* of language in thinking about science education runs very much against Wittgenstein. We seek to recognize more fully the radical nature of Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language. Our position is that accounts of science education more firmly attached to serious reading of Wittgenstein’s texts invites science educators to richer perspectives which *centre* language and grammatical investigations. We end by reflecting on ways that reading Wittgenstein impacts our own teaching.

“Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (Wittgenstein PI 109)

## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

What understandings of sustainable development are offered to teacher students during their education?

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### 1. Research Topic/Aim

Sustainable development can be interpreted in various ways (e.g., Carruthers, 2001; Daly, 2006; Murphy, 2012; Mensah, 2019). A common approach is to discuss sustainability within one of the three dimensions into which the concept is typically divided: ecological, social, or economic sustainability. These dimensions are often treated in isolation from one another. The essence of the well-known Brundtland Commission's description of the goal of sustainable development is to improve (human) welfare without negative consequences for the Earth's ecosystems, while also ensuring that humanity uses resources in a manner that preserves them for future generations. Implicitly, the goal is to find synergies between social and ecological objectives. Hedenus et al. (2018) suggest that these dimensions should be viewed as frameworks for achieving overarching and interrelated goals rather than as separate objectives. This holistic perspective is crucial for understanding and analyzing societal phenomena in relation to sustainable development. Yet, such holistic competences seem not that common among teachers (e.g., SSI, 2023).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the various understandings of sustainable development offered in teacher education programs in Sweden. Specifically, the aim is to examine how sustainable development is constructed in teacher education at 1) different universities, 2) across various subjects, and 3) for different teacher programs (from preschool to upper secondary school). The long-term goal is to develop a deeper understanding of how teacher candidates can be prepared to teach sustainable development in a conscious, holistic and transformative manner.

### 2. Theoretical Framework

The study builds on curriculum theory in a broad sense, i.e., the interest lies in the content and structure of educational programs. More specifically, the study's analysis is based on Englund's (1997) concept of 'meaning offer', i.e., what kinds of 'meanings' of the knowledge content that is offered through curricula, syllabuses and course material.

### 3. Methodology/Research Design

The study deploys qualitative text analysis for examining what kinds of 'meanings' of the knowledge content that is offered through the construction of sustainable development in the curriculum (relevant for all institutions), course material such as syllabuses, how sustainability is constructed in texts describing courses, and what kind of knowledge/abilities are asked for in exams. Only courses that clearly include sustainability issues are included in the analysis.

### 4. Expected Results/Findings

Expected outcomes include the 'meaning' of sustainable development that is offered across different teacher education programs and subjects. Further, the study expects to find clues about the extent to which sustainable development is constructed holistically when teacher candidates encounter sustainability issues in their courses. These results can contribute to improving teacher education and ensure that students receive a nuanced and critical perspective on sustainable development.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The focus and results of this study fits well with the theme of the NERA 2025 conference. Further, the project is relevant to Nordic educational research as it addresses how sustainable development is integrated into teacher education programs, which is central to achieving global goals such as education for sustainable development.

## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### Emphasizing Well-Being in Home Economics Education in the Curricula of European Countries

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<sup>1</sup>Tallinn University, School of Natural Sciences and Health

#### Research topic and aim

The study aims to explore how home economics is presented within general education curricula across European countries, with particular attention to the content and nature of the subject.

#### Theoretical framework

The concept of well-being can be described as people's sense of themselves, how they cope on both a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their life as a whole (Michaelson, Mahony & Schifferes 2012). The subject area of home economics fulfills a similar purpose in education. According to the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE, 2008), home economics is a field of study that supports achieving optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families, and communities. It promotes well-being, personal development, and responsible citizenship by e.g. focusing on everyday life skills such as cooking, budgeting, nutrition, and interpersonal skills.

#### Methodology/research design

The analysis will examine home economics in various curricula through the lens of the well-being concept using document analysis (Bowen, 2009). The study will treat the curricula as formal documents, to systematically categorize the home economics content identifying key elements. IFHE's framework will guide the analysis of the curricula, highlighting how well-being is integrated into the educational content.

#### Expected results and findings

This study will map home economics education in European countries, giving an overview of which countries and with what focus home economics is taught. Based on previous studies, it can be expected that significant variations in the way home economics is approached in different countries are revealed. Some countries may focus more on practical skills such as cooking and budgeting, while others may integrate a more holistic view of well-being, observing mental health, sustainability, and life skills.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This research is highly relevant to Nordic educational research, where home economics has traditionally played a significant role in promoting everyday life skills and well-being. Nevertheless, home economics education has developed in different directions also in Nordic countries. By analyzing Nordic approaches together with the practices of other European countries, the study will contribute to a broader understanding of the home economics subject and initiate discussion of future perspectives in subject teaching. As the study is part of the Horizon Twinning project STE(A)M for Home Economics and Research Exchange led by Tallinn University, policy recommendations will be conducted relying on the findings of this study.

Keywords: home economics, well-being, curriculum

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Where did all the species go? Cognitively informed didactic strategies for lexical ecological literacy in environmental and sustainability education.

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### 1. Research topic

Learning names of species of plants and animals was once pivotal in the Swedish educational system, considered as important as reading, writing, or mathematics. However, the educational biodiversity vanished from the curricula in the 1960s, and the effect, eventually, was very poor knowledge of species among students (Palmberg et al, 2015). The aim of this paper is primarily to understand in what pedagogical context the rapid shift came about, and secondary, how lexical ecological literacy (Lisberg Jensen, 2024) can be reintroduced to support environmental and sustainability education.

### 2. Theoretical framework

Scholars in environmental and sustainability education emphasise the need for "nature connection" (Beery et al, 2023; Chawla, 2020), or "sense of place" (Woods et al, 2024). As important as these aspects are, they often remain vague about the didactic what, why and how (comp. Klafki, 1995). Applying an evolutionary informed model of learning (Geary 2008), knowledge on cognition could be central to reconstructing didactic strategies for education for a lexical ecological literacy.

### 3. Methodology

This study is initially based in a quantitative historical overview of the species listed in Swedish curricula ca 1840-2020. Additionally, it contains a critical document analysis of the Swedish biology curricula from 1960, to better understand how pedagogical ideals were reflected as extinction took place. Thirdly, it elaborates on a conceptual framework for lexical ecological literacy based in the academic debates on cognition, experience, and the structure of knowledge.

### 4. Expected findings

One expected result is that the number of species in Swedish curricula crashed during the study period. The other is that a pedagogical paradigm, possibly unintentionally, resulted in the educational extinction. A third result should be a developed conceptual framework for lexical ecological literacy.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The Nordic countries have solid traditions of outdoor education and science education. Educating for lexical ecological literacy should substantially enhance the foundation for environmental and sustainability education. This is specially important when it comes to fields like ecology and biodiversity, as well as to nature connection and to sense of place.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

### Policy, Curriculum, and Actors' Agency: A Theoretical Integration of STS and Curriculum Theory

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The purpose of this paper is to explore how concepts from Science and Technology Studies (STS) can be combined with curriculum theory (CT) to create an integrated framework for examining the relationship between educational policy ideas across different levels of the school system and how these both enable and constrain teaching situations, making the agency of actors visible.

Swedish CT has evolved from frame factor theory as a model for highlighting and structuring how policy influences the educational system (Lundgren 1972, 1977, 1979). The theory emphasizes external factors that both enable and constrain teaching situations. Furthermore, the theory contributes to making visible how various aspects of a teaching situation are connected to a specific curriculum (national guidelines, syllabi, time allocations, etc.) and how these interact with internal school organizational factors. The fundamental idea is to systematically reflect on "how are goals for education formulated, how is knowledge selected for learning, and how are methods for teaching developed?" (Lundgren 1979) across three levels: societal, programmatic, and local.

In the field of STS, similar theoretical models exist for understanding the relationship between policy and curriculum and their impact on teaching situations through the notion of *material semiotics* (Akrich & Latour, 1992). What distinguishes these theories are ideas about actors' agency within a constraining system. Material semiotics uses concepts to describe the embedded values of a curriculum and actor definitions through the concept of *script* (Akrich 1992). This script is created by the curriculum's designers: *in-scription* and involves a set of *prescriptions* (possibilities) and *proscriptions* (constraints) that can be made visible through analysis: *de-scription*. When the curriculum is implemented in practice, a series of translations (Latour 1986) occur, based on a non-deterministic view of actors' actions, meaning they can *tinker* (Berg 1986) with its intentions and act independently of the curriculum's original ideas.

I will first introduce an integrated framework (STS+CT) then apply it as an analytic tool on a case, the new Swedish governmental reform, the *Guarantee for Early Interventions in Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic*.

Given the range of changes at policy level and new curriculums in the Nordic countries, there is a significant need for analytical tools to understand how these changes impact the educational system.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Doing Qualitative Systematic Reviews in Education Efficiently – A step-by-step guide to ensure quality, reliability and to save time

Rebecka Rundquist

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This methodological paper builds on Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework, combined with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR) (Tricco et al., 2018), applied to conduct a thematic synthesis (Gough et al., 2017). Drawing on experience from performing and publishing a *systematic scoping review* (Rundquist et al., 2024), as well as, comparing different methods used in systematic reviews. This study explores options and may provide insight regarding scoping reviews and systematic reviews within education. The aim is to provide a step-by-step guide for doctoral students and junior researchers on how to go from a scoping review to a systematic review.

This paper suggests 10 steps on how to perform a systematic review according to Arksey and O'Malley (2005) following the flow of PRISMA ScR (Tricco et al., 2018), clarifying the amount of work needed for a systematic review and how to perform a systematic review efficiently. The Ten Steps, organised according to PRISMA ScR, include identification (step 1), screening (step 2–5) eligibility (step 6–8) and inclusion (step 9–10), and are as follows:

1. Identifying and defining key elements; 2. initial screening by exclusion searches; 3. Develop screening instrument and protocol; 4. Second screening; 5. Full screening and relevance coding; 6. Full-text records assessed for eligibility; 7. Appraisal of source evidence; 8. Inter-rater reliability; 9. Inclusion through data and discussion; 10. Data presentation.

The method accounts for data preparation for synthesising mixed method and qualitative findings, complete with inter-rater reliability measurements and efficient use of eligibility criteria, relevance coding and data extraction.

Reviews in education has increased, both as research reviews but also from different institutions interested in collecting evidence regarding specific phenomenon (though not necessarily on a scientific foundation). Therefore, reliable methods for systematic reviews in education are an important task, both for the field of education as well as for doctoral students as they often conduct reviews.

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Gough, D., Oliver, S., & Thomas, J. (red.) (2017). *An introduction to systematic reviews*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Los Angeles, Ca.: SAGE.

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## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Sustainability through curricula - conceptualizations in and recontextualizations from transnational to national contexts

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Sustainability is now at the center of the social, economic, and environmental concerns, and because education is [seen as] a key lever in that regard, reforms have also responded in tandem in how schools and attendant functions can become the vehicles and engines for sustainable change. A significant area of activity in that direction has been for governments to reform their curricula, often considering global education policy goals. In societies radically transformed in new digital ways, a key engagement has to be how sustainable are the current modes of living and governance and how education systems in that sense respond to the issue of sustainability.

### Theoretical Framework

We have two aims for this study. First, we examine the conceptions of sustainability at transnational level as espoused by the international organizations such the UNESCO, the OECD, and the EU, where sustainability is promoted as a *global education policy goal*. Second, we compare the curricular reforms involving *sustainability* as a key theme of action in four countries i.e., England, India, Norway, and Pakistan, where sustainability is presented as a *national curriculum goal*. Our study is guided by models of diffusion of innovation by Berry and Berry (2018), and Aker's curriculum framework to understand how countries are framing their curricular objectives around sustainability.

**Data and Methods:** We exploit a qualitative multi-case design, primarily based on document analysis to investigate the conceptualization and diffusion of *sustainability* in transnational policy documents and national curricula in K-12 contexts in England, India, Norway, and Pakistan. Data sources include policy documents from the UN, UNESCO, the OECD, and the EU/EC related to sustainability as a *global education policy goal*; and the latest national curriculum documents/frameworks from the four countries.

**Findings:** Transnational organizations position sustainability as a key education policy goal, advocating for its integration into national curricula. While definitions aren't always explicitly provided, we find the common thread that sustainability encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions with emphasis on equipping learners to become agents of change for a more sustainable future. Curricular reforms in all four countries respond to the global convergence toward recognizing sustainability as a crucial educational goal. Different dimensions of sustainability such as environmental awareness, climate change, global citizenship, social cohesion, tolerance, peace, and sustainable use of resources, appear in curricula to varying degrees in these countries. A comparative lens on the four cases also shows a difference in interdisciplinarity vs compartmentalized approaches to incorporating sustainability. We also see curriculum ideologies (identified by Schiro as scholar academic, social efficiency, learner-centered, and social reconstruction) reflected within the curricula.

### Relevance to Nordic education research

We believe our study is unique in that it compares curricular innovations in countries with varying degrees of socioeconomic development. As a first study of its kind, we employ diffusion of innovation model by Berry and Berry in the multi-case design to understand how transnational policy goals influence curricular reforms in national contexts.

# Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Bridging Policy and Practice: A Review of School Leadership in Differentiation from a System Perspective

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This study explored system-level differentiation strategies and examined the critical role of school leadership in promoting inclusive education within complex educational systems. The aim is to address the existing knowledge gap regarding system-level differentiation and highlight how school leaders function as a bridge between policy and practice, thereby enabling a systematic approach to inclusive education.

The theoretical framework is based on the concept of differentiation as a strategy for inclusion from a systemic perspective. Here, differentiation signifies a shift from homogeneous to heterogeneous educational environments and encompasses both organizational and pedagogical forms. Organizational differentiation involves grouping students according to their ability to adapt instructions to their specific needs. Pedagogical differentiation, however, focuses on applying varied teaching methods in heterogeneous classrooms to accommodate students' diverse learning styles and needs. From a systems perspective, school leaders' role in creating a school culture that supports these differentiated strategies is emphasized, with their instructional leadership being central to ensuring the broad implementation of differentiated instruction.

A systematic literature review was conducted using structured database searches and manual sorting based on predefined criteria. Fifteen articles were selected for thematic analysis. Two main themes emerged: systems and leadership practices. The systems theme included subthemes, such as students' rights, principals' systems thinking, and their influence by systemic factors. The leadership practice theme encompassed the principals' role in student development, the use of differentiated strategies, the creation of organizational conditions for inclusion, and the promotion of teachers' professional development.

The findings indicate that differentiation from a systemic perspective is strongly dependent on school leaders' ability to manage systemic demands while simultaneously promoting inclusive practices. A key factor is the use of distributed leadership, in which responsibilities are delegated to various actors within the school, thus fostering a collaborative culture that encourages teachers to adopt differentiated instructional methods. However, the study also highlights systemic challenges such as administrative barriers and teacher resistance to differentiation. Effective school leadership, which promotes collaboration and continuous professional development, is essential to overcoming these obstacles and ensuring that the system can be adapted to meet students' diverse needs.

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by examining the interplay between juridification and differentiation within the Nordic educational systems, particularly in Sweden. It highlights the tension between the principle of "one school for all" and the implementation of differentiated instruction from a system perspective, and how this impacts school leaders' role in balancing policy demands with practical inclusion. By analyzing how school leaders navigate these complex issues, this study provides insights into how leadership can promote equitable and inclusive educational environments in the Nordic context.

The relevance of this study to Nordic educational research lies in its focus on how a systemic perspective can be used to understand and address the challenges associated with the implementation of differentiation strategies. In the Nordic context, where inclusion is a central policy issue, this study offers important insights into how system-level differentiation strategies can be effectively implemented through strong and strategic school leadership.

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

At Arm's Length: A Study on the Leadership of Swedish Folk High School Principals in the Tension between Trust and Control

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The research topic concerns specific conditions and forms of leadership from the perspective of Swedish folk high school<sup>[1]</sup> principals. It is part of a larger project that also includes cultural school leaders with the same aim to explore leadership.

The theoretical framework used in this study is discourse theory (Potter, 1996) for survey data and the narrative approach for interview data (Polkinghorne, 1995; Elliott, 2005). The research design includes semi-structured web surveys and group interviews via Zoom conducted in 2023-24. Out of 156 folk high school principals, 65 responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 41.67 percent. Seven of these participated in group interviews, totaling 1,5 hours split into two groups. The survey questions were both multiple-choice and open-ended, for example: "most important mission of the folk high school," "what potential opportunities and obstacles do you experience in your job?" or "what support do you have?" The group interview questions delved deeper into the survey questions, such as: "what are the conditions for leading the folk high school?" "how much control can the folk high school tolerate?" and "what is the most important future issue?"

Some findings from the survey show, for example, that *participants as a person* had the largest number of responses on the question about the most important mission with open-ended answers highlighting subthemes like "grow as a person," "influence one's life situation and contribute to social development," and "understand one's abilities and resources." The next most important mission was *education, which included aspects like "a second chance" and "giving people a different school form that suits them better."* *Democracy* is the third most important mission according to the respondents, with subthemes such as: "to create meetings and educate for strengthened democracy based on local conditions", "equality, contributing to solutions to common societal challenges" or "the pedagogical work is democracy work in sharing of experiences and transformation."

A preliminary conclusion is emerging of a leadership that does not primarily see the folk high school as an institution qualifying its participants for a profession but seeing it as a place with an education and pedagogy that have existential concerns (Biesta, 2020; Reindal, 2020), and where participants can develop in a life perspective. It requires freedom and trust from those involved to lead and create conditions to grow as a subject in a time where control and budget cuts affect the folk high school's possibilities of continuity and even survival.

The relevance to Nordic educational research is considered high since the folk high school is a specific school form with its origins in the Nordic countries. There is a lack of comprehensive research specifically focused on the leadership of folk high schools, at the same time, the situation of the school form is being questioned, and the schools are losing financial support despite being sought for and needed as an alternative form of education. Empirical research is more than ever of importance.

<sup>[1]</sup> also called adult education college

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

School principals turn research and research collaboration into assets: Value production as part of school and teacher development

Magnus Levinsson

University of Borås, Sweden

This paper reveals how school principals approach research in the wake of New Public Management reforms in Swedish schools (Larsson & Sjöberg, 2021; Moos et al., 2016). The empirical context is school principals' accounts of how they use research and research collaboration to promote school and teacher development. Drawing from interviews with 15 school principals, the study uncovers three ideal types of school principals—collectivists, pragmatists, and networkers—capturing distinct patterns of relating to research. Guided by the concept of *assetisation*, the analysis demonstrates how these types produce different kinds of value (Birch & Muniesa, 2020; Ideland et al., 2022): (i) pedagogical value—improving school and teaching quality; (ii) academic value—defining relevant and useful research; (iii) social value—connecting with qualified future personnel; (iv) economic value—improving the school's reputation and obtaining grants; and (v) political value—persuading and silencing teachers. Taken together, the analysis provides critical insights into how principals relate to and use research that go beyond previous research (Mills et al., 2020; Ståhle, 2022). The paper concludes with a call for a shift in the education governance system to enable research use among school principals that serve the interests of the teaching profession.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### School Leadership: Dilemmas in Dealing with Crisis

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

This paper is a literature review of peer reviewed research articles from Western countries on school leadership in dealing with crisis published within the last ten years. The purpose of the review is to investigate the expectations and dilemmas school professionals experience in uncertain times characterized by major challenges.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

In this study, we develop our understanding of educational leadership within a multidisciplinary field that encompasses politics, sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, and economics (Gunter, 2001). Educational leadership can be defined as the work on mobilizing and influencing others to develop shared understandings and intentions and to achieve the purpose of the school (e.g., Gunter, 2004; Leithwood, 2005; Firestone and Rihel, 2005). The influence of others, along with perspectives on power and conflict, underpins nearly all aspects of studying leadership and change within local school organizations. These dimensions involve the study of leadership as part of micro policy work in schools (Ball et al, 2012). The ways in which leadership is both an individual, collective, and relational practice (Sørhaug, 1996), has influenced our analysis of the findings in the review.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

This study is a literature review of peer reviewed research articles about school leadership and crisis, published within the last ten years (2013-2024). Databases chosen for the search were Eric, Education Research Complete, Psyc Info and Web of Science. 3,547 studies were identified and screened and ended up in 51 relevant studies included in our review. A thematic content analysis was applied to summarize findings.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

Four dilemmas school leaders experience in dealing with crisis are identified in the paper: 1) individual power and responsibility versus shared leadership, 2) to render care and support versus management duties 3) to be true to core values and beliefs versus to respond quickly, and 4) the loss of control versus to provide stability amid constant uncertainty. Findings indicate that school leaders during crises must balance individual power and the facilitation of collaboration, relational aspects and operational expectations, individual and collective decision making, being in constant uncertainty and providing predictability.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study contributes to knowledge about the implications of school leadership and governance in crisis. The paper identifies implications for future educational leadership research which includes a contribution to an international field of research.

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Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

When political reforms meet frontline principals in daycare centers

søren voxted, Lise Andersen

University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

When political reforms meet frontline principals in daycare centers

A research gap exists in the continuation of national reforms in the daycare center sector, consisting of a lack of insight into how frontline principals interpret and adopt these new initiatives. The aim of this contribution is to elucidate how frontline principals in daycare centers handle the implementation of a national reform initiative in their units. Thus, the article addresses a central challenge in the development of daycare centers: translating national political goals and strategic initiatives into local professional practice.

In 2018, a national reform was launched in Denmark<sup>[1]</sup> with the aim of strengthening the pedagogical quality in daycare centers. One of the concepts central to the reform is 'evaluation culture.' Additionally, it was specified that the implementation of this evaluation culture locally was the decentralized principal's task and responsibility.

The aim of the paper is to uncover and discuss how the frontline principals in the daycare centers perceive the challenges of implementing and developing an evaluation culture in their organization. This is done through two research questions:

How do the frontline principals perceive and articulate the task of implementing an evaluation culture on the local level?

Has the frontline principals' perception of this task changed over time?

The theoretical lens, neo-institutional organization theory, is used to understand the principals' perception of evaluation culture and the notions of adoption. The specific theoretical elements used to analyze and interpret the data are through agency theory and leadership (the leadership role) in new institutional, organizational theory.

The empirical foundation of the paper is a survey among 126 frontline daycare principals in Odense municipality. This data is collected from a four-year longitudinal study, which uses a mixed methods design that includes quantitative data collected from a survey and qualitative data produced through semi-structured interviews. The survey dealt broadly with the managerial tasks and challenges that the respondents observed in the work of implementing the daycare reform. The study was based on 20 topic-related questions, where one of these questions was about implementing an evaluation culture.

The quantitative data show that the frontline principals perceive the implementation of an evaluation culture as the most demanding challenge in the new daycare reform. This result is consistent throughout the four-year period covered by the study. The qualitative data shows that the principals' perceptions of what constitutes challenges and what is needed to implement an evaluation culture locally have changed over time. Meanwhile, it is also possible to analyze the causal explanations for these changes over time.

The results of the study will, based on the frontline principals' organizational position, contribute to both theoretical and application-oriented knowledge about the micro-processes that unfold when concepts that originate from central and political initiatives and which aim to develop the professional and pedagogical quality in daycare, are adopted and implemented in the local practice.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.uvm.dk/dagtilbud/love-og-regler--formaal-og-aftaler/aftalen-om-staerke-dagtilbud/kort-om-aftalen>

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Diversity management in Norwegian ECEC: Bridging the gap between the personal and the professional

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This paper explores diversity management in a Norwegian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) context. It examines students' experiences of working with diversity and the dilemmas they face in the process of becoming teachers and leaders in the kindergarten. These dilemmas contribute to develop their individual and collective competence in leading diversity in kindergarten as a learning organisation.

Diversity management includes the management of collective organisational learning and leadership (Brenna & Solheim, 2018). However, diversity management, with its focus on difference, can be difficult to apply in a Nordic context where 'equality is equated with sameness' (Holvino & Kamp, 2009, p. 397). Studies of diversity management are criticized for having an essentialist and static understanding of concepts such as 'culture' and 'identity' (Kaasila-Pakanen, 2016). Therefore, we use an intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989) to critically examines how social categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality, interact to reinforce hierarchies and power differences.

This study is based on data collected from three focus group interviews with sixteen kindergarten teacher students. This was analysed using collective qualitative analysis method (Eggebø, 2020). This included multiple rounds of inductive and deductive coding from an interdisciplinary perspective.

A key finding in our study is that a resource-oriented approach to diversity has led to the appreciation of employees' personal characteristics related to their social and cultural background, such as ethnicity and religion, within the professional domain, but without recognizing it as a part of their professional competence. Students with a minority background experienced that their professional competence is reduced to their personal background, and they are exclusively assigned to work with diversity. As future pedagogical leaders, students want to strengthen collective competence in diversity management, and leadership in kindergarten.

Our study is a contribution towards the research on educational leadership and diversity management in the Nordic educational context. We contribute with new knowledge about integrating personal and professional competence for professional development in diversity management. In a time of conflict and change, the Nordic countries face similar challenges to promote understanding and dialogue in a diverse society, which our study addresses in the ECEC context.

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Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Mapping What Controversial Issues Swedish Principals Encounter in Their Profession

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This paper takes its point of departure in the concept of controversial issues (CI) and which CI principals in Sweden perceive that they encounter and must deal with as a part of their profession. We define CI in schools as topics or issues that evoke strong, conflicting opinions and perspectives among students, educators, parents and the community (Council of Europe, 2017). There is abundant literature on how teachers can and should manage CI in schools, however, far less attention has been paid to how school principals manage CI.

The aim of this article is to map different aspects of controversial issues that Swedish principals encounter in their profession. We are guided by the following research question:

What controversial issues do principals describe that relate to formal and informal features of their organization and societal topics from outside the organization?

The theoretical framework draws on a holistic approach rooted in an organizational model developed by Jacobsen & Thorsvik (2021). Three perspectives are used to understand what CI principals perceive they must deal with in their leadership practice. *Formal features* describe features of the school that include its purpose and aim formulated through goals and strategies and the formal organizational structure. This includes the curriculum and the Education act as well as the internal organizational structure of the school. *Informal features* can be described as related to the school's culture and power including internal norms and values. *Societal topics* can be described as all conditions, outside of the school, that have an impact on their practice.

The study is based on 26 in-depth interviews with Swedish principals where they were asked to name what CI they meet in their role as a principal. We selected a heterogeneous sample, aiming for maximum variation among the principals interviewed since the study had an exploratory approach (Ritchie et al., 2014). This included principals with different gender, school type (preschool - upper secondary school), community size, geographical position and level of experience. All principals had concluded the mandatory professional principal training program that spans over three years in Sweden.

The tentative results show a preponderance of controversial issues rooted in informal features of the organization and societal topics. Informal features are issues, for example, concerning differences in pedagogical approach among staff, fraught relationships between guardians, students and teachers and controversies concerning basic values. Issues concerning societal topics include, for example, gang crime, segregation and freedom of opinion. The least prevalent category concerns formal features and includes who controls the need of school development, economy and issues linked to the size of child and student groups.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Building Sustainable Educational Leadership: Understanding Turnover Intentions Among Novice School Leaders in Sweden

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Research Topic/Aim School leader turnover poses a significant challenge for education systems, particularly in Sweden, where turnover rates are among the highest in the OECD (OECD, 2019). High turnover undermines efforts to ensure sustainable educational leadership, essential for maintaining school performance (Grissom et al., 2021).

This presentation draws on a study (Richard, 2024) investigating the relationship between psycho-social working conditions and turnover intentions of novice school leaders in Sweden. The study explored variations in these relationships across public- and private school organizers and educational levels.

#### Theoretical Framework

The study was framed by the job demand-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), suggesting that an optimal balance between job demands, autonomy, and support is essential for well-being and job retention. This model provided a robust lens for examining how varying levels of these factors influenced turnover intentions. The analysis also included concepts from organizational studies, focusing on perceived ambiguity and availability of prerequisites.

#### Research Design

The research utilized survey data from 1,998 novice school leaders enrolled in Sweden's National Principal Training Program, with a response rate of 65%. The survey assessed variables such as turnover intentions, demands, autonomy, and support, adding measures of organizational ambiguity and prerequisites. Data were analyzed using ANOVA to identify differences among school types and levels, and linear regression to explore predictors of turnover intentions.

#### Findings

Findings revealed that novice school leaders in public schools exhibited higher turnover intentions than those in private schools, primarily due to differences in organizational prerequisites and perceived ambiguity. The results underscored that combinations of high demands, low autonomy, and inadequate support were strongly associated with increased turnover intentions. These stress combinations remained significant predictors of turnover even when controlling for other factors, suggesting that targeted improvements in working conditions could mitigate turnover intentions.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This study has significant implications for educational research and policy in the Nordic context, where sustainable leadership is vital for school effectiveness. Sweden's high turnover rates, as highlighted by the OECD and recent studies (Thelin, 2020), reflect broader challenges in retaining school leaders under demanding conditions. By identifying critical stressors and organizational factors that influence turnover intentions, this research provides actionable insights for policymakers and educational leaders to enhance working conditions and promote leadership stability across schools in the region.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

How to Make Sense of Learning? Activities, Processes and Diversity when School leaders and Researchers Collaborate.

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Research and practice need to inform each other to create valid and useful knowledge for school development and several initiatives have been launched to strengthen these aspects across the Nordic countries. In this paper we report on an ongoing partnership between one school organizer and a university unit within a national initiative to strengthen long-term collaboration (ULF), primarily focusing on a project conducted with two researchers and 15 principals. The partnership has undergone several phases, and within this study the focus was on strengthening principals' pedagogical leadership (Leithwood et al, 2020, Uljens et al, 2021). The aim of the paper is to explore and discuss how multiple learning intentions and forms for both practitioners and researchers become visible during a combined research and development project.

To do so we draw on research that highlights multiple learning forms and levels (Kennedy, 2014; Huber & Pruitt, 2024) that can help us to detect a variation in learning and sensemaking among the participants, which is arguably important especially in leadership positions working in a complex mission (Weick 2009). We depart from the idea that to be able to improve schools, principals' and researcher's own reflections and changed behaviour become essential. However, there is a need to further understand how individual and organizational learning appears in combined research and development projects, as previous research has tended to adhere to either or, and seldomly is conducted among school leaders (Korthonen et al, 2024)

Empirically we draw on recorded conversations, exercises as well as notes, and analyses conducted during the process. Our results show that the individual learning content differ among the principals at the same time as the mutual process strengthen the collective understanding and relations in the principal group. For the researchers the process contributed to a deeper understanding regarding the importance of combining generic knowledge with contextual sensemaking.

Research on how principals learn in school development program and courses are highly relevant in a Nordic context. We argue for that a more nuanced understanding of different forms of knowledge and individual outputs of participating in a school development project can contribute to both hope and sustainability.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Towards a more sustainable school leadership - examples from Swedish principals

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Numerous international studies suggest that the school principal position can be highly challenging and potentially health hazardous (e.g. Collie et al 2020). For example, a recent study from Sweden observed that circa 25% to 30% of the more than 2200 participants displayed signs of exhaustion that, if sustained, could lead to poor health (Authors, 2021).

The present study rest on the assumption that school principals need good working conditions for their health and leadership, and that their behavior have downstream effects on the health and performance of teachers and students (Betaille m.fl. 2012; Levin & Bradley 2019).

The aim of the paper is to increase knowledge regarding principals' understanding of which activities can promote sustainable school leadership. The main research question is:

What do principals want to continue to do, do more, or do less to gain a more sustainable school leadership?

This paper draws on five principles of sustainability in educational change and leadership (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006).

*Depth*, the leadership must be based on the school's main task, children's/students' learning.

*Length*, the leadership works with a long-time perspective.

*Breadth*, leadership and responsibility must be spread throughout the organization

*Resources* both human and material resources are used thoughtfully.

*Conservation* and learning from the best of the past and on the experiences that exist in the organization

Six workshops (each including 4 – 8 principals with at least 3 years seniority) were conducted in six geographically dispersed and differently sized municipalities in Sweden. With the main concern to explore the principals behavior and conduct, the workshops combined individual work with group discussions based on the five principles derived from Hargreaves and Fink (2006).

Each workshop lasted for 4 hours. Structured participants notes were collected and analyzed. The group discussions were recorded, transcribed and analyzed in the NVivo 14 software.

The first crude analysis shows that the principals express a strong wish to increase the depth in their leadership by, for example, developing a closer relationship with the staff and students and to stop doing activities others could do better (often concerning facility and administrative issues). In relation the resource dimension, and to conserve resources and gain more leisure time, many principals wanted to reconsider and limit their availability via phone and e-mail after working hours. In relation to the breadth dimension, the participants gave examples of how they distributed or shared leadership to gain a more sustainable leadership for themselves and for the organization.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Making sense of municipal supervision

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It is commonly known that high-quality early childhood education is crucial to children and their overall development and wellbeing (Dietrichson et al., 2020). Therefore, concerns over quality have been increasing in Denmark, because more and more studies state that quality is waning. A large-scale national survey, for example, recently noted that in spite of large variations the overall quality in Danish early childhood education centers (ECECs) too often is insufficient (Lindeberg et al., 2023). Mindful of these concerns several policies have been installed to improve quality in these ECECs. One of which has mandated all municipalities to develop and install relevant methods and practices for both supervising and ultimately improving the quality provided by ECECs across the country.

Little, however, is known about the effects of the supervisory efforts that have been put into action. It is, for example, very unclear how ECEC-leaders, actually utilize them. Do they in fact assist leaders as they work to secure and develop quality? If yes, how so? And if not, what is the nature of the challenges at hand? Knowing that the cooperation between these leaders and the municipality, their consultants in particular, is key to the productive instalment of these efforts, we have thus undertaken a study that examines how ECEC-leaders 'translate' the methods and practices introduced by the municipality for purposes of supervising and improving quality in ECECs.

The study is centered in a medium-sized Danish municipality. It is based on semi-structured interviews and workshops with both ECEC-leaders and municipal consultants, and while using Weick's (1995) concept of sensemaking it examines how the leaders make sense of the methods and practices employed to assist their work. In doing so, the goal is to obtain a better understanding of what working with quality entails for ECEC-leaders, focusing on how they find meaningful ways to balance policy-driven goals and demands with children's needs and interests, staff resources and cooperation, established practices, professional discourse, and the material conditions specific to their local ECEC.

The study illuminates the relationship between municipal supervision and the formation of ECEC-leadership, while seeking out more detailed awareness of how leadership in ECEC is enacted through everyday practices and the social-material arrangements upholding them (Fenwick & Edwards, 2012; Law, 1997). And as such, it seeks to advance a more nuanced debate on the role of leadership in relation to quality in early childhood education.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Leading Under Neoliberalism: Affective Capitalism, Academic Leadership, and the Struggle for Critical Scholarship

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My presentation is based on a recently published book titled "Affective Capitalism in Academia - Revealing Public Secrets," which I co-edited with Dr. Daniel Nehring. In this book, we delve into the current state of universities and explore their emotional underpinnings by drawing on affect theory and research on academic capitalism.

In my presentation, which focuses on my chapter in the book, I examine my experiences as an academic leader to identify some of the flaws in leadership discourses. These discourses reduce academics to being mere human capital and seen only as productive units. I recognize that the power effects of neoliberalism, manifested through the influence of anxiety, act as a specific governing strategy that directs academic leaders towards an economic logic. This logic shapes the self-perception of academics and their work as inadequate.

In my presentation, the concept of experience does not refer to individuals having personal experiences. Instead, I focus on academic educational leaders who both shape and are shaped by their experiences through affective encounters within academia. Given my theoretical and methodological aspirations in the field of critical and feminist studies in education, as well as my concerns about power and social justice, I have chosen to relinquish my authorial right to stand outside of power relations and my desire for authenticity. My aim is also to discover new discursive practices and positions that would allow me to continue as an educationalist and critical scholar within the contemporary neoliberal order.

The methodology I employ is autoethnography, and my primary data consists of writing tasks, notes, observations, and other written materials from a one-year academic leadership training program conducted in 2017, designed for future university leaders. I will concentrate on the effects that are produced discursively and affectively, examining what academic leadership within the neoliberal rationality entails and what it enables leaders to do.

This research is relevant in the Nordic context as it challenges the traditional Nordic values of equality, transparency, and collective responsibility that have shaped public institutions, including universities. However, as neoliberalism and market-driven approaches increasingly influence these institutions, they are undergoing transformations that may erode these foundational principles. By examining the affective dimensions of academic leadership under neoliberal pressures, the research highlights the impact of such transformations on the self-perception and agency of academic leaders. It also sheds light on the broader implications for social justice, critical scholarship, and the preservation of Nordic educational ideals withing a changing global academic landscape.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Decision making and responsibility in Swedish and Norwegian school leaders' quality work

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With a global increase in decentralisation of autonomy to local leadership levels, understanding school leader decision making has become paramount (Neeleman, 2019). Research has indicated that the Nordic countries are characterised by shared decision making and democratic or distributed leadership practices (Gunnulfsen & Leo, 2023), but sharing decisions across individual actors and professional groups are also prone to tension and dilemmas (Wildy et al., 2004). In a context of increased professionalisation of school leaders (Brauckmann et al., 2023) and ongoing discussions about re-centralisation/decentralisation, there is still much to understand about how different dimensions of autonomy plays out in school leaders' work. This paper reports on a comparative study from Sweden and Norway exploring school leader autonomy in the intersection between schools and local education administrations (LEA). The following research questions guide the study:

*What characterises decision making and responsibility in Swedish and Norwegian school leaders' quality work?  
How does this reflect different dimensions of school leader autonomy?*

The study is framed by an understanding of autonomy as decision-making capacity and control, acknowledging the multiple actors involved (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007). Elken and Stensaker's (2018) conceptualisation of quality work serves as backdrop for the study. Through a comparative, qualitative driven mixed methods design, data material consists of semi structured interviews with school leaders in Sweden ( $N=16$ ) and Norway ( $N=15$ ), and survey-answers from school leaders in Sweden ( $N=828$ ) and Norway (396). Preliminary results indicate differences in decision making and responsibility, as more actors seem to share leadership responsibilities in the Norwegian context, which might have consequences for how school leaders experience autonomy. Results also indicate a multiplicity in the Swedish context not found to the same extent in the Norwegian data. The study contributes to nuancing our understanding of school leader autonomy in two Nordic countries where shared decision making and democratic leadership practices hold prominence.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Middle Leaders' Communicative Practices: Qualitative differences formed by different conditions

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This paper aims to explore qualitative differences in middle leaders' (MLs') communicative practices with different conditions for leading professional learning. In many studies of MLs, variations in conditions have not been taken into consideration (Adams et al., 2024; Sülau, 2024). In a previous study, we identified differences in the conditions for two different types of middle leaders (development leaders and teacher leaders) (Nehez et al., 2022). In the study presented in this paper, we strive to deepen the understanding of how the identified differences affect MLs' communicative practices.

Drawing on the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014) and quality aspects in communication for learning (Wall & Lundgren, 2014), we re-visit and reanalyze qualitative data (fieldnotes, log notes and recordings) from the previous study, and conduct a comparative analysis (Nehez et al., 2022).

The preliminary findings show qualitative differences at micro level in MLs' communicative practices when leading and facilitating professional learning in practices with different conditions. More specifically, the favorable conditions (cf. Nehez et al., 2022) for development leaders formed communicative practices characterized by high quality aspects in communication that enabled participants to draw conclusions for own teaching or leading. On the contrary, the less conducive conditions (cf. Nehez et al., 2022) for the teacher leaders formed more instrumental and superficial communicative practices hard to draw conclusions from.

The article contributes to increased knowledge about how conditions matter and how to develop communicative practices for middle leaders to promote professional learning. Since MLs across the world, including Nordic countries, are assigned to facilitate professional learning (Rönnerman et al., 2018), such knowledge is of relevance. Especially when previous research has shown that several conditions affect MLs' communicative practices and enable and/or constrain professional learning (Nehez et al., 2022; Sülau et al. 2024), without in depth analyzing what differences at micro level differing conditions give arise to.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Rural Principals' Network for Equitable Education, Two Cases of Professional Exchanges.

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Numerous scholars have described the professional isolation experienced by rural school principals (Davis & Anderson, 2021; Lund, 2023), which in turn contributes to increased workload and higher turnover rates (Davis & Anderson, 2021). Lund (2023) describes principals as organizers of teachers' professional learning but also notes a lack of practices for principals' professional learning. Based on this knowledge, a university course was initiated which later developed into a network for principals in small schools and preschools.

This study aims to describe and understand if and how professional networks can enable equitable education and increased professionalism among principals in small rural schools.

To investigate this, the network has been followed, by participating observation, for almost two years. Within the framework of the network, two spontaneous contacts will work as cases and will be described as two narratives. The sample of these narratives is (1) how principals coordinate modern language teaching with the help of remote teaching, and (2) how mentorship can develop when a principal of a newly established independent school met with a principal who has managed an independent school for a longer period. In addition to the observations made by network leaders during network meetings both digitally and physically, the principals will be interviewed to describe their experiences.

The theory used is the *theory of practice architectures*, which describes practices as sayings, doings, and relating that are interconnected through a common project and enabled and constrained by arrangements such as material/economic arrangements, cultural/discursive arrangements, and social/political arrangements (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Additional to this the *ecologies of practices* are used to understand how educational practices enable and constrain each other.

The findings will consist of descriptions of how principals enable education in small rural schools with a remote teaching system, students gain access to a classroom where the whole world is invited. The independent school receives support for a professional approach within the framework of collaboration with the established independent school.

The findings will also highlight the importance of networks in creating equitable education across the country. The isolation and proximity to the local community can be used as a superpower if principals simultaneously have the opportunity to distance themselves to place the small school or preschool in a larger democratic project for the education of future citizens.

This study is relevant for the nordic context due to the struggle the nordic countries face to build equality in education and the findings can be used to understand professional learning for principals in different settings in the Nordic countries.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Emancipation. School leaders and administrators experiences with the new Danish School Agreement

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### Research topic/aim

New public reforms have emerged in Denmark. The new Danish School Agreement and the Quality Program has recently been launched. In the program the word freedom or emancipation is named fifteen times. The last Danish school reform in 2014 was named a leader reform. School leaders gained more responsibility and competence, like also more central government instrument was introduced.

In contradiction to that the latest school agreement introduces more local autonomy and decentralization. School leaders, teachers and actors in and around the school are expected to develop local solutions on various subjects.

The research question is: *How do administrations and school management work to realize the ideas about emancipation that are formulated in the latest primary school agreement*

### Theoretical Framework

The concept of emancipation serves as the central theoretical lens for this study (Schantz, 2012.) Also, institutional theory (Scott, 2008) and leadership theory (Bolmann & Deal, 2007) are used in the attempt to discuss administrator and leadership expectations and experiences with the mentioned school agreement.

This framework helps to understand how leaders and administrators navigate the balance between dilemmas in the context of the New Danish School reform, e.g. between autonomy and accountability and how they deal with new emancipatory initiatives.

### Methodology

Through a qualitative approach, the study conducted in-depth interviews with teachers and administrators from various schools across Denmark (Brinkmann og Kvale, 2015). This methodological choice allowed for a rich and detailed exploration of personal and professional experiences, providing valuable insights into the lived realities of those working within the new educational framework.

In the beginning of the project representatives from three different municipalities, respectively a large, medium and a small municipality will be interviewed.

### Expected results/findings

The project is in an early phase. Earlier research dealing with self-governance attempts in two Danish municipalities pointed out that school leaders and administrators are satisfied with more local autonomy and on that background have developed local initiatives (Hjelmer et al, 2023; Schoop og Hjelmer, 2023). Our very primary analyses points to that administrators and school leaders do not find that the school agreement will result in significant changes in school and school leadership. But all the elements in the reform have not yet been introduced.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In a Nordic context reforms often change between central and decentralized initiatives (Gunnulfsen et al. (2023). The new Danish school agreement put weight on decentralized initiatives and is in line with present reforms in other Nordic countries.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Navigating post-pandemic challenges faced by upper secondary school leaders

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In the post-pandemic era, the education sector has faced significant instability and disruption, requiring school leaders to address a broader and more complex array of tasks with increased agility (Gunnulfsen et al., 2023). This study examines the extent of instability and disruption in upper secondary education in Iceland during this period, exploring the diverse tasks school leaders must address and their need for agility. It also investigates the agency of school leaders in managing crises.

Using longitudinal interview data (Corden & Millar, 2007) from two sets of in-depth interviews with school leaders from three upper secondary schools, the study captures the evolving challenges faced by these leaders. The first set of interviews was conducted one year after the pandemic hit the school systems globally (end of 2020 to early 2021), and the second set three years later (end of 2023). Neo-institutional theories, focusing on institutional and organizational leadership, are employed to analyze the data (Scott, 2014; Washington et al., 2008).

The preliminary findings indicate that school leaders' responsibilities have increased in complexity in post-pandemic era. During school closures, their tasks were similar across school types, involving extensive changes in school practices and in some way limited agency within a centralized system controlled by the health and educational authorities. Post-reopening, challenges diverged, and school leaders used their prior pandemic experience when dealing with these challenges. Some leaders faced human resources and financial crises, while others dealt with abuse, violence, immigration, and refugee issues. The latter challenges were linked to the diversity and socio-economic backgrounds of their student populations. Leaders in more diverse schools navigated a broader range of issues, reflecting the complexities of managing a heterogeneous student and teacher's body. School leaders typically responded in their roles as either institutional or organizational leaders. They also provided examples of hybrid interactions between these roles, especially in situations where polarization was present.

Despite stressful circumstances, school leaders exhibited resilience and adaptability, often without much support from educational authorities. Their agency was evident in proactive decision-making and influencing positive outcomes despite the turbulent environment. The study underscores the need for robust support systems and professional development in the Nordic countries to enhance school leaders' crisis management capabilities and agency, ensuring educational stability.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### The pedagogy in pedagogical leadership

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#### Topic

Research in educational leadership is lively, but rather scattered and theoretically underdeveloped. Three dominant approaches during the last decades have been instructional, transformational and distributed leadership (Wang, 2018). All three share some of the same challenges; 1. Challenges with explaining pedagogical influence, 2. Challenges explaining the role of education in society, 3. Challenges in dealing with educational leadership as a multilevel phenomenon. This paper explores if non-affirmative theory of education could solve some of the above mentioned challenges and provide a more solid theoretical foundation for research.

#### Theoretical framework

Non-affirmative theory of education (NAT) builds on a longstanding European bildung-centered tradition of pedagogical thought (Benner, 1995). NAT consists of two constitutive principles, explaining relational pedagogical influence, and two regulative principles, explaining the relation between education and other societal fields of practice, such as politics, economy, religion, culture. NAT has the potential to provide a metatheory for educational leadership research by shedding light on the role of education in a liberal democracy (the regulative principles), and to provide a language for explaining pedagogical influence. Explaining pedagogical influence (the constitutive principles) on the one hand provides a language to explain the end object of educational leadership (pedagogical influence in teaching), on the other hand the pedagogical leadership influence of leadership itself. (Elo & Uljens, 2023; Uljens & Elo, 2024; Uljens & Ylimäki, 2017).

#### Methodology

This is a theoretical/conceptual paper.

#### Results

The preliminary results show that NAT on the one hand has the potential to overcome the three identified challenges, however, the answers provided by NAT are only partially compatible with the fundamental approaches of instructional, transformational and distributed leadership. NAT's relational view of pedagogical influence appears to be at odds with the rather linear view on influence assumed by instructional and transformational leadership. Thus, NAT does not solve the challenges of either but rather questions the validity of their basic assumptions. Distributed leadership comes across as more compatible with NAT as both share a processual understanding of leadership influence. To conclude, NAT has a potential to function as a metatheory for educational leadership but is not compatible with all existing leadership theories.

#### Nordic relevance

The theoretical foundations for educational leadership research are as relevant in a Nordic context as they are internationally.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Principals' professional learning and its link to school improvement – a Swedish case

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#### Research topic

This chapter will shed light on how universities and school districts can develop their partnerships by linking examinations within the principal training program with school districts' needs for school improvement. In Sweden, the state in cooperation with all school districts and selected universities have since 2009 been running a compulsory principal training program for all newly appointed principals. These must be completed within 4 years after appointment. In the curriculum for the principal training, it is clearly stated that there should be a clear link between the theoretical education in the professional training program and the principals' practices at their schools. In the current study, we explore the rationale behind the principals' choice of examination projects for school improvement in their schools. Are the projects driven by their participation in the principal training program, their practical work in the schools, a combination or something else? We also discuss how examinations within the principal training program can develop to contribute to links between theoretical education and school development in practice.

#### Theoretical connection

The paper will draw on theories on school improvement, partnership, implementation and practical enactment.

#### Methodology

In the chapter we analyze the examination projects in relation to the programs' theoretical content, the subject, what theory and method the principals have used, what form of activity they operate in, and which respondents they have used. In total we have analyzed 100 examination projects. The material will be supported by interviews with different stakeholders representing the partners; the state, the school districts, principal themselves, and their university teachers. In total we will interview about 20 stakeholders.

#### Research questions and expected findings

The research question is: What connections are made, or not, between the educational content in the principal training program and the issues that principals choose to raise in their examination projects? Is there a need to further develop the links between the principal training program's theoretical education and the principal practices at their schools?

This is the first time in Sweden an exploration is done of links between principals' school improvement ambitions and their compulsory education. Our preliminary results show that the chosen topics are more linked to personal interests than to the training program. We also see that the cooperation between the stakeholders regarding examination- and school improvement projects is low.

#### Relevance for Nordic educational research

All Nordic countries have principal training programs based on cooperation between different stakeholders. Thus, the chapter is relevant to researchers and practitioners in all Nordic Countries.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Music in Mood Regulation: Exploring the Role of Coping Strategies in Managing Stress and Emotional Demands of Work among Finnish School Principals

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This research examines the role of music in mood regulation among school principals. Music listening serves a variety of purposes, including enjoyment and relaxation, but it can also be a tool for mood regulation (Moore, 2013). Successful emotion regulation has been shown to decrease physiological stress (Thayer et al., 2012). Intriguingly, music listening has been associated with similar effects (Mojtabavi et al., 2020). This study investigates the use of music for mood regulation among Finnish school principals (n=320): connections between music use, work demands, and stress.

#### Methodology

The study uses surveys to measure principals' work demands, music listening, and stress, followed by statistical analysis to identify correlations and moderating effects. Correlations are examined between work demands, stress and a sum variable of music use comprising seven strategies. Further analyses are performed to study the various strategies of using music.

Work demands and stress were measured among 320 principals using the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire-II subscales (Pejtersen et al., 2010), while music use was measured with the Brief Music in Mood Regulation (B-MMR) scale (Saarikallio, 2012).

#### Preliminary results

The findings indicate that the use of music for mood regulation is connected to emotional demands and somatic stress among the principals. The most used strategy was *strong sensation* (intense emotion induction). The least popular strategies were *diversion* (distraction from worries and stress) and *discharge* (releasing and venting negative emotion). Previous research links these latter strategies to unfavorable well-being outcomes (Koehler et al., 2023).

#### Relevance

As school principals play a central role in their educational communities, challenges in their well-being can impact both students and teachers (Upadaya et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding how principals manage stress and regulate their emotions is essential. In this study, principals demonstrated relatively low stress despite high work demands, suggesting they possess effective emotion regulation skills.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Turnover of teachers in compulsory schools in Iceland from 1998 to 2020

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Teacher turnover varies between European countries and is higher in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe (Federičová, 2021). Meanwhile, despite long hovering around 5% in the United States, teacher turnover has risen to 8% on average. There is, however, considerable variability between states and regions primarily based on schools' characteristics (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Research on turnover has underscored the importance of retaining teachers, both in the profession and in the same schools, to sustain good practices and students' learning. In Iceland, the focus on teacher shortage has mainly been on increasing the number of teacher graduates, for example, by offering distance education programs instead of retaining those already teaching in schools. Moreover, information regarding teacher turnover in Iceland is slim. Thus, in the context of the teacher shortage and high rates of teacher turnover in Iceland and other Scandinavian countries (Sigurdsson et al., 2023; Federičová, 2021), the purpose of our study was to examine teacher turnover in compulsory schools in Iceland using data from Statistics Iceland from 1998 to 2020. We examined the age of teachers, both when they began teaching and when they left the profession, along with the extent of their mobility between schools. Our findings show that most teachers (63%) stayed in the same school, where they had accumulated 5.87 years of teaching experience on average; teachers with experience from two schools had 10.15 years of accumulated experience, while the ones who had taught in three schools had 12.2 years of teaching experience. Women stayed in the profession longer than men, and teachers in small schools had less teaching experience than teachers in large schools. Regarding mobility, teachers mostly moved between schools in the same geographical area, and many left the profession long before the normal retirement age. Research shows that improved working conditions and better preparation for the profession can reduce teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Grissom et al., 2021). Indeed, our results suggest that improved working conditions and retaining practicing teachers in compulsory schools in Iceland might be as crucial to mitigating teacher shortages instead of limiting the emphasis on attracting new people to the profession.

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## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Professional learning in school closures and mergers: A case study from Finland

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#### 1. Research topic

The small rural school is often said to be the heart of the village. The school connected to place create something unique which might not be possible to re-establish in another place. Or – what is movable when a school is closed? In Finland, hundreds of small schools have been closed during the last decades due to demographic changes and political decisions (Lehtonen, 2021; Karlberg-Granlund, 2023). In 2012, there were 266 Swedish-language comprehensive schools in Finland, but in 2023 there were only 204 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2024). It would be of great interest to explore how principals and teachers manage the changes and challenges that may occur when a school is getting closed and merged with another school. What obstacles and opportunities does a school merger create for school leadership, teaching and school development? How does a school merger affect the professional learning of teachers and principals? And how does the principal promote and build a collaborative and inclusive culture in the new school?

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The structure of education, considering the location and size of the school, and the size and age-mixture of classes, are all co-dependent with the possibilities of pedagogy, influence the culture of the school and its cultural models, and, in the long term, even society (Kvalsund, 2004). Researchers agree that the leadership and organisation of a school has a significant impact on students' learning. In successful rural schools the school leaders set the direction for the school, facilitate and support teachers' professional learning, build a collaborative culture and good atmosphere, as well as support the teachers teaching (Forfang & Paulsen, 2024). In Finland comprehensive education is arranged by the municipalities, free of charge for families. Analysing and understanding changes and challenges will help create long-term strategies to provide equitable and high-quality education for all children.

#### 3. Methodology

The planned research is carried out in co-operation with three schools: two merged schools and one school under threat of closure. The research is relying on a qualitative case study approach. Data will be collected through both individual interviews with principals and focus group interviews involving teachers. The research material will be analysed with narrative methods.

#### 4. Expected results

Through the explorative research a knowledge base is created, that will be useful for analysing how school closures and mergers impact on the school as a community, as well as on the local communities where the schools work – a knowledge that is valuable for creating a sustainable future.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

One cornerstone in the so-called Nordic model of education, is equal opportunities (Frønes et al., 2020), but the curricula of the Nordic countries often seem to be adapted to urban contexts (Bæck, 2016). Hence, it would be important to create sustainable strategies for educational provision in sparsely populated areas. A previous comparative analysis indicated that although external frameworks in Finland and Sweden differ, the local contexts still are quite similar, thus actualising similar challenges for professional learning (Lund & Karlberg-Granlund, 2023).

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

Leading partnerships in teacher education – Institutional practices at the boundaries of teacher education and schools

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Partnerships in Teacher Education (TE) refers to an equal and long-term initiative to connect teacher education institutions and schools and is intended to lead to mutual development. In 2017, partnership in the TE was formalized in Norwegian policy papers through different partnership arrangements such as teacher education schools (initial teacher training) (Lærerutdanning 2025, 2017) and decentralised school development (Meld. St. 21, 2016–2017.) The responsibility to establish and develop partnerships is given to the TE. Research on partnerships is a growing field of interest, especially in Scandinavia (Forsström & Munthe, 2023), but the focus has mainly been directed at ideal characteristics (Hermansen & Mausestaden, 2023) and less on how the partnership influence the TE internally (Elstad, 2020). Moreover, leading partnerships involves different levels of governance (Baumfield & Butterworth, 2007) where power dynamics are at play in the line of whose questions will be raised and heard (Benerdal & Westman, 2023). This article deals with leadership experiences and strategies from the teacher education's point of view.

The theoretical framework utilizes *institutional practices* (Hedegaard, 2014; Hermansen, 2020; Hermansen & Mausestaden, 2023) as analytical terms to understand how the leaders are shaped by the historically and traditionally developed practices in their institutions. Since the leaders in this study cross institutional boundaries (Tuomi-Gröhn et al., 2003) to cooperate with schools, the theoretical concept, *boundary work*, is used to provide an understanding of the differences and connections between the TE and schools (Langley et al., 2019; Liu, 2015).

The data material consists of a group interview with leaders in a teacher education institution. To get an insight of the work *in situ* (Silverman, 2014), observations of the leaders in partnership meetings were included. During the analytical process an overarching thematic division (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was developed. The findings show how partnership activities such as teacher recruitment and initial teacher training might bring the two partner institutions closer together. They point out the importance of a customised approach to secure a mutual outcome for both the TE and schools, but the approach challenges the TE's organisational practices such as staffing and hiring. Since the responsibility of establishing and maintaining equal partnerships is given to the TE alone and the schools' participation is voluntary, the leaders attempt to blur the boundaries between the TE and schools and operationalise activities that benefit both the TE and schools. The leaders are also challenged by traditional expectations from their institution and from the schools on what counts as knowledge. The study shows that leading partnerships is a complex process that demands leadership strategies that connect the TE and schools closer, and that the strategies are both challenged and supported by the institutional practices when leaders cross institutional boundaries to establish partnerships.



## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Principals' understanding of ethical dilemmas – moral reasoning in school leadership

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Principals are subjected to conflicting expectations and need to deal with complex dilemmas in their daily work (Stoll & Louis, 2007). However, how principals experience their own ethical situation and what strategies they employ to deal with ethical dilemmas (Møller, 2009) is less clear. This paper seeks to investigate principals' perceptions of ethical dilemmas and professional responsibility. Moreover, it aims to provide insight into the knowledge they utilize in addressing these dilemmas, along with the moral reasoning associated with ethical judgments and responsibilities in principalship.

The research questions are:

How do principals understand professional ethics and professional ethical responsibility?

What characterizes principals' descriptions of professional ethical dilemmas and how they are managed?

What do principals highlight as their knowledge base, and where do they seek support for their professional ethical judgements?

Theoretically the paper is informed by theories on professional ethics and on educational leadership theories, especially on the role of principals and different aspects of ethical judgments and morality (Brandson, 2010).

The research employs a qualitative design and gathers data through interviews conducted with 43 principals from various primary and secondary schools throughout Norway. The data collection involved the principals responding to a series of questions during both group and individual interviews. The principals' responses were grounded in crafted vignettes with ethical dilemmas, and in experiences encountered in their roles as principals. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Preliminary findings indicate a diversity in understandings of professional ethics among principals. Many principals perceive professional ethical responsibility as demanding cognitive and emotional practices. They emphasize the importance of integrating ethical principles with formal administrative procedures and maintaining ongoing relational commitments in managing dilemmas. Moreover, the findings display what aspects of situations that seems to be morally salient and what modes of reasoning the principals' employ to reach ways of managing the dilemmas. In terms of knowledge sources, principals draw on and integrate internal and external realms. Internally, they may reference their own experiences or the established norms and policies of their schools. Externally, they often look to professional networks which help them to contextualize their dilemmas.

Based on our findings, we will contend that there is a necessity for increased awareness regarding the cultivation of professional ethics among school leaders, particularly in relation to research and the development of school leadership. This emphasis can establish a foundational framework for subsequent research relevant to the Nordic school context, where democratic and ethical values are frequently considered to be inherently understood.

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# Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Loneliness and mental ill-health in relation to friends and school: Young peoples' experiences.

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### Research topic/aim

Loneliness and mental ill-health are a serious threat to the well-being of young people. It is important to listen to their own voices about how they experience loneliness and mental ill-health, but few studies focus on loneliness related to young people's friends and school. The aim of the study was to examine young people's and young adults' experiences of loneliness and mental ill-health in relation to friends and school and strategies for alleviating loneliness.

### Theoretical framework

Eriksson's caritative caring theory was used as a theoretical framework in this study.

### Methodology/research design

A qualitative study with an inductive approach was used as a design. Ten young people aged 19-27 were interviewed. Data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

### Findings

The results show that *young people's experiences of loneliness* may be related to their upbringing and personality traits. Their experiences of loneliness may originate in not fitting in, lack of friends, suffering from mental illness, and experiencing exclusion and bullying. Other reasons for young people's experiences of loneliness include not having someone close to talk to. Several of them describe the transition from primary to secondary school as a time when they experienced loneliness. Mental health problems, such as anxiety and panic attacks, can be a cause of emotional loneliness. Young people have different strategies for alleviating experiences of loneliness. One is to turn inwards and make friends with their loneliness. Another is to turn outwards and find support from other people or the natural world, but not everyone can find relief by being physically alone in nature. Young persons may then seek different forms of entertainment as a strategy to relieve their suffering, such as computer games, watching movies or doing exercise and sports. Yet, even if they exercise a great deal, and have contact with many other people, these contacts can be superficial and limited. Negative coping strategies mentioned by young people include eating disorders, addictions, self-harm, social isolation, and an unhealthy lifestyle with alcohol. Young individuals may try to alleviate their suffering through various forms of addictions, compulsions, pornography or drugs. One strategy that they report to alleviate the experience of loneliness is to engage with other people in the community. Talking to others in a similar situation can ease the suffering and the support of friends can alleviate the experience of loneliness. The advice young people give to alleviate loneliness is to try to make contact and do something together with other young people. While being alone by choice can be stimulating and energizing for some young individuals, young people would like to see early interventions if student loneliness is discovered at school. They would also like to see places for various inexpensive activities and support groups for young people who feel lonely.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study is relevant to Nordic educational research since the findings can help to understand young people's loneliness in relation to friends in school and how to support them in alleviating it.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### The Place of Religion in Nordic Higher Education: The Case of Swedish ECEC Teacher Education

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This paper examines the place of religion in Nordic Higher Education through the case of Swedish ECEC Teacher Education. Sweden, alongside other Nordic countries, is both an increasingly secular and a notably multi-religious society. This may generate tensions related to worldview visibility and the related self-expression, relevant also from the freedom of religion and Human Rights perspectives. Although equity and non-discrimination related to religion and worldviews are central to all higher education, we know very little of what the visibility of religion and other worldviews in ECEC teacher education is like at present, and how the students themselves have experienced this phenomenon during their degree studies. This project aims to fill this gap in research, whereof the present paper focuses on the pilot study data from student narratives.

In Sweden, the discourse and content of ECEC teacher educations, from the perspectives of religion and worldviews, are yet to be explored. For this purpose, a theoretical tool (Raivio et al. 2022) based on critical pedagogy, black feminist and postcolonial theory (e.g. hooks, 1994; Spivak, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 2011) and feminist ethics of care (Noddings, 2013) will be used for analyzing and discussing discursive elements of 'othering' and 'belonging'.

The presented preliminary findings will focus on the ECEC teacher students' perceived experiences of the educational content related to issues linked to religion and worldviews during their education. A survey was used to gather their narratives of perceived experiences. The survey, which consisted of open-ended questions, was posted on the students' learning platforms.

Findings from an ongoing pilot study indicate that students perceive that they rarely encounter contents related to religions during the seminars or lectures as the theoretical part of their teacher education, however, that they describe that they often meet children and parents with different religious affiliations during their teaching practice. Students' narratives suggest that there is a dominant Christian and/or secular discourse within the programs, which places students with religious or other than Christian worldviews as "the other" and in the margins of the discussions.

Addressing value issues related to social relations, equity and non-discrimination related to religion and worldviews is crucial in higher education. This project, focusing on religion in Swedish preschool teacher education, is highly relevant to Nordic educational research, as this perspective has not been previously studied in ECEC teacher education.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Sustainability and the future – Values according to South African and Swedish children

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When asked about the future in relation to sustainability, what do 10- to 12-year-old children express regarding their own future, possibilities to influence and what kind of knowledge that might be needed? What values do their responses reflect? And, do South African and Swedish children differ in their views?

In this interview study 41 children were individually interviewed. Their voicing of ethical and existential concerns is interpreted as expressions of 'moral authorship' – a concept introduced by Sporre, Lotz-Sisitka & Osbeck (2022) building on the work by John Wall (2010) and Mark B. Tappan (1991). Both Wall and Tappan theoretically emphasize the role of narratives for the understanding of moral and ethics. This presentation aims to offer an analysis of the interviews with the children regarding the values present in their narratives, particularly focusing on aspects relating to the future.

The study was carried out in 2019. 4 schools in each country were chosen and 5 (in one case 6) students were interviewed in each of the school classes. The schools represent varying socio-economic backgrounds and areas where a scarcity of water has been experienced; in Sweden, due to the dry summer of 2018, and in South Africa it depends on changing patterns of rain due to climate change. Consequently, almost all the children articulated experiences of the need to save water. The interviews lasted between 17 – 41 minutes and an interview guide with open questions was used.

The interviews have been transcribed in full, theoretical background-work done, and some analyses are carried out and published (Sporre 2021; Sporre, Lotz-Sisitka & Osbeck 2022; Borg & Sporre 2023). The results point to both similarities and differences between the narratives of the children. For example, in the South African narratives children express more communal aspects of relationality, while more individualistic ones show forth among the Swedish. Do the differences reflect different societal discourses? Could one e.g. speak of an ethic of care vs. an ethics of justice?

Facer (2021) emphasized the importance of educational researchers engaging with future(s). This study reveals children's negotiations in relation to sustainability and the futures they express.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Abstract: Trust in Schoolteachers – a scoping review project

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In general, student-teacher relationship is studied extensively the latest decades (Katz et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2020). Still, the trust aspect of these relations we find less emphasised, and believe that the construct of trust can contribute with more forward-looking, agency-focused and societal perspectives than the traditional student-teacher relations research.

### 1. Research topic/aim

What is the nature of studies on students' trust or distrust in their teachers, and what are the key findings of the studies?

### 2. Theoretical framework

We apply the theoretical framework of Tschannen-Moran & Hoy on 5 facets of trust: 1) benevolence, 2) reliability, 3) competence, 4) honesty, and 5) openness (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). This is combined with Niklas Luhmann's notion of trust as a forward-looking construct based on «knowledge and ignorance» (Luhmann, 1979).

### 3. Methodology/research design

Scoping review.

Time frame: 2000-2023.

No limitations in terms of countries.

Peer-reviewed papers only.

No limitations in terms of research design, but only original, empirical studies are included.

### 4. Expected results/findings

At present we are in the extraction/ analysis phase. We have identified 75 papers in the period 2000-2023.

We would like to present preliminary findings of the review. This will focus on the included studies in terms of their research design and what countries they are performed in, but perhaps mostly on the key findings.

A protocol is published (Conradsen et al., 2024).

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The Nordic countries is considered to keep a high level of trust in “most people” – generalized trust – and also a high level of institutional trust. This seems to be under pressure. As such, students' trust in teachers may be a key factor for maintaining trust in public institutions such as democracy, legal systems and government.

This, however, should be combined with “healthy mistrust”, which is a precondition for democracy and critical thinking. Luhmann's notion of mistrust may be useful to discuss these matters.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

In progress: Meanings of social relations in upper secondary, as experienced by students with special support.

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### Research topic/aim

This project, currently in its first phase of data collection, explores how students receiving special support within mainstream Swedish upper secondary school settings experience social relations with peers and school staff. It examines what meanings these students ascribe to social relations and how their perceptions evolve over time. This addresses a gap in educational research by better mapping experiences of a heterogeneous group of students which has often been overlooked. Previous studies on needs and views on social relations more often has focussed on either mainstream students or specific sub-groups of students, often categorised by needs and/or psychiatric diagnosis.

### Theoretical framework

The study utilises a phenomenological foundation and approach to explore lived experiences of social relations as experienced by students with special support. It examines students' daily school life, employing reflexive open approaches with phenomenological and ethnographic lenses.

### Methodological design

The study spans two academic years and three different schools. Participants consist of approximately ten students with special support, their peers and school staff. Phase one focusses on students in grades one and two while phase two follows up with the same or equivalent students the following academic year, then in grades two and three. Methods include in-depth interviews with students with special support, participant observations of these students, their peers and related school staff in various school settings, as well as document analysis of e.g. policy documents and individual development plans. Data will be analysed during ongoing periods of observations and interviews, as well as after concluding data collection at participant schools.

### Expected conclusions/findings

At NERA2025, initial findings will be shared from phase one, inviting discussions on challenges and opportunities in student experiences of social relations in school. The study is expected to contribute to understanding at-risk adolescents' evolving experiences and broader dynamics impacting well-being and academic progress.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This currently ongoing research will contribute to Nordic educational research specifically relevant to Network 7: Value Issues and Social Relations in Education, as it explores meanings of social relations as experienced by upper secondary students receiving special support within mainstream school settings.



## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Norms of friendship and violence in school policy documents and school textbooks

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Friendship violence is a topical but under-recognised problem in children's lives. It is often excluded from the discussion of bullying and violence, even though the most common perpetrator of abuse is known to be a friend or an acquaintance (Mielityinen et al. 2023). Friendship is often described as the opposite of violence and as mutual benevolence (Helm 2013). Therefore, violence embedded in friendship can be shameful, difficult to talk about and can hide behind norms about friendship (Moore 2020).

This presentation contributes to the existing critical, societal bullying research of the Nordic region (Horton 2019; Juva 2022). It illustrates the results of two sub-studies, a document analysis and a school textbook analysis, that are a part of a wider research project addressing friendship violence among primary school children. In these studies, we have examined 21 national and European school policy documents and 31 Finnish primary school textbooks and asked how they present friendship and violence. The analysis utilizes thematic and discourse analysis.

The results show that school textbooks and policy documents produce a simplified goals when talking about friendship and violence. When the texts talk about violence, the focus is on reporting practices and intervention mechanisms rather than addressing and dismantling the societal dimensions of violence. When the texts describe friendship, they view it as an ideal relationship and a goal for children. Friendship is defined by personal traits, not by actions, and seen as a permanent unchanging relationship in which violence is not possible. The complexities and contradictories of friendships is left out of the discussion. Understanding friendship and violence this way is problematic. Focusing on individuals, intervention mechanisms, reporting practices and friendship ideals, leaves out the complexities of friendships. It also excludes the role of societal atmosphere and importance of recognising and addressing the social inequalities.

This research is societally significant because the policy documents and textbooks guide educational practices and produce relationship norms to children's lives. By identifying violence that is normalised in friendships, tools can be developed to support more equal peer relationships and prevent violence.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Children's Perspectives on School Safety and Unsafety

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#### Research Topic/Aim

This presentation investigates perceptions of safety among students in Swedish primary schools, focusing on how children interpret and experience feelings of safety and unsafety within school environments. Although Swedish educational act emphasizes the need for a safe and secure school experience for all children, surveys indicate that 10-20% of primary school students report feelings of insecurity (Skolinspektionen, 2021). Research suggests that students' perceptions of school unsafety are increasing, yet the term "unsafety" is rarely defined, and little is known about students' own definition of "safety" and "unsafety".

#### Theoretical Framework

The research is framed by symbolic interactionism and the sociology of childhood. Symbolic interactionism provides a lens for examining how students make sense of their school environment through social interactions, co-constructing shared understandings of "safe" and "unsafe" spaces, and employing strategies to navigate and manage these spaces. Additionally, the sociology of childhood positions children as active agents, not merely influenced by their environments but actively shaping them. This perspective allows us to view students as experts in their own experiences, capable of offering insights into their perceptions of safety and actively challenging or conforming to existing norms and rules.

#### Methodology/Research Design

This study is based on ongoing qualitative interviews conducted from 2024 to 2025 with students in grades 4-9 in Swedish schools. The analysis, guided by grounded theory, centers on identifying and understanding students' perceptions of safety and unsafety within their school context.

#### Expected Results/Findings

The study is expected to reveal students' own perspectives on the terms "safety" and "unsafety" in a school environment. Preliminary findings are expected to highlight both environmental and social dynamics. Initial findings from student interviews indicate that safety is closely tied to relationships and that feelings of loneliness, unpredictability, anxiety, fear, resignation, lack of adult supervision, and limited time contribute to feelings of unsafety.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This research contributes to Nordic educational research by offering a child-centered examination of safety in schools, in line with the school law's commitment to inclusive and safe learning environments. By exploring how children actively interpret and respond to their school surroundings, the study enhances current scholarship on student well-being and school safety. The findings will have implications for policy and practice, potentially informing the development of interventions tailored to the specific needs of students in the Nordic context, where student agency and safety are central educational priorities.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Social support and LGBTQI+ affirming school climates for LGBTQI+ young people experiencing homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying at school

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### 1. Research topic

While LGBTQI+ students are more likely to experience bullying than non-LGBTQI+ students, and schools can thus be perceived as unsafe and non-affirming for many LGBTQI+ young people (Aragon et al. 2014), there has been limited research into LGBTQI+ students' experiences in the Swedish school context (Odenbring 2022). We aim to contribute to this body of research by exploring the lived experiences of bullying among LGBTQI+ students in Sweden, the social support these young people receive, and what they perceive as the most effective ways of promoting positive school climates.

### 2. Theoretical framework

Three theoretical concepts guide our exploration of LGBTQI+ young people's lived experiences of bullying: misrecognition (Fraser 2001), stigma (Goffman 1963), and affect (Ahmed 2010). These concepts help unpack experiences of (mis)recognition, experiences of stigma processes, and how LGBTQI+ young people are affected by bullying and/or (mis)recognition.

### 3. Methodology/ research design

We use in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore LGBTQI+ young people's lived experiences. The results in this paper are based on interviews with 18 LGBTQI+ young people, aged 15-19, from across Sweden, and have been thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke 2022).

### 4. Expected findings

Our preliminary findings demonstrate that LGBTQI+ students experience their school climates as either negative and non-affirming or positive and LGBTQI+ affirming. These experiences are influenced by the attention given to LGBTQI+ issues in education, the presence of homo-, bi-, and transphobic interactions and the social support LGBTQI+ students receive when experiencing bullying. These experiences impact young LGBTQI+ people's openness about their identity, their well-being, and their choice of school. These findings highlight the importance of increasing awareness about (mis)recognition, fostering positive school climates, providing space for LGBTQI+ issues in school, and understanding how the school as an institution and its social dynamics impact LGBTQI+ students' experiences.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper contributes to Nordic educational research, particularly Network 7: Value Issues and Social Relations in Education, as it addresses bullying in school from the perspectives of LGBTQI+ youth. Such information is crucial for informing broader efforts to promote well-being and prevent ill health among the LGBTQI+ population in Sweden and beyond.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Ballers, Brawlers, and Bawlers: A territorial analysis of social relations on Swedish school football pitches.

Paul Horton

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### *Research topic/aim*

While researchers have highlighted that certain school spaces, such as playgrounds, are ‘hot spots’ for school bullying (Vaillancourt et al., 2010), that students perceive certain school spaces as insecure because of the ways in which they are organised and supervised (Astor et al., 2001; Migliaccio et al., 2017), and that school football pitches are particularly gendered and contested spaces (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Forsberg et al., 2023), relatively little is known about how the construction, design, and management of such spaces influence the social relations that occur there (Francis et al., 2022; Izadi & Hart, 2024). This paper seeks to address this lacuna in knowledge by investigating how spatiality and school design impact social relations on Swedish school football pitches.

### *Theoretical framework*

The paper draws on theories of territoriality (Goffman, 1971; Lyman & Scott, 1967), with particular focus on Goffman’s (1971) notion of territories of the self, to analyse school football pitches as partly monitored and partly free situational public territories that are highly contested and competed over.

### *Methodological design*

The findings stem from data collected at five Swedish elementary schools as part of two ethnographic research projects, one recently completed and one ongoing, which included the analysis of Google Earth imagery, photography, observations during breaktimes, and semi-structured interviews conducted with school staff (including school principals, caretakers, members of school safety and student health teams, teachers, and teaching assistants) and students from preschool class up to grade six (i.e., ages 5-12). The research followed an AIR (abductive-iterative-recursive) ethnographic logic (Agar, 2006) and the analysis of the observations and interviews was guided by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022).

### *Preliminary findings*

The preliminary findings demonstrate that school football pitches are both monitored and free situational public territories that are considered unsafe by many students because they are highly contested and claimed as personal territories by certain football-playing boys. Such contestations and claims include intrusion and obtrusion upon the territory, the challenging of other students’ turns and claims, and encroachment upon the personal space of other students. The findings also highlight how access to and enjoyment of school football pitches is governed and contravened by gendered status hierarchies which distinguish between those who are perceived to be skilled footballers (*ballers*), those who are seen as tough (*brawlers*), and those who are deemed unable or unwilling to engage in rough play (*bawlers*). As the paper illustrates, these gendered status hierarchies are brought into play to differing degrees, depending on the construction, design, and management of the different school football pitches.

### *Relevance to Nordic educational research*

The findings are highly relevant to Nordic educational research as they shed light on the importance of spatiality and school-design to social relations in territorial spaces that tend to dominate many school playgrounds. In doing so, they point to values issues related to the allocation and use of space, and illustrate the importance of managing such spaces and challenging dominant gendered status hierarchies that serve to restrict access to school resources and cause feelings of inadequacy and insecurity.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### The Ethics of Assessment - A Philosophical Endeavor

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#### Research topic and aim

Assessment research highlights negative and positive consequences of student assessment and whether assessment practice is mainly positive or negative for students. Hirsh (2020) and Kärenkeinen (2006) argue that strongly focusing on assessment in school increases risk of mental illness such as increased pressure and stress, and reduced faith in the future (i.e. hope). The view taken in the research project of which this paper is part, is that the scholarly discussion about the ethical ramifications of assessment practice highlights the importance of continued theory-based empirical studies of assessment validation that considers its social, i.e. ethical, consequences (Messick, 1989).

The purpose of this paper is to develop an understanding of such negative consequences in terms of identity formation, i.e. subjectification processes (Biesta, 2022). The paper aims at an in-depth understanding of the social ethos of the Swedish society in which assessment practices are situated. Key conceptualizations from this social ethos are important to understand the ethical meaning of students' moral/existential experiences, and to enable further understandings of ethical validity of assessment.

The questions addressed in the paper are: How can a social ethos of our time be characterized? How may a continental ethics style inform our understanding of such potential moral-existential experiences and perceptions? To what extent can conceptualizations drawn from such an ethos be used to press empirical material?

#### Theoretical framework/methodology

The project has an interdisciplinary profile combining the disciplines of continental ethics and pedagogy. Drawing on interviews with children in the age of 13-14, continental ethics will be used to *press* (Levy, 2003) the specific ethics questions that will surface in the empirical material. Accordingly, *this paper* presents an in-depth reading of the works of the Korean philosopher Byung Chul Han (Han 1998, 2011, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023, 2024) to flesh out key ideas of the current social ethos in the Swedish society. These key insights will be used to inform the analysis existentialist questions (identity formation, self-views, relationships, moral development) of relevance for a deeper understanding of negative consequences of assessment. Further, whereas analytical ethics, "mimics the scientific style of inquiry" continental ethics is engaged in cultural critique (Levy, 2003), which enables a seldom explored inquiry into the ethical validity of assessment in relation to preexisting social norms and values (ethos).

#### Expected results/findings<sup>[1]</sup>

We expect to find that Han's discussions of e.g. the "burnout society", the "palliative society", the "crisis of narration" and the "scent of time" will provide important insights into a scholarly contextualization of students negative experiences of assessment.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper is of relevance to the Nordic educational field of research because it assumes that validation of assessment practices should consider the relevance of ethics research, and that so-called continental ethics is of particular importance to balance the predominant teleological hence purpose-oriented research on ethics and education in Sweden and the Nordic countries.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### From Supervision to Respect: Students' Recommendations for a Safer School Environment

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#### Research topic/aim

Student wellbeing and dropout is a major concern not only for schools, but even more so for the students themselves, as absenteeism, for example, has been linked to a number of negative short and long-term outcomes. While much has been done to make schools safer and/or to reduce harassment and bullying, anti-bullying approaches rarely include the voices of students themselves. With this in mind, this study explores students' own suggestions for what students and staff can do to create a more positive atmosphere at school.

#### Theoretical framework

This ongoing study draws on the new sociology of childhood and earlier work on student voice to improve schools, which (1) emphasises the importance of children's voices in matters that affect them, and (2) views students as potential agents of change in their own right, including taking seriously the importance of exploring what children and young people themselves want and expect from their schooling in order to contribute to school improvement.

#### Methodology/research design

The study uses thematic analysis based on responses from students in grades 6-9 (12-15 years old) in Swedish compulsory schools. The material consists of approximately 2500 open-ended responses collected through the Friends school surveys between 1 January 2010 and 1 October 2024. The question asked was: "What do you think students and staff can do to create a more positive atmosphere at school?".

#### Expected results/findings

Four main aspects are presented and discussed in detail: (1) 'Supervision', which includes students' suggestions for more teachers to supervise the school day, including the importance of more adults in the playground, corridors and hallways (2) 'Active intervention by adults', which includes students' emphasis on the importance of more active intervention by adults, and more active questioning and taking seriously instances of verbal abuse between students; (3) 'The importance of showing respect', including students' statements about the importance of students being more respectful and caring towards each other, for example, by avoiding and making comments about or to each other; (4) 'Adults showing concern', including students' statements about the importance of adults showing concern for students, for example, how they feel and sense in school, for example, by stating the importance of school staff showing more interest in students' school life.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Taken together, the results will provide important insights relevant to schools and students in all Nordic countries, by showing which aspects of schooling students themselves identify as important to improve in order to create a more positive atmosphere at school, including fewer instances of harassment and bullying. The results of this study could therefore provide information on what is needed to make schools the safe places for learning that they should be.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Tension in teaching well-being as part of the course curriculum in Nordic upper secondary schools

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Teacher-led well-being intervention programmes developed within the field of positive psychology have predominately been quantitatively assessed with a focus on content, outcomes and efficacy from a student perspective. Research within this field has more so been focused on what is being taught as opposed to how and by whom. Using inductive qualitative research methods, the current study aims to broaden the understanding of how well-being intervention programmes are taught and experienced by teachers, in relation to processes and contexts. Thematic analysis of interviews made with 23 upper secondary teachers and non-teaching school personnel, teaching the well-being intervention programme Study with Strength in Finland and Sweden, resulted in identification of tensions within the process of teaching the well-being course content. Four themes of tension were identified in relation to; (a) compulsory or non-compulsory student participation; (b) the course not being graded or evaluated; (c) well-being and/or ill-being discussed in class; and (d) teachers' roles and expectations in relation to well-being. The current article argues that the social context and power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship may cause tension in the process of teaching, and consequently also learning, well-being course content. The implications of the results are further discussed in relation to the tension concept, allowing for both positive and negative perspectives on the process of teaching well-being content in Finnish and Swedish school contexts.



## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Experts and Exploits: The importance of Belonging for English Speaking International teachers' well-being in Sweden

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English profile schools (EPS), particularly Free Schools with English profiles, are a growing niche within the Swedish education system. The Swedish education reforms of the 1990s eliminated restrictions and gave organizations more freedom into how they manage their financial and human resources. For EPS, both private and public, this meant they could hire English speaking international (ESI) teachers to fulfil the English ethos of the school. EPS's look abroad, either recruiting directly from English speaking countries or hiring ESI teachers locally.

This is because within EPS's, ESI teachers are hired as experts, while simultaneously, not being recognised as qualified teachers in the eyes of the Swedish education system, they are exploited for their cheaper labour.

Sweden, along with other Nordic and European countries, adapt the political economic practices of neoliberalism which "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedom and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). However, within this neoliberal marketized context, it is also important to address teacher well-being from other perspectives, including their own. As this group of ESI teachers are working in Sweden as a result of these neoliberal changes, it becomes even more important to understand how the context of work and life affect their well-being.

This research paper examines the connection between the well-being of English-speaking international teachers in Sweden and belonging. As part of a larger thesis project addressing the well-being of ESI teacher's living and work in Sweden; it examines the perceived well-being of ESI teachers. While the larger project utilizes a mixed method design, the findings of this paper come from the survey data which shows the strong explanatory value of belonging within the ESI teachers self-reported well-being score.

A survey was developed around work and life, specifically personal, professional, and organization domains; those three areas were used as a preliminary tool for survey development and assessment. The findings reveal that organizational (organization) belonging, as well as belonging within Swedish society (personal) have a strong impact on teacher well-being; while professional belonging does not have a correlation. One possible explanation for this finding is that professional belonging is a given for ESI teachers, as 90% of the surveyed teachers have a teaching degree from their home country. However, without a Swedish teacher legitimation (only 16% have a legitimation), they are limited to working within EPS's, and feel a disconnect from the greater Swedish society. Other factors contributing to personal belonging within Sweden could also be their feeling of satisfaction with making Swedish friends, and their satisfaction with their own ability to speak Swedish. The study results show a growing need to address the well-being of teachers from a more holistic understanding, rather than simply viewing them as tools to make the current neoliberal marketized system work well.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

A literature review on value creation and anchoring of professional development on children's mental well-being

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### 1. Research topic/aim

Children's mental health and well-being is crucial for their ability to meet school demands and be part of social communities. Nevertheless, the field is highly complex and influenced by technological development, social media, increasing performance culture and a demanding education system. Therefore, it is essential that professionals continuously enhance and adapt their knowledge and skills to support the inclusion of diverse groups of children in daycare and education. This calls for sustainable and flexible models of professional development that are meaningful for the participants.

To provide insights into effective strategies for future sustainable models of professional development in a Danish context this paper present preliminary results of a literature review. The focus is on the value creation and anchoring of learning from professional development programs on children's mental well-being for professionals in daycare and primary school. Existing studies have identified several criteria (consensus criteria) that may influence the effect. However, these studies have typically not focused on following up on the anchoring of learning over time exploring factors that are crucial for professionals' continued motivation.

### Research Question:

How does the motivation of professionals influence the implementation and anchoring of professional development within the field of children's and young people's mental health and well-being?

### 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework integrates several key theories to explore the value creation and transfer of learning in professional development. It includes the social learning theory by Wenger-Trayner (2020), focusing on value creation within social learning spaces. Additionally, it incorporates transfer theory in addressing the transfer of learning from educational settings to the workplace, and Røvik's (2016) translation theory. To further investigate the role of motivation, the framework includes Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2020), highlighting the significance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The methodology involves a literature review, identifying patterns, themes, and gaps in existing research. The focus is on professional development programs aimed at fostering mental well-being and positive communities among children aged 0-18 years. The professionals involved include teachers, social workers, and school nurses.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The literature review is expected to identify key factors influencing the value creation and anchoring of professional development programs. It will highlight the role of motivation in sustaining long-term learning and provide insights into effective strategies for future sustainable models of professional development.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing the critical need for sustainable professional development models that enhance the mental well-being of children and young people.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Understanding and Addressing School Absenteeism in Denmark: A Comparative Study of Stakeholder Perspectives and Prevention Strategies

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#### Research topic/aim

A growing number of schools in Denmark are experiencing challenges related to children and young people with high rates of school absenteeism. However, the causes of this increase remain contested. While theories about absenteeism have traditionally focused primarily on the socioeconomic status of parents (Hancock et al., 2017), the recent rise in absenteeism appears to cut across social strata, class divisions, and conventional explanatory frameworks. This calls for a deeper analysis of the characteristics of this new wave of school absenteeism.

Developing a new framework for understanding school absenteeism requires a closer examination of the concept itself. Whereas absenteeism has often been equated with "truancy" evidence increasingly suggests that many children and young people suffer from "prolonged, problematic absenteeism" (Knage & Kousholt, 2023), where they are unable to attend school due to underlying psychological and somatic stress reactions to the school environment, such as anxiety, stomach pain, dizziness, and nausea.

While the causes of prolonged, problematic absenteeism can be complex and multifaceted, Danish legislation in this area appears to adopt a rather rigid approach, using purely percentage-based thresholds to determine when school staff should intervene. This approach is, however, not without issue, as it overlooks local, practice-based understandings of the root causes of absenteeism and may create tension in the collaboration between parents and schools in managing it. There is thus a need for a closer examination of how individual schools perceive the root causes of absenteeism and how they work to prevent it.

**Methodology:** In this presentation, I will outline a research project conducted by University College Northern Denmark (UCN) in collaboration with the Municipality of Aalborg. The project aims to investigate absenteeism issues in six different schools and propose strategies for prevention.

The researchers conducted interviews with school leaders, teachers, and pedagogical staff, as well as parents of students with high absenteeism rates, to examine the issues surrounding absenteeism in the municipality. The project employs a comparative narrative approach to the analysis of the qualitative interviews to identify and compare how the different stakeholders (school and home) articulate and disagree about the causes of absenteeism.

**Theoretical Framework:** The project is based on various international definitions of "prolonged, concerning absenteeism" (Heyne et al., 2019; Knage & Kousholt, 2023) and examines how schools' narratives about students with absenteeism contribute to their perspectives on responsibility distribution for prevention.

**Findings:** A thematic analysis of the project's qualitative interviews suggests that absenteeism issues manifest differently across schools, and that teachers and school leaders in public schools express a need for more locally grounded, practice-oriented guidelines for preventing absenteeism.

**Relevance:** The project has implications for identifying structural challenges schools face in preventing absenteeism and for supporting teachers in fostering school engagement and a sense of belonging for these students in their classrooms.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Distress and Deliverance: School Spaces in Narratives on Bullying

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Research indicates that the physical environment of schools, including their architecture and furnishings, can contribute to bullying behaviours (e.g., Horton et al., 2023; Izadi & Hart, 2024). Despite this understanding, there seems to be a gap in the literature regarding how students who experience bullying describe the role of these spaces. This study seeks to address this gap by examining written narratives of experiences of spatial and material dynamics of bullying within school environments. The focus is specifically on hallways and their adjacent areas, such as toilets and lockers, as these locations are frequently mentioned in the narratives and are also highlighted by previous research as significant areas where bullying occurs.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The paper draws on the theoretical frameworks of performativity (Butler, 1990) and posthuman performativity (Barad, 2007), which allow for consideration of the influence of both human and non-human actors in the manifestation of bullying.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The empirical material utilized in this study comprises 518 narratives of first-person experiences of bullying, contributed by individuals from Sweden and Finland who endured bullying during their school years. From these narratives, a selection was made for inclusion in the analysis. The analytical approach employed is theoretical thematic analysis, influenced by narrative theory, with a focus on 'small stories' within the key narratives. These 'small stories' specifically depict instances of bullying that are associated with hallways, toilets, and lockers.

#### 4. Preliminary findings

Consistent with prior research, the findings of this study suggest that environments such as hallways, along with adjacent toilets and lockers, often become 'hot spots' for bullying (Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Hallways, as transition zones, can lead to crowded conditions that facilitate impulsive actions. Consequently, lockers, meant for personal storage, can be targets for vandalism or theft, and platforms for unwanted comments. Despite these risks, lockers can provide a sense of security, offering a momentary shield from negative interactions. Some students linger at their lockers to avoid certain individuals or blend into the crowd, using the area as a temporary shelter. Similarly, toilets can be sites of bullying or refuges from it. Their privacy can be exploited by bullies to intimidate or cause distress to others undetected, and the enclosed space can make it difficult for victims to escape or seek help. Conversely, due to their separation from more public areas of the school, toilets can offer respite for students trying to evade bullies and thus facilitate temporary deliverance from harm.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper contributes to Nordic educational research, particularly Network 7: Value Issues and Social Relations in Education, by highlighting perspectives from Swedish and Finnish narratives on school bullying. The preliminary findings emphasize the need to identify locations within schools that facilitate bullying. This study adds to the growing body of research on the spatiality of bullying and offers insights into enhancing student safety and well-being.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Do Greater Teacher Support and More Well-Functioning Class Climate Predict Less Peer Victimization in School? A Longitudinal Multilevel Study

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#### Theoretical Framework and Research Aim

Understanding peer victimization among students in schools requires looking beyond individual characteristics of the students involved. The social-ecological framework highlights that students' development, learning, and behaviors result from the complex interplay between individual and contextual factors. Students' relationships with, or perceived support from, their teachers have been linked to their involvement in peer victimization in previous research. Furthermore, because students are embedded in school classes, the classroom peer group serves as a critical everyday context that influences how students treat each other. While a few studies have examined the relationship between class climate and peer victimization, they have been limited to a cross-sectional design. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to investigate whether perceived teacher support at the individual level and well-functioning class climate at the classroom level during the fall semester predict peer victimization in the spring semester.

#### Methodology/Research Design

This study employed a short-term longitudinal design, involving 3,731 Swedish students in grades 4–9 from 210 classrooms across 23 schools. Participants completed a web-based self-report questionnaire twice during the 2023/2024 school year. The data were analyzed using multilevel regression analyses.

#### Findings

The results revealed that peer victimization at Time 2, after controlling for peer victimization at Time 1, was negatively predicted by both teacher support and a well-functioning class climate at Time 1. Specifically, students who reported higher levels of teacher support and belonged to classes with more positive class climates during the second half of the fall semester were less likely to experience peer victimization in the second half of the spring semester, regardless of their initial level of peer victimization. Additionally, the negative relationship between peer victimization and teacher support was moderated by both gender and grade. The protective effect of teacher support was stronger for boys compared to girls, suggesting that boys benefited more from increased teacher support in reducing peer victimization. Moreover, the protective effect of teacher support became more pronounced with increasing grade levels, indicating that older students relied more heavily on teacher support as a buffer against peer victimization than younger students.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The current discourse in Sweden about enhancing school safety and reducing peer victimization underscores the relevance of these findings. Our study highlights the significance of supportive teachers and well-functioning class climates, as both were predictive of reduced peer victimization within a single school year. These results, drawn from a sample of students nested within classes in Swedish schools, contribute to Nordic Educational Research by demonstrating how two key aspects of everyday school life—teacher support at the individual level and class climate at the classroom level—are longitudinally associated with peer victimization in school. In light of these findings, peer victimization prevention efforts should prioritize improving the quality of student-teacher relationships and fostering positive class climates.

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### A Practice-oriented Research Approach to Dealing with School Attendance Problems in Sweden

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#### 1. Research Topic

School attendance problems (SAPs) are a growing global concern. More research is needed to understand absenteeism patterns and develop multilevel interventions (Kearney et al., 2022). This paper examines how five municipalities in Sweden handle SAPs by analyzing their routines, intervention strategies, and use of statistics to create guidelines for data collection and intervention development.

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

SAPs are linked to multiple factors across ecological levels (Kearney et al., 2022). To explore how five municipalities address SAPs, we use a socio-ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This perspective reveals how various factors shape attendance routines and interventions, including macro factors (e.g., statistical systems, lack of guidelines), exosystem factors (e.g., available actors and resources), mesosystem factors (e.g., home-school cooperation, school-level interventions), and microsystem factors (e.g., pupil-school interactions, pupil-teacher interactions, pupil well-being).

#### 3. Methodology/Research Design

This study is designed as a Practice-Based Educational Research (PER) project, addressing key issues in education from the perspectives of teachers, school leaders, and student health professionals (Persson, 2020). Representatives from five municipalities collected data on routines, interventions, and statistics. The research team analyzed this data and proposed further data collection to better understand these aspects. We used thematic analysis to interpret the material (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

#### 4. Findings

Our findings show how school attendance interventions and routines develop, highlighting similarities and differences between municipalities and the impact of conceptualized roles and responsibilities. The study reveals that the lack of a national system in Sweden to monitor school attendance statistics complicates school comparisons, forcing local authorities to create their own solutions. This also hinders tracking statistics over time to identify trends at individual and group levels. Moreover, municipal systems do not allow data filtering by necessary variables to identify vulnerable groups and factors at various ecological levels, limiting their use for early interventions addressing both risk and protective factors.

A success factor identified is designating a specific individual in the municipality to compile and share statistics with mentors, principals, and the student health team. The study also shows that statistics are used for early interventions when organizational leaders request analysis of absenteeism and various risk and protective factors. Making these statistical patterns available to teachers helps them interpret the data alongside other relevant factors affecting pupils' school situations.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper is valuable for Nordic educational research, particularly Network 7: Value Issues and Social Relations in Education. It provides important insights into the formation of school attendance problems (SAPs) and offers knowledge on improving routines and interventions.

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## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

Popularity among peers, school contextual (dis)advantage and educational achievement in Nordic metropolitan region, Finland.

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Socioeconomic segregation in residential and school domains is reflected in between-school variation in pupils' educational outcomes. In addition to pupil compositional differences of schools (social selection), this variation may relate to contextual effects arising from the socio-spatially segregated school and residential environments. Large body of research suggests that neighbourhood and school contextual (dis)advantage may influence students' educational outcomes. In the field of contemporary school and neighborhood effects research typical questions have shifted to consider why and for whom do contexts matter, instead of only asking whether they matter at all.

This study contributes both to the why and for whom –questions by examining the exposing or buffering role of student's social status in a peer community on the influences of school contextual (dis)advantage. Popular students may be especially sensitive to "risky" peer influences due to their high, central or visible social position within peer community. Focusing on subjective social status (self-perceived popularity) in a school community as effect moderator not only offers a new way to scrutinize to whom school and neighborhood contexts matter. It also enables to shed light on how they matter: as a measure of social hierarchies among peers, subjective social status captures the normative dimension of peer culture.

Peer cultural norms regarding school attitudes and success have been much studied over the decades. Classical ethnographies in cultural studies, as well as contemporary gender studies, have linked anti-school behavior to students' masculinity construction work. Putting too much effort into schoolwork may become sanctioned as not properly masculine, whereas disruptive and rebellious behaviour at school may signal masculine toughness offering a way to gain social status and prestige among peers. These gendered norms may also be channelled by school context: masculinity sanctions from pro-school orientation have been suggested to be especially strong among peers in low SES school contexts.

The study bases on high-quality school survey data, linked with GIS register data measures, from Helsinki metropolitan region, Finland. The results of the random intercept linear regression suggest that residential and school segregation may have a potential to differentiate student peer cultures between schools, being reflected in the ways students aim to achieve social recognition from their peers: masculinity norms may vary between school contexts and popular boy students may be especially sensitive to the related anti-school peer pressures. The results highlight the importance of schools to foster pedagogical approaches and practices that recognize also non-middle class cultural capital of the students, and facilitate emotional learning spaces that challenge stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and gender.

# Network: 8. Gender and Education

## Network: 8. Gender and Education

Joint explorations of the becoming of sexuality education for younger pupils

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This research project draws on a collaboration between two Swedish primary and middle schools, where teachers and staff working with 6-13-year-old pupils collaborate with researchers. The practice-based study aims to investigate the construction of sexuality education for younger pupils. This paper focuses on how various teaching activities created within the project could become part of the overarching school structure.

In Sweden, sexuality education is considered an interdisciplinary field of knowledge. In the curriculum's introductory sections, the principal is assigned the responsibility of ensuring sexuality education is addressed consistently in teaching (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2022). Research in systematic quality work also highlights the importance of school leadership in educational development, emphasizing the need for leaders to stay connected to teachers' and pupils' daily activities (Ståhlkrantz, 2021).

Despite Sweden's long history with sexuality education, challenges remain. Teachers of younger pupils often express uncertainty about appropriate content (Weil et al., 2021) and encounter varied expectations from guardians, who may see these topics as family matters (Årman, 2024).

The study is grounded in socio-material ontology and epistemology, which argues that knowledge is produced collaboratively in intra-activity with human and non-human actors (Fenwick, 2015). This approach recognizes a diverse range of co-producing actors in analysis.

This two-year, practice-based project includes four teachers, a leisure-time teacher, an assistant principal, and three researchers. Data was collected through workshops, interviews, classroom visits, logbooks, student work, and recordings, analyzed using diffractive analysis, which shifts focus from interpretation to examining how practices function and what they produce (Lenz Taguchi, 2012).

The ongoing analysis shows that constructing sexuality education involves multiple actors. Teachers are important actors in creatively exploring what sexuality education for younger pupils might entail. In this study, classroom teaching included creative, co-constructive work with emotions such as anger and sadness, as well as with touch and relationships. However, challenges emerged throughout the project. Legal guardians, the school organizer, colleagues, and the time available for joint meetings all influenced and at times limited the development of sexuality education. Here, the assistant principal's engagement proved crucial in incorporating this knowledge area into the school structure. Although the project has been ongoing for two years, the schools' construction of sexuality education requires further development, both in teaching and within the school's overarching structure.

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Gender equality is essential for sustainable development. However, several constraints seem to make achieving it difficult. This paper builds on a study of 1575 preschool photographs (Wahlgren 2023), where 320 were taken outdoors. The study was carried out in four Swedish preschools and aimed to examine how children are portrayed in everyday preschool photographs through critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) and critical image analysis (Rose 2016).

Altogether, the study showed how indoor photographs were focusing on conventional masculine coded activities like production and accomplishment, while outdoor photographs were picturing feminine coded values as care, empathy and sensitivity (Wahlgren and Andersson 2022; Wahlgren and Günter 2024). Some previous research has suggested nature a gender-neutral space (Änggård 2011). Other research shows gender-based differences in children's outdoor play, and argues that natural spaces are not in themselves providing gender neutrality (Günther-Hanssen 2020).

In this paper, photographs are understood as language, which is perceived as an active part in constructing norms and identities. Further, the theoretical frame of Hirdmans (1988) gender order is used to discuss differences of values portrayed in indoor- versus outdoor photographs. According to the gender order, women are perceived as close to nature and feelings, while men are described as rational and logical. Moreover, expected male characteristics are valued higher than female (Hirdman 1988).

Nature excursions are well established in Swedish preschools (Ärlemalm-Hagser 2013), and photographs are used to document and communicate everyday practice. A revision of the curriculum suggests contact with different types of nature to be further underscored as important for all children. One reason for this is climate change and the need of increased knowledge about nature and species.

This paper constitutes an important basis for discussions about which values to emphasize and mediate in preschool photographs. Outdoor photographs contradict norms by underscoring conventionally feminine values such as care and empathy as desirable for everyone. Sustainable ecological development can thereby also mean shifted gender hierarchies.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

“They need to be bold and address it in school”: parent narratives on the extended school-based HPV vaccination programme and social justice

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Since August 2020 all children born 2009 and later is included in the extended HPV school-based vaccination programme. The voluntary school-based HPV vaccination programme is part of the Swedish national child vaccination programme, and it is offered free of charge and organized by the student welfare team in schools. The target population to receive the two doses of the HPV vaccine is all students in the fifth grade of primary school. The current paper draws from individual interviews with parents (all of them are mothers) of children attending the fifth school year of primary school. The interviews were digitally conducted during the fall of 2023. Our aim is to analyse parent narratives on the extended school-based HPV vaccination programme. The preliminary empirically analysis shows that most schools lack in properly informing parents as well as the students about HPV and the vaccination. Furthermore, the parents express that the students probably would benefit if the school in a better way as well as more pedagogically addressed issues around sex, sexuality and HPV. The third aspect the parents address is social class. They argue and underline the importance of providing accessible information to all parents, regardless of their social background. At this preliminary stage we are thinking of applying an intersectional analysis of gender and social class by combining Skegg’s (2002) work on gender and social class and Bourdieu’s (1998) theoretical concepts of the capitals in the study. Research addressing the extended school-based vaccination programme is still scarce in the Nordic countries. The present study aims to contribute new knowledge to the field from a parent perspective. This study hopes to bring new insights into the discussion on sex education, social justice and public health.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

Analysing Finlandization in the everyday lives of children and young people: memory work on atmospheres of cold war childhoods

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Our paper discusses our ongoing collective memory work on Finnish cold war childhoods (Hohti et al. 2024). Our – five feminist researchers – work was sparked by the heated public debate in 2021-22 in Finland on Finlandization. We found ourselves being irritated by the ways children and young people were positioned and represented in these discussions concerning cold war years. As researchers inspired by earlier memory work done in gender studies and educational research (e.g. Davies et al. 2013; Mnemo ZIN & Gannon 2022), we decided to do memory work on “Finlandized childhoods”.

We applied the method of memory work developed by feminist researcher Frigga Haug (Haug et al. 1987) and her research group to understand the socialization of gender. The original Haugenian memory work progresses in a structured manner and includes three phases. However, we did not work this rigorously. What was most important to us in Haug's (1987) approach was the idea of the social nature of personal memories. We were not interested in how we became who we are, but in what our personal memories reveal about the time we had lived through.

Along the memory work process, atmosphere as a concept and method started to resonate with our interest in studying the collective through (embodied) personal memories. Following McCormack (2018), we understand atmosphere as a material and affective phenomenon: sometimes a clearly felt and collectively recognized condition, but often also elusive, fleeting, and difficult to articulate. In this research, atmosphere is, on one hand, a subject through which we examine the feelings and moods influencing everyday life of Cold War childhood. On the other hand, it serves as an analytical tool that allows us to approach and recognize broader contexts beyond the individual.

In our paper we will focus specifically on questions related to methodology by discussing the memory work process, our way of thinking with atmospheres and affects, and the analytical possibilities opening through these processes. We suggest that Grand narratives cannot be challenged by replacing them with other (grand) narratives but rather through analyses that make space for messiness and stay with differences and ambivalences. These kinds of critical, (historically and geographically) contextualized and reflexive analyses are able to address complexity while avoiding simplifying arguments concerning childhoods and/or educational/cultural practices.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

The 'invisible' students: LGBTQI student experiences on sex education.

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Research suggests that LGBTQI students are exposed to and experience homophobia and transphobia on an everyday basis in school. Violations and discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression often result in mental health issues. Research addressing these issues from LGBTQI students' own schooling experiences as well as research from the Nordic countries is still scarce. Given this background, the current study takes its point of departure from LGBTQI student narratives. Individual interviews with 42 young LGBTQI students in Sweden and Denmark have been conducted digitally or on the phone. This presentation will specifically focus on student experiences on sex education. Theories on sexuality and gender will frame the study (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2021). Our preliminary findings indicate that sex education is taught and framed from a hegemonic understanding on sexuality and intimate relations, i.e. what Butler (1990) would define as compulsory heterosexuality. Schools often lack in addressing sexuality and intimate relations from a holistic point of view. Our results also indicate that non-heterosexual and non-binary students sometimes are ridiculed and questioned by other students in class as well as by teachers. This exposure to discrimination put LGBTQI students in a vulnerable position. In exceptional cases teachers stand up for LGBTQI students and LGBTQI rights. There seem to be a lack of knowledge among teachers in Swedish and Danish schools of how to teach and include LGBTQI issues in sex education and thereby support and protect LGBTQI students from discrimination. In our study, we find tendencies that this lack of knowledge turns LGBTQI students into experts are invited by teachers to teach fellow students LGBTQI issues. From a Nordic perspective, this study will generate new knowledge about LGBTQI-students' schooling experiences in Sweden and Denmark that might enable schools to prevent mental health issues among LGBTQI-students, improve awareness about discrimination and improve sex education in schools.

## Network: 8. Gender and Education

‘You always try to one-up each other’: Siblings in life stories about non-traditional trajectories into STEM

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This paper explores how sibling relationships are made meaningful in undergraduates’ stories about trajectories into university physics education. Strongly aligned with masculine intellect, physics is often considered a ‘hard’ science, both as in providing objective knowledge claims and as in difficult. The university programs stands out as homogeneous, predominantly consisting of middle-class men from ethnic-majority backgrounds. Previous research suggests that aspirations towards STEM fields are nurtured not only through schooling but also through everyday conversations, family members’ scientific knowledge and qualifications, and participation in extracurricular activities (Godec et al., 2024). Intragenerational relations have primarily been explored using quantitative methodologies, with attention to birth order and its impact on development of interests and educational achievements (Shahbazian, 2021). However, despite the overall focus in sociology of education on family and peer cultures, research on sibling relationships remains limited. Drawing on the concepts of *siblingship* and ‘*sticky*’ *proximity*, Davies (2019) suggests that sibling relationships, marked by expectations, comparisons and shared socio-economic, familial, and peer cultures, shape young people’s formation of identity and transitions in significant ways.

This study is part of a research project (Swedish Research Council 2018-04985) investigating university physics education, with a focus on underrepresented students. Data were collected through timeline interviews with twenty-one students enrolled in physics programs at older Swedish universities, all of whom self-identified as having underrepresented backgrounds. The open-ended interviews explored factors that had facilitated their path towards physics education, e.g. persons, experiences, and life conditions (see Johansson et al., 2023). Among the interviewees, eighteen of the students mentioned having siblings, and seven of these had either studied or completed a degree in STEM. Positioned within the broader landscape of life story research, the analysis brings forward stories about siblingships and sibling influences in childhood and youth, and how these matter (or not) for fostering science interest, competence and sense of belonging.

The analysis focuses on eight life stories in which siblings were described as influential or decisive in shaping STEM aspirations— including six interviews with young men and women who had older siblings in STEM. The analysis highlights themes such as shared peer cultures and companionship, older siblings as role-models and tutors, as well as siblings acting as negative reference-points. For students who described little or no influence from siblings, this was related to birth order (‘being the oldest’), limited contact etc.

This paper contributes to Nordic educational research by offering insights into how relationships between young people—here, siblings—can shape processes of identity, learning and belonging that facilitate ‘unlikely’ choices in masculinized STEM education.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Gendered Aspirations and Wellbeing: The Role of School and Socialization in Nordic Youth

Bergljót Þrastardóttir, Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir

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Different aspirations between genders are often explained by early socialization into different gender assignments (Gabay-Egozi et al., 2014). Socialization takes place in culturally specific and socially structured spaces where gender performativity is produced and reproduced in the school environment. As the genders are still seen as fundamentally different i.e. boys as lacking educational skills or girls seen as better learners and self-sufficient, research indicate that many girls experience stress affecting their wellbeing (Odenbring, 2019) also that ideas on masculinity work to repress boys from admitting their anxiety and distress (Stentiford et al., 2024). These findings are in line with research findings suggesting that the mental well-being of youth is increasingly under strain due to the pressure to perform at all levels; academic, social, and even personal as e.g. social media impacts youth identities (Burns and Gottschalk, 2019; DeRidder, 2017). These findings call for inquiry into what affects students' wellbeing emotionally, academically and socially and how they can be supported by the school environment.

The study is a part of the INSPECT project focusing on the wellbeing of Nordic youth. The paper presents findings from 6 interviews with students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Iceland about their identities, aspirations, their wellbeing and expectations for the future. The interviews took place in two compulsory schools in May 2024. Each interview lasted from 50–70 minutes. The interview data was coded using Nvivo software.

Data analysis is ongoing, but the first findings suggest that the students experienced gender dividing practices in their school and on social media. The girls felt the pressure to fit in and to adhere to persistent gender norms and seemed to take on many responsibilities, but the boys felt pressure to perform well in sports and aim for well-paid future jobs. The findings indicate that school authorities must acknowledge that they have to meet students' needs holistically as schools are sanctuaries for many to seek support and understanding in the matter of not fitting in or living up to societal and gender expectations.

This paper addresses and problematizes the presumed status of gender equality in Iceland and the Nordic in relations to the prominent gender gaps and lack of enactment of education on gender and student welfare issues.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Nonbinary Teachers: navigating visibility and disclosure in Finnish schools

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In this article, the experiences of nonbinary teachers, whose gender subjectivity exists outside and beyond the binary categorization, in relation to visibility and disclosure are studied in the Finnish educational framework. Queer teachers in Finland and other Nordic countries navigate a complex educational and societal landscape that is shaped by similar structural dynamics, where teacher norms are affected by the reproduction of cisheteronormativity in schools that collide with the official policies answering to the increasing social awareness and recognition of queer people (Kjaran & Lehtonen 2018). This discrepancy demands visibility from queer teachers in a designated manner that answers to both ideals, characterized by a homonormative, assimilationist perspective that excludes gender diverse people (Røthing 2008; Wells 2018). Previous research, mostly on non-heterosexual teachers, shows that many queer educators face expectations to be a role model (i.e., Niinisalo 2024); however, gender diverse teachers, who challenge the binary gender model, are often positioned as suspicious or inappropriate (Ullman 2020), identifying gender as an obstacle even in liberal educational spaces (Iskander 2021; Harris & Jones 2014).

This study applies membership categorization analysis and discourse analysis to the group interview data of three self-identifying nonbinary and queer teachers. Informed by ethnomethodological understanding of social reality being constructed in interaction (Schegloff 2007), this study explores the depictions and membership categories that Finnish nonbinary teachers produce in a group interview discussion of themselves and of other people of the school, and how they report other people categorizing them in schools. Teachers' social categorization work around visibility and disclosure regarding gender and sexuality is understood as an interactional, linguistic resource indexing understandings and meanings conveyed to others.

Preliminary findings indicate that disclosing gender is experienced as challenging and vulnerable when compared to non-heterosexuality, highlighting daily experiences of erasure and invalidation. Significant categories that positively influence visibility and create safety are colleagues, other queer teachers and to some extent, students. However, some students and in particular, their families cast challenges on visibility and wellbeing of nonbinary teachers.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Gendered ECEC: Teacher talk, colours and play

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#### Aim

The foundation for a gender-sensitive approach and for promoting equality and equity begins in early childhood education and care (ECEC). In Finland, teachers in ECEC are required to “encourage the children to make choices without gender-related role models”, develop a learning environment enabling “breaking away from traditional gender stereotypes” and be gender sensitive when recognizing and responding to children's play initiatives (National core curriculum for ECEC, 2022, 29,31,38). Our *aim* is to examine critically how teacher understand and implement a gender-sensitive pedagogy in ECEC in Finland. The study is based on a large multi-sited ethnographic study of inclusion and exclusion in ECEC centers.

Our *theoretical framework* is a norm-critical and gender-diversity approach to ECEC. Such an approach to research in ECEC is still scarce in Finland. Traditionally research has focused on gender-neutral and gender-compensatory education in ECEC examining gender-neutral toys and play areas (Eidevald and Taguchi, 2011; Huuki, 2016).

#### Methodology

We used ethnographic methods for our data collection, which consisted of both participant observations and interviews. We conducted participatory observations of interactions between teachers and children as well as between children in 17 ECEC centers in Finland (one month/each center). In addition, 74 semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted with ECEC directors, teachers, and childcare workers. Both observation notes and transcribed interviews were anonymized and coded in Atlas.ti. A thematic analysis was conducted on the coded data (Brown and Clarke, 2022). Consent was obtained from teachers and parents as well as continuous assent from the children.

#### Findings

Only a few teachers acknowledged a gender-sensitive approach and, if they did, they had a superficial view of gender-sensitive ECEC. The teachers experienced having worked enough with gender development issues. They occasionally mentioned a gender neutral or gender compensatory action, but despite policies and in-service training, the implementation had stagnated on being gender neutral and far from a gender-sensitive and norm-critical approach to ECEC. Many teachers had a binary view on gender and did not question their role in fostering children's stereotypical gender identifications. Despite occasionally challenging the status quo, teachers mostly confirmed and reproduced stereotypical gender divisions.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This study is relevant for Nordic educational research as it reveals that gender sensitive education has not yet been fully implemented in the Nordic countries, despite the significant role ECEC plays in promotion equality and equity.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Gender Coding and Gender Patterns in Home Economics Education in the Nordic Countries

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#### Abstract

This study investigates gender coding and gender patterns in home economics education, with a primary focus on Finland and a broader perspective on the Nordic countries. The aim is to explore how gender expectations and norms are embedded, perpetuated, or challenged within this subject and to analyze their implications for gender equality in education. Recent societal challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted persistent gender inequalities, making this research particularly relevant (Statsrådet, 2022). Despite its potential to promote equality, home economics remains a gender-coded subject, often perceived as more suited to girls, while boys are seen as less engaged participants (Yrjänäinen, 2018; Saleh, 2015). This research aims to critically examine these dynamics through a comprehensive, multi-layered approach.

#### Theoretical framework

The study draws on theories of gender structures and norms, particularly Hirdman's (2006) theory of gender systems, which emphasizes the dual principles of separation and hierarchy in shaping societal gender norms. These theories are complemented by feminist pedagogical perspectives that highlight the role of education in challenging or reproducing gender stereotypes (Pipping Ekström & Palojoki, 2019; Blomberg, 2020). An intersectional lens is also employed to critique and expand traditional gender frameworks, ensuring the inclusion of diverse identities and experiences (Dahl, 2016).

#### Methodology/Research Design

A mixed-methods approach is used to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the topic. The research includes:

**Curriculum and policy analysis:** A comparative review of national curriculum guidelines in Nordic countries, focusing on how gender equality is addressed in home economics education.

**Classroom observations:** Observing teaching practices in Finnish schools to analyze the reinforcement or disruption of gender norms.

**Teacher and student perspectives:** Semi-structured interviews with teachers and anonymous surveys with students to understand their views on gender dynamics in home economics.

This combination of methods ensures a robust understanding of how gender patterns are communicated and experienced within the educational framework (Widerberg, 2002; Dalen, 2015).

#### Expected results/findings

The study is expected to show a complex interplay of traditional gender coding and growing efforts to challenge these norms within home economics education in the Nordics. Preliminary analysis suggests that while the curriculum promotes gender equality, classroom practices often still reflect ingrained stereotypes. Findings will hopefully provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers, highlighting strategies to make home economics a more inclusive and equal subject.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational research

This research contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing a critical yet underexplored area: a combination of gender, education, and societal norms in home economics. As Nordic countries are often seen as leaders in promoting gender equality, this study provides a valuable case for examining how progressive policies

translate into classroom practices, and how it can be connected to Nordic exceptionalism. The project's focus on teacher training and curricular development offers practical implications for creating more inclusive educational environments across the Nordic region.

# Network: 9. General Didactics

Christian Tradition and Socialisation – A historical perspective on education and fostering through an ocular of continental Didaktik

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Religion studies has historically played a dominant role in Swedish schools to educate and foster the upgrowing generation. At the same time, this role seems to be clear, the subject is captured in an inherent complexity between facts and beliefs. The purpose of this research project is, through a continental perspective on Didaktik (Künzli, 2010; Weniger, 2010), to understand how the purposes of subject of religion education ambitions have been expressed and how they have changed over time in relation to the zeitgeist of society (or public opinion) 1842–2025.

Our theoretical framework is inspired by Popkewitz's (2004) understanding of a school subject and its relation to socialization and Bernstein's typologies of knowledge codes. According to Popkewitz's understanding of alchemy, as both in the organization of a school subject, and as a normalizing practice of teaching, a transformation occurs when it moves from the academic field to a school subject. According to Bernstein (1971) different subjects differ in their presentation in the curricula and syllabus in terms of framing and delamination which are related to the degree of control teachers and pupils have over the content, selection, and organization of the pedagogical relationship in their classroom.

The empirical material consists of educational policy documents and curriculums concerning religion education in the Swedish upper secondary school over time. In our work of analyzing our empirical data, we used a purpose-related and thematic analysis (Brown & Clark, 2022). First, we closely read the documents to be able to identify time-typical formulations in relation to the current societal and political context. Second, we kept attention to the specific vocabulary of documents and the public opinion. The time-typical formulations identified in the first was in our third step relate to the 'zeitgeist' of society.

We identified four different established traditions, and one in formation: First, the 'confessional wave' focused on the clerical Christian inheritance to produce subservient and Christian citizens (1842– 1950's). Second, an 'objective wave' aimed to educate objective and broad-minded citizens, responsive to religious plurality (1960's– 1980's). Thereafter, in the 'uncertain wave', religion studies became a matter of subjective beliefs, focusing on learning through encounters with other persons an become a broad-minded citizen (1994–2011). While the curriculum from 2011 gave birth to an 'objective wave 2.0', with the purpose to educate rational citizens with a scientific view on religion as a social phenomenon. The becoming syllabus 2025 is basically in line with the former, with a few exceptions when it comes to ethical and existential questions. Hence it is possible to discern a change towards a more reflective and understandable rational citizen.

The theoretical perspective contributes, together with the empirical findings, to the ongoing discussion about the relation between general didactics and religion education in a Nordic educational research context. The study also deepens the understanding of the complex relation between facts and beliefs, between subject matter and pupil related questions.

Network: 9. General Didactics

Sustainability in education

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The aim of the paper is to provide insight into how sustainability in education in schools is addressed within the research field of environmental and sustainability education (ESE), and insight into central discussions of purposes and teaching approaches in this field. The concluding discussion in the paper focuses on illuminating how the Nordic Bildung tradition has influenced the ESE research field.

The paper is based on a discussion of findings from a literature review (Carlsson & Lysgaard 2024). The review included peer reviewed journal articles as well as dissertations and reports identified as peer-reviewed electronic resources published in English or Scandinavian languages between January 1997 and December 2022, target population aged 7–15 (primary school, middle and lower secondary school). It was based on a systematic literature search of research journal articles was conducted in both international databases such as ERIC PRQUEST, and Scandinavian research databases. After a screening of duplicates 3634 citations (based on searches in English, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish), were imported to Covidence systematic review system, where a screening and selection process took place in two steps: first of title and abstract, where after the selected citations of 150 full texts were screened and the final selection of 104 studies were included in the literature review.

Although sustainability generally is described as a contested concept in the literature, the three dimensions of the concept presented in the “Brundtland report” from 1987 - ecological, social and economic sustainability, are often outlined as a framework that can guide the schools work with sustainability. Nordic publications in the ESE research field often emphasize the value of going beyond primarily environmental dimensions and including the other dimensions when teaching sustainability in schools. They often also offer a critique of when the link between education and sustainable development is addressed as a political interest in continuing economic growth at the expense of social and ecological considerations. The literature review points out that one of the key questions in addressing sustainability in education is how to teach in/about/for sustainability based on existing knowledge and at the same time make room for uncertain knowledge about what challenges the future will bring.

The literature generally emphasizes teaching approaches where pupils can ask open and wondering questions, and have opportunities for developing action experiences and experiences with participation. One of the main points in the literature review is that references to democratic formation and Bildung as an overall purpose of ESE, often is related to teaching across the school subjects, viewed as something that can be realized during periods of project- or topic specific teaching. While references to behavior modification purposes are related to subject specific knowledge- and skills aims, integrated in the regular subject teaching on an ongoing basis. Thus, the organization of teaching in schools – cross disciplinary versus subjects specific – seems to influence which purposes sustainability in education is aimed at.

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Network: 9. General Didactics

Peer tutoring in 4th grade Math: When SYKL is new and challenging

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#### Research Topic/Aim

This study investigates the implementation of structured reciprocal peer tutoring, termed “Systematiseret Klassekammerathjælp” (Danish abbreviation: SYKL), in 4th grade math classes. SYKL assigns students the role of either tutor or tutee, aimed at fostering both academic and social participation. Teachers receive training in peer tutoring techniques and scaffolding. Students work on tasks, which include specific hints, and general prompt cards. The focus is on the challenges that arise when students are new to this collaborative didactic, specifically when they struggle to take on these roles effectively.

#### Theoretical Framework

SYKL is rooted in sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 2019), emphasizing peer-mediated interaction within students' zones of proximal development. Peer tutoring encourages dialogical teaching (Alexander, 2004; Thurston et al., 2020), where reasoning, problem-solving, and collaboration are central to mathematical inquiry (Blomhøj, 2016; Lindenskov, 2022).

#### Methodology/Research Design

This qualitative study is based on video-recorded sessions of SYKL interventions in four Danish 4th-grade classes, comprising 12 mathematics lessons. Each session was analyzed using a framework for social and academic interactions (Rasmussen & Schmidt, 2022), focusing on moments where dialogue broke down, and peer tutoring became challenging. Supplementary focus group interviews with students and teachers provided deeper insights into the collaborative dynamics.

#### Expected Results/Findings

Preliminary findings reveal that while SYKL fosters positive peer relationships and task engagement, challenges arise when either the tutor or tutee struggles with the mathematical content. Cases highlight how overly directive tutors may inhibit the tutee's independent problem-solving, while tutors facing difficulties themselves may fail to provide meaningful support. Teachers play a critical role in scaffolding these interactions, especially in helping students ask reflective, probing questions.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The study contributes to Nordic educational research by highlighting the dual academic and social benefits of peer tutoring in math, resonating with broader pedagogical goals in the region that emphasize inclusivity and collaborative learning. It also offers practical insights for improving peer tutoring in classrooms, addressing both the academic challenges and the development of teamwork skills essential for future work environments.

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## Network: 9. General Didactics

### Cultivating a Didactic Space with Bildung-Didactics and Crosscurricular Teaching

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Crosscurricular teaching is central to many Nordic curricula and Wolfgang Klafki's Bildung-didactic theory, as it promotes pupils' understanding of complex societal phenomena and their overall development (Klafki, 1998). This paper presentation is based on a study exploring Finnish primary school teachers' Bildung-didactic considerations when organising crosscurricular teaching. Although the teachers worked within a subject-based school structure, they consistently included crosscurricular approaches.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Bildung-didactic theory offers a valuable framework for crosscurricular teaching, aiming at multidimensional educational goals (Klausen & Mård, 2024). Klafki (1998) argues that teaching should address key societal issues, helping pupils engage meaningfully with the world. Content needs to be contextualised and reorganised to explore these issues in depth, moving beyond traditional subject-specific teaching structures (cf. Blanck, 2023). This requires teachers to make thoughtful didactic choices, as educational systems and curricula typically follow a subject-based organisation.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The empirical data consisted of semi-structured interviews with the teachers and was analysed hermeneutically. Bildung-didactic theory and a model for crosscurricular teaching developed by Mård and Hilli (2024) informed the analysis.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The results indicate that the teachers managed the complexity of multiple subjects by flexibly integrating content areas and societal phenomena, thus providing pupils with holistic learning experiences. Crosscurricular teaching positively addressed not only pupils' but also the teachers' professional need for meaningful contexts. Crosscurricular teaching thus became a way to create a didactically meaningful space by allowing teachers to organise their time and content with the pupils. In some cases, the space included collaboration with external actors to open the school towards society and offer new perspectives to support pupils' Bildung processes. However, teachers must navigate tensions related to Bildung-didactic education when collaborating with external actors.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

In the presentation, we want to discuss didactic space as a possibility for teachers' professional agency. In the Nordic countries, teacher autonomy is obvious but rarely explored specifically. We suggest that a Bildung-oriented crosscurricular approach can provide primary school teachers with a didactically meaningful space to reflect and transform their teaching to follow the world and its contemporary and societal issues rather than the subject-based curriculum.

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## Network: 9. General Didactics

### Conceptual learning in language-aware crosscurricular education for democracy: A case study in grades 7–9

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#### Research topic/aim

The purpose of this presentation is to explore students' perceptions of the significance of conceptual learning for content learning in language-aware crosscurricular education for democracy in grades 7–9.

#### Theoretical framework

Research into crosscurricular teaching suggests increased learning possibilities from working with the same or similar phenomena and themes from the perspective of several school subjects (Björkgren et al., 2014). Our previous research (Juganson et al., 2024) showed that when the school subjects of religion and geography were combined in language-aware crosscurricular teaching in grades 7–9, it had positive effects on the development of students' democratic skills, understanding of countries, cultures, and religions as well as on their literacy (writing) skills. Although conceptual learning was not the main focus of our previous study, we observed that students benefited when subject-specific concepts were highlighted.

Strong language skills and an awareness of how language is used are important for engaging in the democratic processes of today's reading and writing society. In a world facing increasing global challenges, we argue that it is crucial for students to develop an in-depth understanding of central concepts related to human rights and sustainable development as part of democracy education. Halleson et al. (2024) describe conceptual understanding as a vital component of subject mastery, which can pose challenges for students without scaffolding provided by the teacher

#### Research design

In this case study, we use qualitative methodology to further explore students' perceptions of the significance of conceptual learning for content learning. The study's empirical material consists of surveys and interviews, student reflections in form of written assignments, and teacher observations, all of which are analyzed hermeneutically.

#### Expected results

We expect the study to contribute to a greater understanding of how language-aware crosscurricular teaching can support conceptual learning. Preliminary results indicate that also students experience improved subject understanding when conceptual learning is emphasised. Furthermore, we hope to provide insights for curriculum development regarding education for democracy.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Facing global challenges for democratic and social sustainability, the Nordic countries need to be able to support teachers to prepare students for future challenges in a complex world. For this purpose, the development of didactic guidelines for language-aware crosscurricular teaching is of high relevance.

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## Network: 9. General Didactics

Guidance counsellors' understanding of career competence in Finnish general upper secondary education.

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### Research topic/aim

This paper investigates how guidance counsellors relate to the concept of career competence and how they act on the goals for this in the national core curriculum of general upper secondary education.

One of the aims of student guidance is supporting the students in planning their future, coping with life changes and transforming gained knowledge into lifelong employability skills (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020).

This is the responsibility of the whole teaching staff, but the guidance counsellor has a key role as guidance counselling in Finland is not only guidance but also a separate school subject taught in class.

### Theoretical framework

The study is informed by Theory of Practice Architectures (Mahon et al., 2017) to understand the guidance counsellors' sayings, doings and relatings.

### Methodology/research design

With a hermeneutic approach semi-structured interviews have been conducted with nine guidance counsellors.

The data are interpreted using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

### Expected results/findings

Preliminary results show most guidance counsellors interviewed feel insecure with the concept of career competence. How they choose to act on the goals of the national core curriculum depends on their own strengths and weaknesses and the cooperation with other teachers and leadership.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Career competence is positively linked to study engagement, life satisfaction, and academic performance (Akkermans et al., 2018) and in the Nordics seen as a part of school values and the purpose of education (Einarsdottir et al., 2023; Skovhus & Thomsen, 2020). This is part of preparing young people for a sustainable and hopeful future.

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Network: 9. General Didactics

Students' perception on carnivores in nature. An evaluation of a carnivore project in Norway.

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Understanding complex societal challenges are more than ever a vital part of education. Issues and dilemmas related to these societal challenges can be seen as wicked problems. These are characterized by their complexity, requiring relational understanding, critical reflection, and consideration of ethical and moral aspects. One wicked problem are the long-term conflicts between the four large carnivores in Norway: brown bear, wolverine, wolf and lynx, and grazing livestock and reindeer husbandry. Visitor centres focusing on predators have been established by the Norwegian government to mitigate these conflicts. The centres have a mandate to provide a comprehensive and objective overview of the ecology, management, and conflicts associated with large carnivores in Norway. This study followed six classes (115 pupils) attending either a one-day field trip to the Visitor Centre Carnivore Namsskogan or a three-day field trip that included a visit to this centre, a South Sámi language and culture centre, and the Lierne National Park Visitor Centre. The latter trip included an overnight stay at a bear camp. The aim of this study was to explore students' perceptions of carnivores, grazing livestock, and reindeer husbandry before and after the field trip. The research questions were: 1. How does the field trips change students' perceptions of carnivores and the place of grazing livestock and reindeer husbandry in nature? 2. What characterizes students' perceptions of carnivores and the place of grazing livestock and reindeer husbandry in nature? The research employed a mixed-methods design, using a questionnaire and interviews conducted before and after the trip. The questionnaire addressed how the students ranked various elements such as the right to being in nature (grazing livestock, reindeer husbandry, hunter, hiker, sheep, bear, elk, tree, bird and a reindeer). The interviews addressed accordingly the students to rank the three elements bear, wolf and sheep and subsequently rank the lynx, wolverine and reindeer. To analyse the quantitative data from the questionnaire a linear mixed model and a Wilcoxon rank-sum test were applied. The qualitative data were analysed with thematic analysis, with an inductive and deductive approach. The analysis of the questionnaire indicated that, overall, students have the most negative perception of human-related elements in nature. Only for the category bear there was found a statistically significant change in score between the one- and three-day courses. In the interviews conducted before the field trip the students often rank the carnivores above the grazing livestock without giving any explanation. After the field trip, most of the rankings were explained. The explanations were sorted into the categories: the animal's properties, the animal's needs, the animal's relationship to humans, and, lastly, the students' relational understanding and critical reflection. The study indicates a certain level of relational and complex understanding of the wicked problem after the fieldtrips, especially related to bears, which were in focus at the 3-day field trip. The ability to use critical reflection and relational understanding increased as knowledge increased.



Network: 9. General Didactics

Students' Perspectives on Individual Development Dialogues

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Research Topic / Aim

The focus of this article is to examine what students perceive as significant beyond the content of a development conversation, with a particular emphasis on communicative aspects. The empirical data comes from a completed dissertation project highlighting the importance of teachers' leadership during development conversations in primary schools.

Theoretical Framework

We start from an understanding that the world is a social, intersubjective, and historical realm where individuals experience, act, and intertwine in both private and shared worlds. The study is inspired by phenomenology and adopts a lifeworld phenomenological perspective, analyzing data to account for people's contexts.

Methodology/Research Design

This article presents the results of an analysis of student interviews conducted as part of a project aimed at studying teachers' leadership in parent-teacher development dialogues and examining the experiences of both teachers and students regarding this leadership. The analysis was conducted using van Manen's (2014) three reading strategies: a holistic approach, which involved reading the text in its entirety; a selective approach, which focused on identifying significant statements, thematic expressions, or longer descriptions; and a detailed reading strategy to understand what in students' lived experiences stands out as particularly significant. We explain our understanding of reading using the lifeworld phenomenological concepts of intersubjectivity and intentionality.

Expected Results/Findings

The results reveal students' perspectives on what is significant for them in their communication with teachers and guardians during a development conversation. The analysis of student interviews identified the following themes: being heard, describing and asking questions, and bodily expressions. Students consider it important that all parties involved in a developmental conversation are active participants, that they have time to think and articulate their thoughts, and that the participants listen to one another. For students, it matters how teachers frame descriptions so that they can recognize themselves, the topics teachers ask about, and how questions are posed. Questions should be kind, nuanced, and framed in a way that invites reflection and ensures student comprehension. Both verbal and non-verbal communication are essential for students. When teachers listen, this should be evident in the topics discussed and their bodily expressions. How a teacher listens, uses body language, and speaks tone are significant.

Relevance for Nordic Educational Research

A study that reveals what students find significant in development conversations, particularly focusing on communicative aspects, can be seen as relevant for research in education in the Nordic context. The study's analysis, supported by lifeworld phenomenological concepts, contributes to increased knowledge and a deeper understanding of what is required when teachers lead development conversations, potentially benefiting teachers. The findings are relevant as they provide a scientific basis regarding student perspectives and practical implications, helping teachers to improve their work with development conversations. Research on development conversations that explore teachers' verbal and non-verbal communication, primarily from a student perspective, is scarce. Relationship and assessment research requires studies from both teacher and student perspectives, making this study a valuable contribution to Nordic educational research.

## Network: 9. General Didactics

Exploring students' engagement with societal challenges in the context of interdisciplinary educational settings

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### Research topic

In recent years, there has been much attention on the key role that schools play in preparing young people's participation in an increasingly complex world where societal challenges such as climate crisis, threats against democracies and social injustice are brought to our attention daily. Along with an international educational policy trend, the Norwegian core curriculum (LK20) emphasise the importance of addressing societal challenges by introducing three interdisciplinary topics to be taught on all educational levels: health and life skills, sustainable development, and democracy and citizenship. In this paper, we report on central findings from an ongoing national research-based evaluation study of how teachers and students work with interdisciplinary topics in classrooms. Our guiding research question is: *What possibilities and challenges emerge in students' learning processes in settings where they engage with societal challenges?*

### Theoretical framework

The research is based on a sociocultural perspective where learning and teaching are understood as meaning-making mediated by tools and activities (Vygotsky, 1978). This perspective also emphasises the importance of positioning students as active and responsible participants in teaching and learning (van de Sande & Greeno, 2012).

### Methodology

The study is a multiple-case study (Yin, 2015), based on three comprehensive cases; one in lower and two in upper secondary schools. The data consists of video recordings of classroom interactions, structured observation notes, student products and interviews with students and teachers. The material is investigated through interaction analysis of classroom data (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) and thematic analyses of interview data.

### Results

In our analyses, we identify four central aspects of students' emerging understanding of societal challenges: a) how they engage in peer-collaboration, b) how they use (digital)learning resources, c) their work with end products, and d) how students are positioned in relation to the knowledge content they encounter. Overall, our analyses display the importance of procedural and conceptual guidance from a teacher, including support on how to practically participate in peer-interaction, how to critically evaluate and position information retrieved from the internet and ChatGPT, as well as support in linking students' everyday experiences and academic knowledge.

### Relevance to Nordic Educational context

Societal challenges in school and education, explored in this study, are now given attention in all Nordic countries, necessitating research and sharing across the region. This study provides insights that can guide teachers and school leaders in their interdisciplinary work aimed at fostering students' understanding, action competence and vigour in meeting societal challenges.

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## Network: 9. General Didactics

Teachers' reflections on their efforts to apply democratic participation in teaching for sustainable development

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In primary education in Sweden, sustainable development is integrated into various parts of the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School, Preschool Class, and School-Age Educare. It is a multifaceted and complex concept, underpinned by a clear ethical foundation. The Swedish Curriculum emphasizes the importance of grounding the education system in democratic principles. Additionally, the Education Act highlights that education for sustainable development should involve pupil influence. Previous research has largely focused on preschool education, with a central emphasis on the pupil perspective. In contrast, the ambition of this study was to shift the focus to teachers working in classrooms with pupils in grades one and four, addressing the research gap within the primary school context. Specifically, this study aims to contribute to knowledge of the ways teachers reflect on their teaching for sustainable development, with a particular focus on pupils' influence in the classroom.

The study is grounded in sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interactions in the development of cognitive processes. It posits that learning is a social activity in which knowledge is constructed through interactions with others.

The methodology for data collection draws inspiration from educational design research, which involves close collaboration between the researcher and the teachers, with both parties contributing to the research process aimed at developing didactical practices.

The empirical material consists of audio-recorded reflections of teachers discussing their teaching for sustainable development after applying certain forms of democratic participation in the classroom. The material was analysed using concepts from the study's theoretical framework.

The study's results indicate that when the teachers reflect on their teaching for sustainable development with a particular focus on pupils' influence, they emphasize the importance of strengthening pupils' agency and increasing their engagement as co-creators in the learning process. The teachers' reflections also explore the approaches employed to plan for and create an educational environment that is a conducive space for sustainable development. Additionally, the study underscores the value that the teachers place on the integration of authentic materials to connect the classroom learning with real-world contexts, thereby enhancing engagement and making learning more concrete.

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by shedding light on how teachers emphasize the significance of linking classroom content to pupils' everyday experiences. It illustrates the dual role of authentic materials in promoting pupil engagement, while also acknowledging their potential to cause distraction. Ultimately, the study reinforces the idea that education serves as a vital tool for preparing future generations to address the challenges of the Anthropocene era. It holds the potential to equip pupils with the necessary skills to navigate complex issues within the Nordic context, while simultaneously nurturing a sense of global responsibility and the ability to engage with pressing challenges in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Network: 9. General Didactics

### Didactic Leadership for Students' Right to Development

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The research problem of this study is grounded in observations of teaching practices and teachers' narratives. These reveal that despite good intentions, teachers do not reach all students. Not all students participate actively and not all students are held accountable for their participation.

The aim of the study is to develop knowledge about teaching, based on the concepts of high participation format and accountability (Kounin 1970/1977). The study aims to enhance teachers' professional knowledge base.

Theoretically the study draws on Kounin's classic *Discipline and Group Management in Classroom* (1970/1977). The theory emphasizes the importance of the strategies teachers adopt to increase student engagement in lessons. A quiet learning environment does not automatically mean a favorable learning environment for all students. In relation to the didactic tradition, this can be understood in terms of the didactic contract, which describes the mutual expectations between teachers and students in a teaching context (Brousseau, 2002). The concepts operationalized in this study are group alerting, high participation format, and accountability.

The concept of group alerting refers to teachers' concrete methods for keeping students attentive. Teachers are expected to involve all students, thereby breaking up prototypical group formations (Hogg & Vaughan, 2018). The high participation format emphasizes the importance of achieving a teaching format in which all students are active, which is facilitated by the strategies inherent in the previous concept of group alerting. The concept of accountability implies that a high participation format strengthens students' responsibility in their learning process. Taken together, high participation format and accountability benefit the student by enhancing their confidence in their own learning and self-expectations (Bandura, 1997).

The design of the study is based on an in-service training program for teachers. The teachers' problem formulation concerned how teaching can be improved through increased participation and accountability. After the training, the teachers planned and carried out six to eight lessons based on these concepts. Finally, focus group interviews were conducted with four different subject specific groups, comprising a total of twelve teachers. These focus group interviews allowed for a systematic analysis of teachers' experiences in the classroom, providing insights into the factors behind their perceptions and experiences (Morgan, 1997).

The results of the study show strong consensus across all four interviews, that students were more active during class with less segmented tasks presented during the lesson. The findings indicate that students were able to do more work during class, which reduced the need for homework. A prominent feature was also a shift towards more analog activities in the classroom, with a slight increase in the use of textbooks. Given that the study is general didactic, it is relevant in a Nordic educational research context.

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EXTRAMURAL ENGLISH IN THE NORWEGIAN UPPER-SECONDARY SCHOOL CONTEXT: ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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Effective English teaching as an additional language presents challenges within the Nordic educational system due to large class sizes and limited instructional hours, which can restrict students' language development. However, informal language learning through activities outside the classroom—such as listening to music, watching videos, and playing video games—can provide additional exposure to English and support language growth (Dressman, 2020). This type of learning, conceptualized as Extramural English (EE) by Sundqvist (2009), encompasses digital and non-digital activities unrelated to formal schooling that help learners develop their English proficiency.

While research has shown that EE enhances language learning, few studies have focused on its impact in Norwegian contexts. Using EE as a theoretical framework (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016), this study seeks to contribute to the Nordic educational system by exploring how EE activities might support English language learning in Norwegian schools. Specifically, the study examines the types of EE activities that upper-secondary students frequently engage in and investigates whether the frequency of these activities correlates with and predicts vocabulary knowledge, reading proficiency, and writing proficiency.

The study employed a survey methodology with 109 upper-secondary students (55 female, 49 male, 5 other gender), aged 16 and 17. EE activity frequency was measured using the Extramural English Scale (Sundqvist & Uztosun, 2023), while vocabulary knowledge was assessed using the Vocabulary Levels Test. Reading and writing tests were specifically designed for this research to evaluate students' proficiency in these areas. Descriptive statistics were used to assess EE frequency, and Pearson's correlation and regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships between EE frequency and English proficiency. K-means clustering and ANOVA further explored differences in proficiency based on students' EE frequency.

Findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between EE frequency and vocabulary test scores,  $r(103) = 0.44$ ,  $p < .01$ , but no significant correlation with reading or writing proficiency. Regression analysis indicated that EE frequency significantly predicted vocabulary knowledge,  $F(5, 97) = 5.996$ ,  $p < .01$ , with an  $R^2$  value of 0.23, meaning EE explained 23% of the variance in vocabulary levels. ANOVA results supported this finding, showing that students with higher EE frequency scores performed significantly better on the vocabulary test.

This research contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing the gap in understanding EE's role in Norwegian students' language learning. It demonstrates that engaging in EE activities can effectively support vocabulary acquisition, suggesting that encouraging EE activities may be a key strategy for supplementing language instruction within the Nordic educational context.

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## Network: 9. General Didactics

### Representation of teaching practices in teacher education curricula: the case of Norway

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In its simplest form teaching can be delineated (see Fenstermacher, 1986) as a process which is solely established for a pupil to acquire knowledge from a teacher. However, teaching practices are today conceptualized through several theoretical and empirically based frameworks that prescribe knowledge domains guiding how this practice should be operationalized in classroom.

Menck (2006) views teaching as an improvable craft, focusing on strategies that boost student learning. Schoenfeld (2023) sees teaching as a dynamic decision-making process within social contexts, integrating resources, orientations, and goals to form teaching practices. Biesta (2023) regards teaching as an art that guides students' focus, engagement, and comprehensive development. Multiple studies underscore key practices that cause learning gains: TALIS (OECD, 2019) endorses cognitive activation and management techniques, while Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis recommends explicit teacher expectations, formative assessments, and feedback. The MET project (Kane et al., 2013) and CLASS framework (Pianta and Hamre, 2009) identify observable behaviours like clear content explanation, effective questioning, and checking understanding, and categorize effective teaching into emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

Throughout various knowledge brokering processes, these models become incorporated into teacher education curricula (Cooper, 2014; Ellis & McNicholl, 2015). However, the research on the representation of teaching practices within teacher education curricula, as they should be realized through teacher education, is still developing.

#### Research problem and research question

Research on the representation of teaching practices in teacher education curricula is largely focused within a constrained empirical research domain, often representing Anglo-American perspectives on teacher education. There is a gap in the literature concerning the representation of various empirical or theoretical models of teaching from a more global viewpoint. Against this backdrop, this study poses the question: How is teaching practice conceptually modelled in the Norwegian teacher education curricula for primary and secondary education (GLU/ Lektor/ PPU)?

#### Methodology

This study utilized qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014) to scrutinize the curriculum documents pertinent to teacher education in Norway (published 2010-12), with a specific focus on the representation of classroom teaching practices. The deductive categories for this type of analysis stem from both theoretical and empirical research literature based on categorial mapping.

#### Findings/ expected research outcomes:

The research is still underway. It is expected that the study will elucidate how teaching practice is conceptualized within the GLU/ Lektor/ PPU programs, identifying the extent to which established educational frameworks and empirical evidence are incorporated. These outcomes should delineate which teaching practices are deemed as high/low-priority within the curriculum. Moreover, the study may reveal the balance between theory and practical application, and how Norwegian teacher education curricula prepare prospective teachers for the complexities of classroom teaching.

#### Relevance of this research for Nordic education research

This research is relevant to Nordic education research for several reasons. Examining the Norwegian teacher education curricula contributes a new dimension to the international body of knowledge concerning teacher formation and professional development, while offering insights into Nordic educational values and practices.

# Network: 10. Higher Education



## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Teacher educators' researcherly disposition and practices

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#### Research topic/aim

The research is from the context of the longitudinal (2022-2028) initiative NAFA (<https://nafa.nu>) where all Danish Science Teacher Educators (STEs) from the six University Colleges (UCs) are organized in professional learning communities (PLCs). The term researcherly practices refers to a broad understanding of research as encompassing practitioner research and professional inquiry (Boyd & White, 2017), and beside the professional inquiry in the PLCs the aim of NAFA is to facilitate cooperation in science education research between the UCs and the universities. Furthermore, NAFA involves activities in cooperation with teachers and schools. The aim of the paper is to examine the development in the STEs' researcherly dispositions (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2016) and practices during the first years of NAFA, and if and how the modelling of researcherly practices for the student teachers is affected.

#### Theoretical framework

The research refers to the hybrid position as teacher-educator-researcher and the aligned conceptualization 'researcherly disposition' (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2016), and to the conceptualization of research literacy from Mausethagen et al. (2023) emphasising professional judgement and relevance for teaching.

#### Methodology/research design

The research design is a sequential mixed methods design with a yearly survey and repeated group interviews with STEs. The NAFA initiative continues with PLC activities until 2027, but thus far there are results from the first two cycles, following an annual rhythm with professional inquiry work in the PLCs and sharing the findings in a national network. From the 2024 survey we include also data following up on a baseline survey from 2021 regarding self-reported competencies, referring to four domains of teacher educator knowledge (Mork et al., 2021).

#### Expected results/findings

The findings reveal a positive trend in STEs' experiences with science education research over the first years in NAFA, where the STEs are involved in professional inquiry. This engagement has apparently enhanced their ability to model research practices for student teachers. Based on the findings we point to the importance of a practical approach to research literacy (Mausethagen et al., 2023), viewing it as a domain-specific construct influenced by institutional context and professional/pedagogical concerns among educators.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The focus on research literacy as educator, both as here teacher educators and among teachers, is a contemporary research focus across the Nordic countries and we are involved in networking across countries about this research focus.

#### Referencer

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Literature Review: Professional Identity in Continuing Education

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This literature review explores the process of professional identity construction among continuing education students in the school sector, focusing on their collaborative interactions with colleagues, resource persons, and leadership. The study aims to uncover new insights into the formation of professional identity within the context of continuing education, with the intention of fostering meaningful dialogue between practice, education, and research environments.

The concept of professional identity is approached as a dynamic and ongoing negotiation process within an environment that shapes students' self-perception as professionals (Iskov et al., 2023). For continuing education students, this negotiation process differs significantly from that of initial teacher education, as their primary affiliation lies within the school setting. This distinction highlights the unique challenges and opportunities faced by continuing education students in developing their professional identities (Hald & Byskov, 2023; Plauborg, 2022).

The research methodology employs a thematic literature review, including both Danish and international studies. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of how continuing education students in the school sector construct their professional identities through collaborative efforts with colleagues, resources, and management. By synthesizing findings from diverse sources, the review aims to identify common themes, patterns, and best practices in professional identity development within continuing education.

The study is expected to yield valuable insights into the ways in which collaboration with colleagues, resource persons, and leadership can foster the development of a robust professional identity among continuing education students. It explores themes closely related to job satisfaction, engagement, motivation, and retention within the teaching profession. These factors are crucial in understanding the long-term impact of professional identity formation on educators' careers and the overall quality of education.

Understanding the nuances of professional identity formation in continuing education is of importance for educational institutions. This knowledge enables them to design and offer relevant, practice-oriented programs that effectively support professional attraction and retention in schools. By aligning continuing education programs with the real-world needs and challenges faced by educators, institutions can better prepare students for the complexities of their professional roles.

The findings of this literature review have the potential to inspire and inform dialogue and knowledge sharing among various stakeholders in the educational landscape. This includes practitioners in the field, continuing education providers, initial teacher education programs, and research environments within the Nordic context. By bridging these diverse perspectives, the study aims to create a more holistic understanding of professional identity development in education.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Cultivating Reflective Practitioners: Playful Pathways to Professional Identity

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#### Research topic/aim

We explore how playful approaches to learning can be used in social education and teacher education to challenge ready-made answers and foster reflective educational practices. Our aim is to show how playful teaching can be a catalyst for emergent and embodied social dimensions of professional learning in ways where students are simultaneously enabled to navigate the tension between comfort and challenge towards preparing for their future professional identity.

#### Theoretical framework

Playful learning in higher education supports human flourishing and growth (Jensen et al., 2021); fosters courage to challenge oneself (Nørgård & Moseley, 2021); nurtures engagement and imagination; and encourages collaboration (Boysen et al., 2022). Furthermore, playful learning has been shown to challenge students' ways of being present in the classroom (Oreskov & Sønnichsen, 2023).

#### Methodology/research design

This study draws on an abductive analysis (Brinkmann, 2014) across three different empirical situations from design experiments playfully exploring elements of students' future professional practice within teacher education and social education. These design-experiments are conducted through design-based research (Buhl et al., 2022) and research through art and practice (Rasmussen, 2012).

#### Expected results/findings

Our analysis identifies three key themes emerging from playful approaches to learning in teacher education and social education: embodied professional identity formation, balancing comfort and challenge, and embracing emergent and social dimensions of professional learning. While these themes provide opportunities in navigating the complexities of preparing for future professional practice, they also point to how students' hope for own future professional practice depends on embodied and sensory opportunities to reflect on how they will act in their future roles.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Through our findings we discuss how playful approaches to learning contributes to a broader and critical discourse on how differentiated pedagogical approaches can continuously help bring diversity, hope, and sustainability into preparing students for future professional practices.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Why Problem-Based Learning in Engineering Education?

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#### Research Topic/Aim

Problem-based learning (PBL) has taken inspiration from American pragmatism and, to some extent, critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The PBL-principles that underpinned project work at progressive universities since the 1970s include problem orientation, student empowerment, exemplarity, and interdisciplinarity. The PBL-approach aims to tackle curriculum overload by addressing problems in their context, while encouraging students to critically reflect on their insights within a broader societal framework. This perspective relates to the principle of exemplarity. Inter- and transdisciplinarity is valued as problems typically span multiple disciplines and competencies. However, researchers have noted that the principles of exemplarity and inter- and transdisciplinarity are not easily defined and practiced. Different educational programs have thus interpreted these principles in different ways.

This raises fundamental questions about PBL: How does PBL contribute to developing skills and competencies in highly complex and knowledge intensive fields? Additionally, the growing focus on challenges posed by the climate crisis raises new questions about skills and competencies of the professionals of the future. On this background we ask: What are the rationales and justifications presented for PBL in an engineering program at a university of applied sciences, aimed at developing relevant professional skills and competencies?

#### Theoretical Framework

The analysis is guided by Carol Bacchi's approach "What's the problem represented to be" (WPR), that employs a Foucauldian discourse-theoretical framework. We investigate the political process of introducing PBL in an engineering program, focusing on internal organizational dynamics (at a meso-level) and how actors, with different positions, frame the educational tasks PBL is designed to address. In conceptualizing PBL implementation levels, we incorporate theories and concepts from Juebei Chen, Anette Kolmos, and Maggi Savin Baden. To explore relevant professional skills and competencies, we draw on knowledge theory developed by scholars like Basil Bernstein.

#### Methodology/Research Design

This paper is based on a single case study of a university college with five distinct engineering programs. The empirical research includes desk research of key documents related to PBL implementation, complemented by interviews with key stakeholders who hold different positions within the programs.

#### Expected Results/Findings

The research is work-in-progress. Actors generally view PBL as a vital element in addressing pressing challenges that emerged years ago due to decreasing numbers of enrolment and lack of resources. PBL is seen as a response to industry needs, focusing on how engineers work and the need for generic competencies such as communication, collaboration, analytical skills, ethical reasoning, etc. This has resulted in a PBL model that includes both disciplinary courses and interdisciplinary projects aimed at generating, respectively, specialized knowledge and generic competencies. We examine how the rationales behind this model differ among actors and reveal ambiguities in their interpretations.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

PBL is prevalent in the Nordic region, making the discussion of how its principles and rationales are revitalized highly relevant.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

Studentship on/in/about time in Higher education: The significance of age in students' identity constructions in preschool teacher training programs

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### Research topic/aim

This paper explores how age is made relevant in students' narratives about studentship when constructing themselves and each other as students in Swedish preschool teacher training programs.

### Theoretical framework

In order to analyze students experiences of HE, this paper draws on narrative theory and method as well as theories of *life lines* (*life schedules*/*life scripts*). The latter deals with the socially and culturally expected life schemas in which norms are realized and embodied. Based on this type of value-laden schemas, both life trajectories that are coded according to gender and class, as well as the imaginary "stops" for when life events are to take place, are imagined. These normatively charged schemas can thus be described as a kind of meaning-making references for an expected life, with an expected pace, where some things appear as desirable and others as less conceivable depending on "who", or "what" one is supposed to be/become. It is also about notions of what is expected to happen *when* in life that follows socially and culturally trodden paths (Halberstam, 2005, Ahmed, 2006)

### Methodological design

The analyses draw on life story interviews with 17 students enrolled in early childhood education programs at three different Swedish universities. The data consists of two sets of interviews: the first were conducted in conjunction with the students beginning their studies, and the second when they had completed the first year of their 3.5-year program.

### Expected conclusions/findings

In an initial preliminary analysis, it appears that the interviewed students narrate diverse studentships based on their age and their various life situations. In doing so, they also position themselves and others in relation to an imagined "standard student" and to higher education as something to be pursued *on time* or *off time* on a linear educational trajectory and within a normative life schedule.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

With a focus on age this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of diversity in the context of widening participation in higher education in the Nordic countries.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

Professional integration in professional degrees: An extension and test of Tinto's integration framework among students in Denmark

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### Research Aim

The aim of this study is to discuss the applicability of Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure to professional bachelor's programs and to empirically test a revised integration model consisting of academic, social, and professional integration. We argue that professional integration is an essential, yet missing, dimension in Tinto's model. We develop this theoretical argument and test the hypothesis of a three-integration-dimensions model on data from a university college in Denmark.

### Theoretical Framework

We depart in the critique of Tinto's model for not fitting the professional bachelor's degree (Hovdhaugen et. al, 2023; Sweetman et al., 2023). While a student may thrive socially and academically, professional doubts and senses of professional non-belonging may result in turnover intentions or even drop-out (Roberts, 2012). To define 'professional integration,' we draw on theories of educational coherence, professional identity development, and professional commitment (Heggen and Terum, 2013; Smeby and Heggen 2013). Based on this literature, we formulate ten items to capture the key dimensions of professional integration.

### Research Design and Analysis

We apply confirmatory analysis to the Danish national wellbeing study (N=18,398) to test whether we can identify social, academic, and professional integration among students enrolled in professional bachelors. This confirmatory approach aligns with our hypothesis, testing each integration dimension with clearly defined items. We test the measurement of academic, social, and professional integration statistically using the *sem* command in Stata 18. Since observations are clustered in educational programs, we adjust standard errors according to these groups and evaluate the model based on *Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual* (SRMR).

### Expected Findings

Preliminary analysis suggests that professional integration is empirically distinct from academic and social integration, supporting our three-dimensional integration model (SRMR=.047).

### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

Our findings contribute to discussions in Nordic educational research on professional education and student retention, calling for an expansion of Tinto's model to include professional integration. This study provides a framework for future research on how professional integration impacts persistence in professional degrees.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Expanding classroom interaction in higher education: students developing mediational skills with L1 peers in foreign language classes

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International students are an essential resource for fostering enriched exchanges and deeper understanding between students and staff in higher education (Allen et al., 2022). Between 2014 and 2015, the Language Centres at the Universities of Helsinki and Tampere began integrating international master's and exchange students into language classes to act as first language peers (L1 peers) to students learning their language(s). According to Kotkavuori (2024), L1 peers bring their perspectives and experiences in complex ways to dynamic learning situations, playing a significant role as mediators in both language and cultural learning. In the joint meaning-making process, they contribute to meaningful university teaching, transforming the language learning experience (Hardman, 2021; Kotkavuori, 2024).

This postdoctoral study further examines students' experiences on learning languages alongside L1 peers. In today's increasingly diverse societies, different orientations and languages meet for complex and shifting real-life purposes (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Thus, interacting successfully between multiple linguistic and cultural frameworks requires a wide range of mediational skills (Wagner & Porto, 2023). An electronic questionnaire, including closed and open-ended questions was sent to students at the Language Centres of Helsinki and Tampere who participated in language courses with L1 peers, each autumn and spring from 2022 to 2024. The data analysis of the 217 responses includes a quantitative analysis of Likert scale data and a qualitative content analysis, which are examined from the perspective of mediational skills.

The expected results show that interacting with L1 peers fosters students' mediational skills as they not only pass messages in another language, but also mediate meanings and co-construct common understanding on intercultural and interpersonal levels. However, student-L1 peer interactions appear to involve similar communication challenges as those encountered in real-life intercultural situations. Therefore, incorporating mediational skills as a learning outcome in language courses would be highly beneficial. Students and L1 peers could benefit from understanding that successful interaction involves mediation. Furthermore, this awareness can help students, L1 peers, and teachers in achieving the goals of internationalization in university contexts in Finland and beyond: fostering a holistic learning experience in preparation for living and working in a globalized world (Hardman, 2021).

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Challenges in partnerships on education, a question about trust?

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### Research topic/aim

National guidelines for early childhood teacher education in Norway state that university and kindergartens are equal learning arenas with a shared responsibility for content, quality, progression, and assessment in practice. Considering the increased attention to the importance of close interaction between teacher education institutions and practice arenas, this study examines how practice teachers in early childhood teacher education experience their role as mentors and the interactions with a university, as part of an equal partnership in teacher education.

Since kindergartens and teacher education have different core tasks, and partnership often are initiated and managed by the teacher education programs, there is a risk of mentors becoming recipients rather than participants in the partnerships.

The research question for the study is: How do mentors of student teachers in their teaching placement experience their own role as part of a partnership on teacher education?

### Theoretical framework

The empirical data are discussed using theoretical perspectives on practice architectures (Kemmis et. al, 2014), third space (Bhabha 1994/2006; Zeichner, 2010) and trust (Grimen, 2009; Luhman, 1979).

### Methodology/research design

The empirical data consists of interviews with 10 experienced practice teachers/mentors in early childhood teacher education and a questionnaire with text boxes from 29 practice teachers/mentors with varying backgrounds. The transcribed material was analysed through thematic analysis in four steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Malterud, 2017). To achieve an effective, thorough, and reliable analysis of the data material, all three researchers have worked both individually, in pairs and collectively. The method is closely linked to "Collective Qualitative Analysis" (Eggebo, 2020). National ethical guidelines for research in Norway are followed through informed consents to participate in the study, and procedures for anonymity. The study is approved by SIKT.

### Findings

Analyses of the empirical data suggests that the partnership is rather weak. It seems that there is an untapped potential in the collaboration, which limits the development of a third space. The structures exist but are not utilized.

The practice teachers are calling for more involvement from the subject teachers in collaborative forums, and the meetings with the university are characterized by one-way information. The practice teachers also lack opportunities for quality assurance, through peer mentoring with other practice teachers. They are questioning whether the university blindly trust that the quality of the mentoring is good enough.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Lillejord and Børte (2017) emphasize that well-functioning partnerships require symmetrical relationships among cooperating actors as well as agreement on what constitutes good practice, but the relationships between teacher educators and practice teachers are primarily asymmetrical.

Olsen and Bjørndal (2024) find that the parties in primary school teacher education experience the partnership as fragmented, unclear, artificial and random, with a gap between ambitious collaboration ideals and the realized

partnership (2024). Tensions and fronts are common but can be reduced through extensive collaboration. Limited time resources are challenging.

The contribution of this study is the exploration of trust as a core element to create a third space for learning and new identities.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

A renewed hope for accrediting MOOCs in Swedish Higher Education: A case study of a system-divergent innovation

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The Swedish approach to MOOCs - massive open online courses - is described as *laissez-faire*, encouraging a global disruption path connected to international providers and leading to significant variation in MOOC development and deployment. In Swedish higher education institutions (HEIs), MOOCs face deep-rooted systematic challenges and incompatibilities, possibly hindering these institutions' digitalisation and digital maturity. For example, until recently, MOOCs at HEIs in Sweden could not be truly open when obeying routines related to formal education, such as admission, assessment, and accreditation procedures; no MOOC has yet targeted a broad group of international students and simultaneously provided formal recognition through course credits. MOOC students are considered non-regular HE students, impacting both universities' business models and students' livelihoods. In 2019, one Swedish HEI deployed and accredited a mass-market MOOC on artificial intelligence literacy, attracting over 1 million users from 170 countries with a completion figure of 12.4%. The global MOOC was turned into an undergraduate-level, free-standing, credit-yielding course offered to thousands of students in Sweden.

Seeing the scarcity of work investigating the organisational processes of MOOC-related innovation in Swedish HEIs, this case study examines this system-divergent innovation with potential national, even Nordic, educability and contagion. Cross-fertilising Giddens' structuration theory and innovation-related concepts in Swedish HE, this paper answers three research questions believed to advance policy reforms and fill a gap in the literature that would otherwise inform us about the context of MOOCs' emergence and accreditation in Sweden. First, what are the underlying processes of this system-divergent innovation, how did it occur, and why? Second, what were the special ingredients for its success? Furthermore, how sustainable is it?

In-depth interviews with eight university faculty and staff heavily involved in this MOOC-based innovation were deductively and reflexively analysed. Several themes, called *challenges-as-opportunities*, were generated across three innovation phases (unfreezing, moving and refreezing), including bureaucratic, financial, technological, internal conflicts, external pressure, and dispositions and ownership. These findings were eventually packaged into governmental, sectorial, and institutional-level recommendations, calling urgently for a continuous and open admission system and enhanced institutional digital maturity.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Imagining the Future through Fiction – Discourses of Professional Identity in Higher Education Student Groups

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Learning is based on the idea of taking past experiences and using them to prepare for the future. Meanwhile, fiction utilizes the reader's imagination to give them vicarious experiences to learn from (e.g., Felski, 2008; Nussbaum, 1997). In the current paper, we explore how students from teacher education and medical education read and discuss films and novels, which present images of the students' profession in the past. Students then relate these images to their own present, as well as their imagined future, professional self. For students in welfare professions, the conditions and demands of a future world are as unknown as the future professional selves that the students are going to become (cf. Wallner et al., 2024). Discussions about literature and film set in the past form opportunities for students in teacher and medical education to collectively create understandings of what kind of doctors and teachers they might become in the future (cf. Rydén Gramner, 2022; 2023; Wallner, 2024) – encompassing both an ideal of what they would aspire to be, and simultaneously what they might be forced to become, in a world of increased social injustice, economic instability and conflict. Using discursive psychological methodology (Wiggins, 2017), student groups from both educational settings were filmed during naturalistic classroom discussions, and close transcriptions provide a next-turn proof procedure in demonstrating different discourses employed by students. This way, the paper demonstrates how students in both cohorts utilize ideas from fictional media to construct images of the professional teacher and doctor, as well as the educational and medical fields, as something progressing from the past to the present, and beyond. Furthermore, they also construct critical ideas of a cyclical progression of learning and development, emphasizing a 'learning from the past'-perspective, as well as a relatively bleak outlook on their own professional future, as resources for both medicine and schooling diminish, workload increases, and challenges from patients and students grow.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Exploring higher education teachers' perspectives on current and future assessment practices

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The aim of this study was to explore the current and future perspectives of higher education teachers on assessment practices. Traditionally, assessment in higher education has been either summative, focused on grading, or formative, aimed at enhancing learning through feedback. Assessment practices have been guided by the constructivist alignment framework (Biggs, 1996), which emphasizes aligning teaching and assessment with learning outcomes. Recently, there has been increasing focus on sustainable assessment (Boud, 2010) to foster lifelong learning through authentic assessments and self-assessment skills. Technological advancements are further driving a shift toward innovative assessment methods that strengthen students' engagement with knowledge (Kramm & McKenna, 2023). The study drew on two datasets. Dataset 1 comprised seven focus group interviews conducted in Spring 2023. These interviews involved seven focus groups with two to four participants (N=21): three groups of experienced teachers, two groups of early-career teachers, one group of degree program directors, and one group of educational technology experts. Participants' teaching experience ranged from 4 to 20 years. Discussions focused on two key questions: (1) What is central to learning assessment? and (2) How do you envision the future of assessment in higher education? Dataset 2 consisted of an online survey conducted in Fall 2024 with higher education teachers enrolled in a university pedagogy course on assessment. The survey used the same open-ended questions as in the focus groups. The 34 respondents had teaching experience ranging from 0 to 20 years.

In Dataset 1, four main categories emerged regarding current assessment practices: (1) supporting the learning process, (2) establishing clear criteria for learning outcomes, (3) fostering students' responsibility for their learning, and (4) addressing challenges in the learning culture. Future perspectives on assessment were centered around: (1) verifying learning outcomes, (2) leveraging technology in assessment, (3) enhancing interaction in assessment, and (4) addressing ethical considerations. Dataset 2 demonstrated overlap with prior findings while also reflecting new insights: (1) supporting the learning process, (2) ensuring validity and fairness, (3) aligning assessments with learning objectives, and (4) providing meaningful feedback. Future perspectives focused on: (1) integrating AI and technology, (2) providing personalized feedback in response to growing student populations, and (3) maintaining high-quality, consistent assessment practices.

The results highlight both enduring and evolving priorities in higher education assessment. Teachers emphasized the dual purposes of assessment: monitoring student progress through formative assessments and evaluating proficiency at the end of courses through summative assessments. Both current and future assessments were conceptualized through the lens of constructive alignment, with assessment aligned to learning outcomes and sustainable assessment was less prominent. To conclude, the study suggests that more diverse perspectives on the assessment of learning should be discussed both in pedagogical training and at universities.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

"Waiting for a Better Time Is a Waste of Time": Motivation and Resilience in Learning Amid the Genocide in Gaza

Tahani Aldahdouh

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It may come as a surprise that some higher education students and academics continue to pursue their education and complete online courses despite the extreme hardships they face during the 2023/2024 genocide in Gaza. This study employs a social ecological framework and self-determination theory to explore the motivations and resilience strategies of learning among university students, graduates, and academics who autonomously enrolled in an initiative led by Dr. Imed Alromdani. The initiative offers free access to online courses through platforms such as Coursera, edX, and DataCamp. To date, over 6,631 Gazans have enrolled, with hundreds successfully completing courses.

All participants in the initiative were invited to voluntarily complete a brief, open-ended online questionnaire, and informed consent was obtained for their participation. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate their motivations behind the enrollment in the initiative and completion online courses. In addition, they were asked to describe what helped and what hindered their online learning. A total of 503 responses were received, with 138 reporting they had completed one or more courses, 78 indicating they are still studying, 92 did not complete any course and 195 not specifying their status. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis through Atlas.ti. The anticipated findings will shed light on the motivations and the protective and risk factors influencing learners' resilience amid the genocide in Gaza. Implications for higher education in conflict zones and future research directions are also discussed.

This topic aligns closely with NERA's theme, *Pedagogy of Hope: Gratitude, Diversity, and Sustainability in Education*, as it seeks to understand why Palestinians place such a high value on education and what education means to them in the context of the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Through examining these perspectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how education serves as a source of resilience, hope, and resistance, even under the most severe conditions, illuminating the role of education in sustaining cultural identity and aspirations for a more just future.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

Perceiving justice in supervision - the relationship to approaches to learning and teaching-learning experiences in master's thesis supervision

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Perceiving justice in supervision - the relationship to approaches to learning and teaching-learning experiences in master's thesis supervision

In this study we examined how perceptions of justice in master's thesis process are related to students' approaches to learning and experiences of the teaching-learning environment. Writing a master's thesis is a complex task where the supervisor-supervisee relationship and feeling to be fairly treated are essential. Procedural and interactional justice have been found to be relevant in instructional contexts (Chory-Assad & Paulsel, 2004). Procedural justice refers to giving everyone affected by the procedure a voice, avoiding favoring anyone at the expense of others and applying consistent procedures across persons and time. Interactional justice consists of interpersonal justice (people are treated with respect) and informational justice (transparency of the procedure). Studies show that feelings of being justly treated are related to learning motivation (Molinari, Speltini & Passini, 2013) and to positive evaluation of the teaching-learning environment (Alt, 2014).

The data consists of 72 law students who had enrolled and participated in a master's level seminar in spring 2024. All final-stage master's students in the present university were asked to fill in the online survey as a part of their studies. The questionnaire was sent to 102 students, and the response rate was 70.6%. The measurements used were perceptions of justice (Colquitt et al., 2001), approaches to learning (Lindblom-Ylänne et al., 2019) and experiences of teaching-learning environment (Parpala & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012).

Perceptions of justice index was split into three levels (1=low; 2= medium; 3= high). Students perceiving the fairness of supervision to be on the high level, had higher scores in deep learning ( $F(2, 69)=6.031, p=0.004$ ) and in experiencing teaching to be constructively aligned ( $F(2, 71)=3.573, p=0.03$ ). When examining the item correlations, especially items representing fair procedures showed significant relationship to deep learning whereas interactional justice items showed more significant correlations with the alignment variable.

This preliminary study suggests that perceptions of justice are related to how students approach their learning and how clear and aligned they perceive the teaching-learning environment to be. In conclusion, this research is highly relevant to university teaching and learning in Nordic countries as it underscores the pivotal role of perceptions of justice in shaping students' academic experiences. By addressing these dimensions, universities can enhance student motivation and their success in higher education.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### From supervisors to supervision: Experiences of distributed doctoral supervision

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Doctoral supervisors are understood as key to the success of doctoral candidates (McAlpine & McKinnon, 2013). An important development in recent years is the movement from a dyadic apprentice model between one supervisor and one doctoral candidate toward supervisory teams (McKenna & Schalkwyk, 2023). Even though recent work stresses the importance of more collective forms of supervision and complex supervisory arrangements (Gonzalez-Ocampo & Castello, 2019), most of the current research has focused on the role of formal supervisors (Bastalich, 2017). Yet, in an era when doctoral education is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial (Cardoso, 2024), formal doctoral supervisors allocated by the PhD programs, are rarely the only providers of supervision for doctoral candidates. Accordingly, we ask: What is the role of supervising actors beyond formal supervisors and how do doctoral candidates make use of such actors?

Theoretically, we expand on existing theoretical models of supervision that challenge individualist frameworks (Nordentoft et al. 2013; Trowler, 2021). Empirically, we draw on in-depth interviews with 10 newly graduated doctoral candidates, associated with an interdisciplinary Nordic research school. The participants in the study describe highly distributed forms of supervision, where supervision takes place in heterogeneous networks of supervising actors that include, but are not limited to, formal supervisors. Our analysis suggests that doctoral candidates are tasked with both constructing and navigating these complex networks.

We argue that these experiences of distributed doctoral supervision, point to the importance of shifting the focus from supervisors to supervision, regardless of whether such supervision is provided by formal supervisors or by others. Such a perspective underscores the need for doctoral students to be proactive in orchestrating and navigating their supervision needs, supervisors to support candidates in negotiating advice from other supervising agents than themselves, and institutions to rethink the current emphasis on individual supervisors towards a broader model of supervising agents working together. In sum, moving the attention from supervisors to supervision offers new perspectives on doctoral education for doctoral candidates, supervisors, and institutions alike.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Real-world cases of sustainability in higher education: Facilitating co-creation through design-thinking

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Higher Education (HE) is important to foster a sustainable future. Sustainability encompasses social, economic, and environmental dimensions, requiring intentionally designed learning environments promoting competencies to address future challenges (Gamage & Gunawardhana, 2022). Co-creation is an approach aligning with Education for Sustainable Development's (ESD) objectives, highlighting collaboration between staff and students, positioning students as autonomous learners, and teachers as facilitators (Bovill et al., 2016). To facilitate co-creation, Design Thinking (DT) can guide students in addressing complex sustainability challenges, emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration, real-world problem-solving, and critical reflection (Macagno et al., 2024). Limited research examines DT as a method for facilitating co-creation within ESD. *How can co-creation be facilitated through DT and what opportunities and challenges arise for sustainability education?*

#### Theoretical framework

We employ a sociocultural analytical framework focusing on *dialogue, positioning, voice, and agency* (Omland et al., in press), enabling us to understand co-creation as a dynamic process arising from ongoing interactions and shaped by context.

#### Methodology and research design

Interaction Analysis methods (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) were used to examine co-creation in a university pedagogy course involving 21 students from different disciplines and levels, two teachers, and two stakeholders. Data included ethnographic video observations, interviews, and surveys. Aspects of DT were incorporated into the pedagogical design, engaging students in real-world cases in educational practices. Students were guided through their DT process, including investigating the problem, analyzing, ideating, prototyping and presenting ideas, and getting feedback from stakeholders.

#### Findings

Facilitating co-creation through DT: a) provided students with a view of sustainability encompassing social and ecological aspects; b) fostered problem-solving, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability challenges; c) exposed students to complex real-world issues, encouraging innovative solutions. Challenges included tensions among students and stakeholders due to differing priorities and expectations. In terms of positioning, students navigated the subject matter and their roles within the co-creation process, leading to tensions between individual and collective goals, a dynamic not widely addressed in co-creation literature.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper discusses tools to address complex challenges while fostering hope and empowerment, which are essential for a democratic and just society. This aligns with the Nordic educational tradition of collaborative learning, student-centered pedagogy, and the integration of diverse perspectives.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Ethnography on Commercialisation of Campus Recruitment Events

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Recruiting students for employment has evolved from simple job postings to long-term partnerships between universities and corporations. In this study, we are interested in institutional policy and practice whereby universities charge a fee for connecting corporate clients with university students (i.e. the commercialisation of campus recruitment). Such recruitment practices include strategies to establish a strong brand presence on campus, campaigns on job search platforms, placements at recruitment fairs and hosting networking events.

Moreover, interconnections between universities and corporations, which occur within both national and transnational spheres, characterise the positional competition in the global economy (Kauppinen et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2011). Corporate recruitment partnerships function like a headhunting agency, interlocking networks between a few select partners and creating semi-exclusive recruitment pathways to a small number of corporations (Davis & Binder, 2016). Furthermore, inequalities grow also in the exchange between students and recruiting agencies at campus recruitment events, as students with the 'right' capitals benefit most from the recruitment 'pipeline' between universities and corporations (c.f., Isopahkala-Bouret et al., 2023).

The first corporate partnership programmes at university career centres were established in California at the beginning of the century (Davis & Binder, 2016). Building close(d) networks with corporations is one of the key strategies also for the leading European universities to strengthen their positional status. However, a strong presence in higher education (HE) gives corporate actors influence over policy issues and control over the development of the future workforce. New networked forms of governance are blurring the boundaries between public-private, local, national and global spheres in HE (Avelar & Ball 2023).

The objective of this study is to capture how campus recruitment events 'work' in mediating commercial exchanges between university and corporate partners. We analyse how the campus recruitment practices reproduce social inequalities. We conduct a multi-sited ethnography at different Finnish university sites. Our research data includes observations, fieldnotes, photos and informal discussions with presenters/corporate representatives and student participants. Our thematic analysis reveals how different actors at campus recruitment events struggle to improve their social position through competition and collaboration within the social network of actors.

Our ethnographic research have relevance to Nordic higher education research. With rich qualitative datasets, we can offer a multi-layered account that will advance the state of the art in research on the recruitment of 'global talent' and support the development of more inclusive and egalitarian campus recruitment practices.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Crises in a hybrid world: Using hybridity theory to facilitate an understanding of the dynamics of crisis management in Nordic higher education organizations

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Higher education organizations (HEOs) in Nordic countries have recently navigated multiple crises, and face an ever-changing environment that contains a multitude of imaginable crises (Perkins et al., 2024). HEOs are also examples of hybrid organizations, being composed of and operating in an environment of contrasting (often competing) logics (Pekkola et al., 2021). Organizational logics include the “material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules” that shape the actions of those in an organization (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999, p. 804).

Existing crisis leadership theories were developed largely outside of the higher education context and do not explore organizational hybridity (Riggio and Newstead, 2023). Since crises have the potential to alter the logics found within and around organizations, a case study was conducted to explore the relationship between hybridity theory and crisis management (i.e., all elements of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from crises) in Finnish HEOs.

Data collected for this project included interviews and panel discussions. In-depth interviews with nine leaders of a Finnish university in 2022 and 2023 explored the leadership experiences of participants during COVID-19. Two rounds of panel discussions in 2023 with 25 staff members from a diversity of organizations in the Finnish higher education sector encouraged participants to reflect on crises in higher education more broadly, including current and future perceived crisis management needs. Interviews and panel discussions were transcribed, analyzed iteratively for themes relating to crisis leadership, and then links between those leadership themes and hybridity were identified and iteratively refined.

The findings of this study indicate that hybridity has potential as a theoretical framework to facilitate the understanding of crisis management at HEOs. In particular, changes in hybridity appear to be potential causes of crisis, crises appear to alter the hybridity of the organization, and intentionally altering the hybridity of the organization in response to crises may be a strategy for successful crisis leadership.

These results have implications for the theoretical study of crisis leadership, potentially providing a mechanism through which crises and their organizational effects at HEOs may be understood in a more abstracted manner. The results also link to the themes of the conference, as a better understanding of the causal mechanisms underpinning the challenges posed by, and effects of responses to, the diverse set of crises facing Nordic HEOs will allow for better, more equitable, responses to crises by HEO leaders, and thus a more sustainable, hopeful future.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Sustainable academic work and well-being: a qualitative study of staff well-being at a Finnish university

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In this paper, we weave together themes of worker agency, community and sustainable work at a Finnish University within our main theme of wellbeing. Our primary goal is to identify factors that affect the well-being of university staff, exploring the different experiences of teaching, research, and expert- and-professional staff.

Well-being has become one of the key themes in working life in recent years. It is thought to affect both the individual and society (see Martela 2021). However, the discourse of well-being is simultaneously a part of the mechanisms of social governance, where different psychologising practices and values have become part of the social exercise of power; in this context, Brunila and others (2021) talk about therapeutic power. The concept of well-being, while sometimes applied in a one-size-fits all instrumental and individualizing manner, may provide a framework through which we can explore the diverse lived realities of university workers, and by doing so, identify possible pathways towards an inclusive, sustainable working environment.

The study was conducted at a Finnish university in 2022-2024. For this paper, we used interview data from teaching (N=5) and research (N=3) staff as well as expert and professional staff (N=10). Before being interviewed, participants were asked to write a journal or present pictures that reflected their experiences of workplace well-being. The interviews were largely guided by the participants and their pre-designed materials; we thus call our interviews "co-structured" rather than semi-structured interviews (Perkins et al., 2024).

We analyzed the interviews with a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis, designing our coding first deductively, based on our previous research (Ballo et al. 2023). We met regularly during the data analysis to compare our coding practices and develop themes.

The preliminary themes we have identified that were central to participants' workplace well-being are the 1. work environment, 2. work situation, 3. supervisor, 4. purpose and agency, and 5. community. In our paper, we will look particularly into the intertwined perspectives of individual experiences of agency as they are entangled with the experiences of respect or disrespect. Together with analysis of the structural wellbeing factors, these form a basis for a sustainable working environment.

We conclude our presentation by suggesting avenues for further research and practical actions. The paper highlights the impact of the agency, employment relationships and communities of people working in universities on the nature of their work. It raises questions about the sustainability of university work that are relevant for the larger Nordic contexts in similar higher education systems.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: The Shaping of University Teachers' Professional Knowledge Conditions

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As the growth of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning continues to influence education and institutions in society, international as well as Swedish research on the topic of AI in education and higher education is continuously being produced (Rahm, 2023; Selwyn, 2024; Williamson, 2019). Today, there is a need for research to explore the social implications of AI, its risks and opportunities, as well as calls for developing a nuanced language when approaching and addressing AI related themes and topics (Bearman, Ryan & Ajjawi, 2023). This dissertation project wishes to contribute to such efforts in the Nordic context.

The aim of the thesis is to generate a richer understanding of the influence the emergence of AI has on meaning-making and knowledge views in higher education. Construction of meaning and perspectives on knowledge are studied on the institutional level of higher education pedagogy discourse. Additionally, the thesis explores potential consequences of such perspectives concerning professional practice and knowledge for higher education teachers.

Research questions:

Which regulatory discourses and practice- and agency-near policies concerning Artificial Intelligence are identifiable in higher education pedagogy material and resources?

What notions concerning education and competency relating to Artificial Intelligence are identifiable in regulatory higher education pedagogy policies?

How may discursive implications and potential consequences concerning professional practice and knowledge for higher education teachers be understood?

The project takes an interest in the construction of meaning and knowledge views in discursive material. To frame such concepts and to explore them in analyzed textual content, pragmatism is operationalized as a theoretical framework and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is utilized as a method. Conceptualizing knowledge views and conditions, as well as situating higher education in society is done using the pragmatic theoretical framework alongside Deweyan views on the relationship between education and society.

Higer Education Pedagogy Units (HEPUs) at six Swedish universities are studied, through related textual material. These units may vary in operational setup and exist on different organizational levels within the universities. Expressions of educational views, themes of ideology and genre, implicative rhetoric and discourses in policy and strategy documents, regulatory and informational writings relating to the function and practice of HEPUs, are examples of preliminary findings.

For the purposes of this conference paper presentation, background, theoretical framework, methodology, preliminary findings and analysis will be presented. Hopefully criticism and discussion may follow on the presentation as well as on the process of the dissertation project thus far.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Pedagogy of Hope: Embedding Academic Literacy Instruction through Subject-Integrated Teaching

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Academic literacy is essential for students' success in higher education. Universities offer various forms of support directed at individual students' development of such competence, and increasingly also initiatives tailored for specific educational areas (Hakim & Wingate, 2024), e.g. teacher education. This presentation therefore targets an academic literacies project where teams of subject lecturers from teacher education were invited to a series of workshops. The workshops included exploring, developing and critically reflecting on their own literacy practices under the guidance of literacy development practitioners (LPP). In alignment with the ideological stance found in the field of Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 2006), this type of approach assigns responsibility for scaffolding students' academic literacies on study programs rather than on individual teachers or even students.

This presentation demonstrates how subject lecturers in teacher education describe their efforts to enhance academic literacy instruction. The study was guided by the research question: what opportunities and obstacles arise when teaching practices evolve towards subject integrated approaches to writing instruction in teacher education? We analyzed how subject lecturers, who had participated in the workshops, perceive and integrate academic literacies principles into their educational practices, using data from workshop output such as writing plans, questionnaires and follow-up interviews with subject lecturers. Data was initially analyzed using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) followed by an examination through the sociocultural framework of Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 2006). Results show a range of perspectives among subject lecturers on academic literacies including instances of broadened viewpoints. The results emphasize that collaborating with LPP can facilitate subject lecturers integrating academic literacies into the curriculum by making their tacit knowledge explicit and accessible (Jacobs, 2005; Wingate, 2019; Hakim & Wingate, 2024). While there are opportunities to enhance literacy instruction through strategies and theories, subject lecturers' ability to implement these improvements is affected by time constraints, resources, policy documents and perceived gaps in competence.

This study is relevant to Nordic educational research as it contributes insights into how subject lecturers develop their understanding of Academic Literacy and learn to implement such an approach in ways that make a difference to students. Although there are several published examples of embedded literacy instruction, there is still limited evidence of collaborations where university management has provided funding and teams of subject lectures have been given authority to implement these initiatives.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Difficulties in well-being and belonging in modularized education – from the students' perspectives

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### Research topic/aim:

Well-being problems and study-related stress are growing phenomena among Danish students in higher education (EVA 2023, Katznelson et al. 2022). Students' feelings of loneliness, stress, and social exhaustion are negatively affecting their well-being and sense of belonging in education. These trends are also observed among students enrolled in the Bachelor's Degree Program in Social Education (Social Education). Through several analytical cases from the Social Education, this paper explores how various aspects of the educational organizational design challenge or disrupt students' well-being and sense of belonging to their studies.

### Theory:

The paper draws on studies that adopt a relational approach to well-being, viewing it as a complex phenomenon that emerges through the interplay with one's surroundings. Well-being is understood as something students actively engage in, rather than merely a static state (Smith & Reid 2017). A relational and conflictual approach to well-being includes societal logics, dynamics, and structures (Lind 2019). Additionally, the paper is situated within higher education research that emphasize the importance of students belonging as it relates to students' learning processes. Belonging is in this research conceptualized as situated processes that are continuously renegotiated depending on context, situations, and relationships (Gravett & Ajjaw 2021, Guyotte et al. 2021, Falkenberg 2024 [in preparation]).

### Methodology:

The analytical cases are based on qualitative data generated from a longitudinal study (Holmegaard 2018) focusing on students' participation and sense of belonging in The Bachelor's Degree Program in Social Education, which lasts 3.5 years. The longitudinal study is being conducted at University College Copenhagen from 2022 to 2026 and combines ethnographic classroom studies and qualitative interviews with a survey study and an intervention study.

### Findings:

The analytical cases highlight how the political governance of education, through standardization and modularization of the Social Education into multiple academic modules, affects students' well-being. A consequence of modularization is an acceleration in the number of assignments and tests, as well as an increased convergence of assignments and tests, which are troubling students' well-being and sense of cohesion. The cases foreground students' voices and narratives about for instance breakdowns when the overlapping assignments create stress and anxiety, and narratives about how the lack of cohesion in academic modules leads to feelings of frustration and confusion. Additionally, the cases highlight students' narratives about how they withdrawal from academic activities due to fears of becoming socially exhausted.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research:

Since the standardization of education through modularization is an international phenomenon, the findings, which highlight students' voices regarding the impact of these organizational designs, are highly relevant to Nordic education research.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Transition Pedagogy as a New Concept in Professional Education

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#### Research topic

Professional educational programs presuppose competences to master and integrate various forms of knowledge. Students in professional educational programs are introduced to various learning arenas across both one's own profession, across disciplines, as well as across practice settings, and different professions. This means that students are met with many transitions throughout their education. This paper discusses what we can learn from these transitions, in a pedagogical, didactical perspective, by exploring the potential of transition pedagogy as a concept in professional education.

#### Theoretical framework

In this paper we use the term transitional pedagogy. This refers to pedagogical and didactical considerations particularly related to transitions across learning arenas. Though challenging, transitions can be seen as a unique potential for learning.

Our theoretical framework is inspired by Wolfgang Klafki (2002), implying that transitions can be seen as a dialectical and interactive process. We also take inspiration from Afaf Ibrahim Meleis (2010) and her transitions theory. According to Meleis, transitions can be understood as shifts from one relatively stable state to another, triggered by change. Within transitions lies a potential for growth and empowerment and this is the subject for this paper.

#### Methodology / research design

The point of departure of this paper are two Danish qualitative research projects that explored nursing and medical students' transitions between classroom and practical learning arenas during their education. The empirical material for this paper comes from ethnographic observation, field notes and interviews with students and clinical and theoretical educators. Informed consent has been obtained in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2018). In this paper the findings from the two research projects are used to discuss the potential of transition pedagogy as a concept in professional education.

#### Expected findings

Findings from the two research projects indicate that the interaction between the theoretical and practical learning arenas during education are challenged by the arenas' lack of communication or interrelatedness. This leads to students and educators experiencing a lack of connectedness and meaningfulness. The link between these different arenas cannot just be reduced to a matter of transferring theory to practice, or the opposite. The findings suggest that there might be a potential in exploring the transitional space between the different learning arenas with a pedagogical, didactical approach which this paper unfolds.

## Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper discusses how transition pedagogy can be used as a concept in professional education. This topic is relevant to higher education in the Nordic countries because transitions between different learning arenas are common to many educational programs across the Nordic countries.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Signs of Hope? Investigating Location as an Educational Tool for Change

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In our paper we discuss the potentials of change in students' practices as an effect of moving our teachings of early childhood education to a super diverse area in Oslo. Our discussion is based on interviews with students and the analysis of two practical assignments carried out at campus Holmlia, a suburban area in Oslo. The campus is located at a shopping center and was established as a department of Oslo Metropolitan University in partnership with the district in 2022 with an intention of strengthening "research on the welfare society and the quality and relevance of educational programs" (OsloMet, 2022). In contrast to the main campus location, Holmlia has a complex socio-economic and multicultural demography which opens the possibility of learning about different aspects of language and a multitude of different narratives. In the two assignments of study, we asked our students 1) to investigate and converse with people about signs and symbols in the center environment, and 2) to attend a storytelling session with a reception class at the local library.

In our paper we examine how the semiotic landscape affect the students, their practices and the local community drawing on theories of the symbolic dimension of signs in educational and public spaces (Brown, 2012; Malinowski, 2015). We use *stance*, *shift* and *design as* analytical concepts from theories of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice, to further analyze and discuss our teaching design (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Among the ethical dilemmas in our teaching design, we will in our presentation elaborate on the tension between the districts co-creative obligation, to become an object of study, and the fact that the pupils in the reception class as well as individuals in the local community have not actively given their consent to being studied. As far as we know there is few Nordic studies of semiotic landscapes as a teaching tool in higher education.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Expectations for Study Program Leaders in Teacher Education - expressed through job advertisements

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This study examines institutional expectations of Study Program Leaders in three Norwegian Teacher Education Institutions (ITE), as they can be read from job advertisements. The leadership level examined is a middle management position with responsibility for educational quality, and the tasks involve both professional and administrative responsibilities (Bjerva and Guldvik, 2023). The study contributes with insight into which professional expectations the institutions emphasize in the recruitment of Study Program Leaders and discuss how these expectations can contribute to giving the leaders legitimacy as educational leaders in Teacher Education.

Two research questions are raised:

- What characterizes expectations for Study Program Leaders in Teacher Education - expressed through job advertisements from three Norwegian universities that offer Initial Teacher Education?
- What do these expectations imply for Study Program Leaders' legitimacy?

The analytical framework used is based on Suchman's understanding of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) as well as new institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 2008; Scott, 1995). To be able to both maintain and develop institutional practices, teacher education institutions must have legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). Three, coexisting, approaches to legitimacy can contribute to understanding what the teacher education institutions emphasize as key competences and values for study program leaders in the job advertisements: cognitive, pragmatic and normative/moral legitimacy (Suchman 1995; Ødegård and Røys, 2013).

This is a qualitative study based on document analysis of job advertisements (Tellmann, 2023; Gjestrum et al. 2018). A strategic selection of job advertisements was obtained from websites or given upon request from Teacher Training Institutions (Cohen et al., 2018). The aim of the selection is to see expectations for leadership in teacher education across the institutions. This study examines 3 examples at the Study Program Leader level. The data originally consists of job advertisements for two different management levels from a total of five institutions, all of which are universities with Initial Teacher Education, geographically spread across Norway, a total of 10 descriptions.

The findings suggest that the institutions mainly have coinciding, established expectations for supervisors in teacher education, based on cultural and structural ideas about leadership in academia, but that these are emphasized differently. This indicates that educational leaders in the respective institutions must seek legitimacy through various approaches.

Several policy documents emphasize that quality work in the university sector is demanding and complex, and it is pointed out that the sector's challenges must be solved through strengthening leadership and management in the institutions at all levels (Meld. St. 19 (2020-2021); Meld St. 16 (2016 – 2017)). Overall, a clear governance policy has been laid down to ensure that the sector has a holistic approach to leadership and management towards common goals for the universities (Meld. St. 19 (2020-2021), p 11). At the same time, new policy opens for a more liberal governing principle where the individual institutions themselves can shape parts of their managerial structure and leadership practice to provide room for local adaptations (Meld. St. 19 (2020-2021), p. 11), and in this way expectations for educational leaders may be expressed differently.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Analysing AI Guidelines in Nordic Higher Education

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As artificial intelligence (AI) in general, and generative AI in particular, becomes increasingly integrated into academic and administrative operations, higher education institutions (HEIs) need clear guidelines to ensure responsible and sustainable use of AI technologies while addressing ethical, pedagogical, and societal implications and challenges.

This paper analyses AI guidelines for teaching faculty and students across Nordic HEIs drawing on policy theory. By mapping existing policies and recommendations, we explore commonalities and divergences in AI governance strategies and identify key challenges and opportunities specific to the Nordic context. In particular, we focus on questions around responsibility, accountability, transparency, and privacy, addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the current trends and policy priorities guiding AI integration in higher education across Nordic countries?

RQ2: What common efforts and differences can be identified by analysing AI guidelines?

Data is collected through crowd-sourcing local policies and guidelines from universities in the Nordic countries. The documents are analysed in two phases. First, a computational approach using natural language processing techniques will be used to gain an overall understanding of AI guidelines in higher education. The computational analysis aims to identify common and less common themes and patterns, as well as to get a first set of criteria to use as the basis for a codebook to be used in the second phase, where the researchers will conduct a content analysis of the documents for deeper understanding and insights into the contextual nuances.

Preliminary findings reveal shared priorities in AI policies across Nordic universities, such as ethical considerations and transparency while highlighting institutional differences. The results contribute to Nordic educational research by offering a comprehensive overview of how HEIs address AI in education. The study can also enrich ethical and sustainable AI integration by supporting Nordic HEIs in addressing technological, pedagogical, and societal questions. Hence, the results can serve as a basis for policy alignment supporting further collaboration across institutional and national borders in the Nordic countries.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

In pursuit of higher education: Perspectives from Swedish youth

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### Research topic/aim

Recent economic and social crises, technological advances, educational expansion, and marketization have spurred discussions on the contemporary purposes of higher education (Tight, 2024). Reforms emerging from the Bologna Process have further emphasized employability and the economic purposes of higher education (Mendick & Peters, 2023). This study aims to quantitatively identify subgroups of Swedish youths based on their reasons for pursuing higher education and to investigate changes over time and in the context of major disruptions like these. Such insights are important for understanding how contextual factors may intersect with educational decisions.

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical starting point is Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of capital. From this perspective, youths' reasons for pursuing higher education are connected to their desire to accumulate different forms of economic, social, and cultural capital (i.e., resources). The study also considers the influence of inherited capital in shaping their decisions, positioning these choices within broader social and economic structures.

### Methodology/research design

The study uses Swedish data from the Evaluation Through Follow-up survey (Härnqvist, 2000). Nationally representative samples of youth born in 1987 and 2004 are in focus. The 1987 cohort made decisions about higher education in the height of Bologna-inspired reforms, while the 2004 cohort faced a global pandemic and inflation. Experiences in these contexts may have contributed to shaping their desire to gain different forms of capital and ultimately their reasons for pursuing higher education. Latent class analysis is used to identify subgroups of youths based on their reasons for pursuing higher education.

### Expected findings/results

Preliminary results indicate three consistent subgroups of youth between the two cohorts: cultural capital pursuers, economic capital pursuers, and comprehensive capital pursuers. In the 1987 cohort, cultural-economic capital pursuers were identified and in the 2004 cohort, a group of passive pursuers were identified. These initial results suggest shifts in the composition and characteristics of subgroups, which may have been shaped by contextual factors.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by examining the evolving purposes of higher education from the perspectives of Swedish youth. It offers valuable insights into how societal changes and policy reforms intersect with individual decisions in a region where economic and employability concerns have become increasingly prominent.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Generate insights about inequality through collective learning processes with leaders in academia

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### Research Topic/Aim

This paper aims to describe the methodology and analyze the experiences from a project (2021-2023) focused on promoting a shift in organizational culture to achieve gender equality and diversity at a STEM faculty within a Norwegian university. Department heads and research leaders were some of the target groups for driving this change.

### Theoretical Framework

Previous research highlights that interventions aimed at increasing organizational responsibility and commitment tend to be more effective than initiatives targeted at supporting disadvantaged groups (Bleijenbergh and Engen, 2015). Accordingly, our project was designed to prioritize organizational responsibility. We also based our approach on the assumption that meaningful and sustainable change requires a foundation in locally grounded problem understandings (Sørensen et al., 2019) and that insights into the current situation, along with one's own role in it, should be elicited through observation and reflection (Amundsdotter, 2009; Andersson & Amundsdotter, 2021).

In a comparative study from Norway and Sweden on supporting gender equality in academia, the importance of how goals are formulated in research and development projects is highlighted (Snickare & Wahl 2024).

### Methodology/Research Design

The project followed an action research design. As researchers with expertise in gender studies and organizational change and leadership, we facilitated a series of seminars, workshops, and meetings involving participants from various departments. The empirical material we analyze in this paper consists of fieldnotes and participatory observations gathered throughout these project activities.

### Expected Results/Findings

Our analysis reveals that persistence and a commitment to identifying both barriers and enablers are essential for fostering change toward gender equality and diversity. This aligns with what Risberg and Corvellec (2022) describe as a "trying approach," characterizing diversity work as an ongoing effort without a defined endpoint. However, we argue that a collective learning approach is also essential for promoting gender equality and diversity. This approach involves the group working collaboratively to establish goals and mobilize for change (Andersson, 2021). In this "learning mode," the group processes discoveries and develops clear intentions regarding necessary changes. We suggest that dedicating time and effort at the outset of change projects to establish this "learning mode" within groups—such as department leaders and departmental working groups—is crucial. In these groups, organizational practices, as expressed through culture, can be surfaced and articulated in ways that can ultimately drive new, transformative actions.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The exclusionary role of gender and other categories in STEM environments is a widespread phenomenon in the Nordic region. Building knowledge on how change can be achieved contributes to the goal of creating an inclusive and equitable academic environment for both faculty and students.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Increased participation and engagement through playful learning activities.

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Through the research project *Playful Learning*, we investigate kindergarten teacher students' experiences of teaching and learning outcomes where at least one-third of the teaching involves playful learning activities. We ask *How does the playful approach affect students' experiences, participation, and engagement?*

Jensen et al. (2022, p. 199) describe a culture in higher education characterized by a focus on efficiency, speed, and quantity. This culture contrasts with teaching that is centred around playful learning activities. When playing, participants may forget about time and place, yet remain engaged, and the activity is marked by spontaneity and joy (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Lillemyr, 2020). Playful learning activities encompass various elements of play, such as curiosity and exploration, voluntariness, participation, and motivated engagement. These activities are based on guided play (Weisberg et al., 2016), which is neither direct instruction nor free play, but something in between, where teachers play an active role in inspiring students, setting boundaries, and maintaining focus on learning objectives, even though students manage their own activities and have a great deal of freedom in their choices (Lillejord et al., 2018).

In this self-study-inspired research (Loughran, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004), we have examined our own teaching. We have collected data on students' experiences of the teaching through an online survey, semi-structured focus group interviews, and observational notes (Postholm, 2010). The students who have participated so far are first-year kindergarten teacher students.

Preliminary findings show that students experience the teaching as enjoyable, which increases participation and engagement, fostering the subjective development and acquisition of norms and values characteristic of the kindergarten teacher profession. The students highlight that when they themselves become engaged, the learning outcomes improve, and they become even more participative. They also note that through playful learning activities, an environment is created where there is room for trial and error, and it becomes easier to give feedback to each other and express their opinions.

In higher education, there has traditionally been a teaching method characterized by lectures where students passively listen. In our professional programs, there has been an increasing recognition of the need for more practice-oriented teaching that also introduces students to the ethics and values of the profession. Playful activities as a method to achieve this would be relevant for teacher education in all the Nordic countries.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Master Thesis writing and student-centred supervising in Danish / Scandinavian Higher Education

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Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Based on hermeneutic analyses (Gadamer 1989) of 30 semi-structured qualitative research interviews with both supervisors (Ankersborg 2022) and Master Thesis students (Ankersborg & Pagner 2022) we have developed a three-dimensional “vejledningsmatrix” with the interrelated dimensions of supervision models, supervisor roles, and functions of draft texts in relation to each other (Ankersborg & Pagner 2025 in prep.).

This matrix serves as analytical framework for our investigation of student-centered supervision in inter-cultural encounters at a Danish Business University by focusing on experiences and expectations from non-Scandinavian educational backgrounds in the context of the local Danish educational culture. To investigate the impact of these intercultural encounters on the acquisition and development of research literacy/ies we are exploring how novices (students and/or supervisors) in the Danish educational culture (i.e. with non-Scandinavian educational backgrounds) handle student-centered supervision (‘vejledning’) in the context of the local Danish educational culture, when different supervision models are enacted.

#### Research question

How and why do supervisors’ and students’ understandings of supervision enable and constrain supervision spaces and the acquisition of academic literacies when supervisors and students come from different education-cultural backgrounds?

#### Findings

Our analyses show that Danish teaching and learning philosophies are based on dialogue and equality between student/s and supervisor emphasizing student autonomy. International students’ and supervisors’ ability to adopt this philosophy is essential for students’ learning outcome. Otherwise, differences in education-cultural backgrounds lead to misperceptions of expected behaviour in the supervision spaces. Thus, the enacted supervision model has a direct impact on the role of students’ texts in supervision and their ability to acquire academic literacies. s

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Sustainability Perceptions, Hope and Agency in Higher Education: Insights from University Personnel

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This mixed methods study examines the sustainability perceptions, hope, and agency of university personnel.

We study the personnel's sustainability perceptions through various conceptualisations of sustainability and analyse the multidimensionality and comprehensiveness of these perceptions (Purvis et al., 2019; Willamo et al., 2018). We explore the connections between sustainability perceptions and the types of opportunities personnel identify for implementing sustainability in their work, as well as the relationship between sustainability action and constructive hope (Ojala, 2015). Furthermore, we look into the interplay of sustainability agency and structures (Avelino, 2017) within the context of a university.

Data were collected through an online survey of personnel at one multidisciplinary university in Finland. Altogether, 413 members of faculty and staff completed the survey, which consisted of a combination of open-ended questions and multiple-choice or scaled questionnaire items. The open-ended questions were analysed through inductive qualitative content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015), to study the personnel's sustainability perceptions and agency. Sustainability related hope was studied with the Hope Concerning Climate Change Scale (Ojala, 2015) through statistical methods.

Personnel most often identified ecological dimensions when describing their perceptions of sustainability and frequently discussed social and economic dimensions as well, but only a few responses referred to strong sustainability, systemic thinking, or holistic and transformative visions of sustainability. In general, the sustainability-related hopefulness of personnel was high. Positive correlations were found between sustainability hopefulness and internal effort - the willingness to put effort into sustainability-related issues or actions. University personnel recognised numerous places to enact sustainability at and through their work. In the strategy and rhetoric, the university promotes sustainable action but, paradoxically, also maintains unsustainable practices. Amid conflicting options, the personnel perceived limited opportunities to integrate sustainability into their work beyond small-impact environmental behaviour.

As an implication, we suggest that Nordic universities aiming to act as a force for the sustainability transformation should take concrete measures to foster comprehensive sustainability perceptions among their personnel and leaders, incentive sustainable action and support the autonomy of the personnel to enact sustainability.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

Quantifying expertise, identifying misconceptions and other results from graph analysis in educational research

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This study presents a new method to quantify what is usually discussed qualitatively in education: understanding, knowledge, expertise (Weihs et al., in review). Using explanatory narratives as a proxy for conceptual understanding, we have asked participants to describe their representation of a scientific discipline, here Cloud Physics. Cloud Physics describe the mechanisms behind cloud nucleation, the thermodynamics of cloud maturation as well as the possible pathways of cloud dissipation (Stephens et al., 2019). We collected concept maps from 220 participants from four different levels of disciplinary experience: Novices with no academic exposure to the topic, Adepts, Proficients, and Experts in the field.

Concept maps share relevant characteristics with some of the epistemological foundations of expertise (Farrington-Darby & Wilson, 2006): knowledge (the *nodes* on the maps) and the judgement on how to structure it (the *edges* connecting different nodes together). Some research using graph analysis in educational research had already been initiated some decades ago (Tatsuoka, 1986), but most of it is relatively new (Thurn et al., 2020; Koponen & Pehkonen, 2018; Wagner et al., 2020). Drawing on the mathematical framework of graph theory, we analysed the properties of the participants' concept maps and highlighted the main patterns and characteristics within each of the experience groups. The evolution of these characteristics along the experience gradient helps us quantifying significant changes occurring as a learners acquires more experience in the field: graph densities and diameters, concept centralities, etc. We also present novel graphics depicting the collective representations and opinions about the discipline, amongst others the 'map of cloud physics' according to the Experts.

With metrics computed on both nodes and edges, we identify concepts that are particularly troublesome (such as Droplet Growth or Aerosols) to learners in cloud physics, as well as concepts characterised by low consensus amongst the Expert group (such as the Relative Humidity Increase or Evaporation). Taking the more advanced representations as a reference, we diagnosed misconceptions in the discipline (such as 'condensation only occurs right before precipitation' or 'precipitation occurs on the wind side of a mountain') as well as alternative representations of the field: simplified descriptions (for instance a very basic version of the water cycle) or geographically-influenced representations ('cloud are forming only because of mountains' amongst our predominantly Norwegian sample of Novices).

Our work allows for tailored assessments of individuals and groups, and helps focusing the teaching around misconceptions as well and steering it towards expert-like models of understanding. This research has been developed around the case study of Cloud Physics but could potentially be applied to any other discipline in STEM and/or in higher education. With this presentation, we hope to inspire fellow scholars to try these methods out in their contexts, and initiate possible collaborations across the Nordics.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Forging Subject Teacher Education: Policy and Discourses in Swedish Sloyd Teacher Education

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#### 1. Research Topic/Aim

Since teacher education was integrated into Sweden's higher education system in 1977, numerous reforms have been implemented, granting substantial autonomy to educational institutions while simultaneously increasing political interest throughout the school system. Sloyd teacher education, in particular, has experienced this tension between political governance and academic freedom. This study aims to explore the dynamic interplay between these forces by examining the policy frameworks that shape sloyd teacher education across four Swedish universities. The primary aim is to investigate how political expectations and academic autonomy coexist, influence each other and contribute to the variations in how sloyd teacher education programs and courses are organized and implemented.

#### 2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on a combination of discourse theory, policy enactment theory and Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and the transmission of knowledge. Stephen Ball's policy enactment theory can be seen as a continuation of discourse theory and focuses on how educational institutions and individuals interpret, adapt and enact policy frameworks in practice. This theory is especially relevant for examining how different institutions navigate policy directives, sometimes in divergent ways, depending on local contexts, institutional cultures and individual actors. Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse provides understanding of how knowledge is classified and transmitted within educational systems. Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing help to explore the degree of control that educators and institutions exert over their curricula and pedagogical practices.

#### 3. Methodology/Research Design

Theory is operationalized through policy documents, curriculum frameworks and organizational structures from four Swedish universities are analyzed to understand the regulatory and institutional contexts. To deepen the understanding, semi-structured interviews with sloyd teacher educators provided insights into how these policies are interpreted and put into practice at the local level. Twenty-two out of the 36 active sloyd teacher educators participated in one to two hour long video interviews. The interviews were systematized by coding and thematizing to find and analyze patterns.

#### 4. Expected Results/Findings

Preliminary results suggest that while sloyd teacher educators enjoy significant academic freedom in defining the content and pedagogy of their programs, the organization and structure of the programs are heavily influenced by political and institutional governance. The findings indicate that sloyd teacher education programs, though similar in their academic foundations, vary in emphasis and interpretation due to differences in institutional history, organizational frameworks and educator backgrounds. Furthermore, the results highlight that while political reforms aim to standardize education, the implementation of these reforms is shaped by local contexts, resulting in divergent educational practices across institutions.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This research is relevant to Nordic educational research, particularly given the region's emphasis on balancing governance with institutional autonomy in higher education. By focusing on sloyd teacher education, a field deeply embedded in Nordic culture and educational traditions, the study provides critical insights into how academic freedom, diversity and governance are negotiated within teacher education. The study also has implications for understanding how educational systems manage the tension between standardization and local autonomy.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Transitioning from University Studies to Working Life with Well-being: Students' Study Profiles, Career Paths, and Academic Burnout

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#### Research topic/aim

Working during university studies is generally considered to slow down academic progress, and a negative correlation between working and the accumulation of study credits, grades, and graduation has been observed in literature, although differing results have been obtained (Isotalo et al., 2023; Tuononen, Hyytinen & Asikainen, 2024). In addition to financial difficulties, university students' studies are challenged by symptoms of anxiety and depression, which occur in one-third of students (Parikka et al., 2022). However, the impact of working itself on well-being during university studies has been little studied. This study aims to answer two questions. First, what kind of study profiles can be identified among students in different disciplines, and whether these profiles change during studies. Second, how study profiles differ in employment, study progress, and study-related burnout.

#### Theoretical framework

The present study examines approaches to learning and the risk of study burnout. Approaches to learning have been found to be related to general work-life skills (Tuononen et al., 2020), but there is little research on the connection between different student profiles and working during studies.

#### Methodology/research design

The research data consists of student data from bachelor's and master's programs and from both generalist and professional fields from the University of Helsinki. The data combines employment and learning psychology survey data with study registry data. In the analysis, different student profiles based on learning approaches and individual-level burnout risk are identified. Profiles' connections to study progress, employment status, and burnout risk are examined.

#### Expected results/findings

The preliminary results showed four different profiles in the subset (N=268) of the study: Ambivalent profile (N=121, 45%), Unreflective profile (N=26, 10%), Disorganised profile (N=51, 19%), and Deep-organised profile (N=70, 26%). Profiles of differences in employment and experience of academic burnout will be presented at the conference.

The research provides information on how students from different fields transition from studies to working life and how they assess the relevance of their education to their job tasks. Secondly, the research will provide information on how different students cope with the combination of studies and work.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The research helps the university develop student data reporting, which pays attention to factors that predict students' learning, endurance in studies, and employability. The research results can support student guidance and knowledge-based management. Results can also be utilized to develop education in other Nordic countries as well, where the study context is similar.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Designing Futures: Fostering Emotional and Social Learning for Resilient and Engaged Students

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#### Research Topic/Aim

This study explores the impact of the "Designing Futures" program at the University of Galway on students' emotional, cognitive, and social learning dimensions, focusing on fostering agency, resilience, and a sense of belonging. The programme's aim is to empower students to tackle real-world challenges, through a curriculum grounded in design thinking and reflective practices. In line with the conference theme of "A Pedagogy of Hope," this study emphasizes education as a vehicle for social change. It highlights the importance of empathy, gratitude, and diversity in building a sustainable future for learners.

#### Theoretical Framework

The DF program is grounded in the concept of infrastructuring in educational design, according to which transformative educational change requires the coordination of sustainable, impactful, and mutually reinforcing initiatives. A core component of DF's design is human-centered design, emphasizing empathy, practical engagement, and collaborative problem-solving (Brown, 2008). Additionally, the DF approach integrates insights from Yuval-Davis's (2011) Politics of Belonging, which focuses on identity and social cohesion, and the work of Trowler, Kahu, and Nelson on student engagement and belonging. Together, these theoretical foundations guide the DF program's vision for a partnership-oriented, student-centered learning experience.

#### Methodology/Research Design

This qualitative study draws on a thematic analysis of student feedback collected from Designing Futures modules. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews and reflective journals of program participants. Six central themes emerged from the study which are empathy and emotional engagement, self-efficacy and confidence, resilience and perseverance, practical application and enjoyment, group dynamics and teamwork, and reflection and learning process. These are aspects of students' experiences that contribute to their personal development and the expansion of practical and interpersonal skills.

#### Expected Results/Findings

Initial findings suggest that:

DF project succeeded in engaging students on an intellectual level and nurtured their emotional skills such as empathy, resilience, self-efficacy, and teamwork skills.

There is a strong preference for interactive, practical, and ethically grounded approaches to learning, which allow students to express their ideas and work in dynamic, group-focused settings.

Although students appreciate autonomy, they need adequate support and structure to manage the challenges of open-ended projects.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The Designing Futures project contributes to the Nordic discourse on educational inclusivity, sustainability, and student-centered pedagogy by demonstrating a model of learning that prioritizes empathy, collaboration, and practical problem-solving. This approach resonates with Nordic values of equity, social justice, and sustainability while addressing the pedagogical needs of a diverse student body in a rapidly changing world. Through this program, we seek to show that by fostering students' sense of belonging and agency, educational institutions can cultivate hopeful, engaged learners equipped to address complex social and environmental issues. The findings

thus have implications for Nordic and international educational frameworks aiming to balance cognitive and affective learning for holistic development.

# Network: 11. Historical Research

## Network: 11. Historical Research

"Slow and scatterbrained". The primary testing and assessment of students with learning disabilities at a Norwegian Special School from 1917-1924

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During the years 1917-1924, 252 children were assessed for admission to Thorshaug Skole in Oslo. Thorshaug opened in 1878 and was one of the first schools in Norway for students with learning or intellectual disabilities (ID). My paper is the start of a *qualitative text analysis* of the protocols of the brief initial assessment of these 252 children, aged 10-11 at the time of testing.

Based on these protocols, my analysis of the material aims to show *how the children were tested, which information were deemed important to include in the assessment, and how the assessment included judgements and evaluations of the children's personality and personal qualities*. The testing were performed by the teachers of the school for the purpose of placing the new students in classes and grades, and focused on assessing the children's ability to answer questions, their rudimentary knowledge of writing, reading, counting, colors, understanding pictures, and knowledge of the Bible.

The short assessment notes provide a glimpse into the background of the children sent to Thorshaug School and reflect how they experienced the strange and unfamiliar situation of the testing. Perhaps most salient, the notes show that the testing teacher did quick and subjective judgements of the personality of the children, such as "slow and scatterbrained". These statements will be discussed in relation to the idea that children with ID, due to their condition, lacked the "will to learn and understand". This idea was commonplace in the pedagogical and medical literature of the time. This was expressed by several of the pioneers in special education of ID, such as Etienne Esquirol and Edouard Seguin, and would later be linked to eugenic ideas where ID was inherited within families with questionable moral and ethical ability. The learning disability of the child was perceived to be influenced by their personality, leading to the assumption that the condition was aggravated by, or even caused by, their immature personal traits.

It is both of historical and contemporary interest to study how diagnoses and personal qualities are conflated, i. e. how "you are your diagnosis" were implicitly expressed.

The assessments express certain epistemological beliefs about what knowledge was valuable and important. They were also practical tools to evaluate what "remained" from the minimal ordinary schooling the children sometimes had, and what grade to start them in. The questions asked and the topics assessed changes slightly over the analysed seven-year period, but the form and emphasis of the testing are very uniform.

The analysis will take into consideration the history of testing of children with ID both in the Nordic countries and in a wider context, to see if the practices employed and the attitudes expressed are comparable. Furthermore, it will provide illustrative examples (from the same school) of medical assessments made by doctors, to highlight the difference between pedagogical and medical evaluations of children with ID.

## Network: 11. Historical Research

### The Scandinavian Space of IQ-testing and 'Intelligence' between Normal and Special Education, 1918–1940

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The evolution of IQ-testing technology and its impact on conceptions of human intelligence has consistently contained a prominent transnational dimension. This paper seeks to investigate and comprehend the nature and significance of inspirations, experimental endeavors, and exchanges among key actors and knowledge brokers involved in IQ-testing and educational reform in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark during the interwar period. These neighboring Scandinavian countries shared a robust level of exchange, partly due to their linguistic affinity and mutual perception as reference societies. Through this analysis, the paper elucidates the emergence and institutionalization of IQ-testing within the intersecting domains of normal education and *særskolen* [special schools] in these three nation-states. Furthermore, the study provides insights into the IQ-related selection and sorting to special schools from the joint one-school-for-all *folkeskole* [primary and lower secondary school], as the necessary condition for the early foundation and vision of an *enhetsskole* [unitary school].

By examining the inter-Scandinavian educational journal *Hjælpskolan/Værneskolen/Særskolen*—a journal that unified contributors in the field of special education, first published in 1923—alongside archival materials, newspaper clippings, and policy documents, the chapter addresses the following research question: What are the nature, significance, and implications of interactions and exchanges among key actors and knowledge brokers concerning IQ-testing and conceptions of intelligence in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark during the interwar period?

The analysis of the spaces of exchange, particularly in how ideas about IQ testing and conceptions of intelligence were developed, draws on Bruno Latour's concept of the 'centre of calculation.' This concept refers to spatial venues where knowledge production relies on the accumulation of resources through the circulatory movements of actors between different locations. Latour describes how centres of calculation project power by systematically assembling and expanding a material network of actors. In this context, 'intelligence' is sustained, reproduced, and developed by a community of transnational knowledge brokers—key intermediaries who facilitate the circulation of knowledge across borders and contexts. This process is illuminated through a prosopographical perspective. The functioning of this network shapes the forms and uses of IQ tests and notions of intelligence at Nordic Special School Meetings and in the analyzed journal, which serves as a transnational centre of calculation. Each reflects the specific national contexts of emerging unitary schooling frameworks in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, all grappling with similar societal and educational challenges.

The chapter draws conclusions on the pivotal role of a transnational Scandinavian arena in shaping the development of IQ-testing practices and intelligence concepts across these three countries. The paper finds that common threads among Scandinavian actors included a shared recognition of educational challenges in establishing a unitary school system, enabling them to draw upon practices and knowledge from neighboring countries as reference points for their own educational and scientific endeavors. Additionally, these actors grappled with a collective dilemma regarding the design of a reliable, more scientifically based system for determining inclusion and exclusion in this social reformatory educational project that was closely connected with the creation of the Nordic welfare states.

## Network: 11. Historical Research

Children - A Resource for Change: a historical contextualization of the Swedish Reggio Emilia approach

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*Children – A Resource for Change* is a historical investigation into the adoption of the Reggio Emilia pedagogical philosophy in Sweden during the 1990s. The study aims to contextualize this pedagogical approach within the broader progressive political, social, and scientific developments of the time, thereby redefining the origins of what has since become one of the most widespread early childhood education philosophies in Sweden.

The project draws on the theories of *path dependence* and *cargo cults*. Path dependence explains historical causality within institutional politics, where bureaucratic reform – characteristic of the Swedish welfare state – creates a kind of inertia, locking political and educational developments into gradual, track-bound changes (Pierson, 2004, p10). This reinforces a perspective on the relation between continuity and change, that instead of a dichotomy, they are interdependent; the latter is born out of and constituted by the first (Foucault, 1989, pp 144–146). Simultaneously, the Reggio Emilia approach is interpreted through the lens of cargo cult theory, portraying it as an aesthetically packaged set of established ideals and pedagogical theories, reintroduced with little new content but encapsulating values and ideas in a manner that resonated with or opposed the educational views of the decentralized and market-oriented welfare state of the 1990s and beyond (Johnson, 1999).

This study will be conducted as a contextualizing historization of the institutionalization of the Reggio Emilia philosophy in Sweden. By examining the Swedish intellectual landscape – particularly social and educational policies, scientific discourse in child psychology and pedagogy, and reflections on the teaching profession – this dissertation will elucidate the role, form, and place of Reggio Emilia-inspired pedagogy in 1990s Sweden.

The expected outcome is a nuanced historical analysis of the Swedish adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach. Claims of a postmodern paradigmatic shift in early childhood education, as well as the democratization of the preschool teacher-child relationship, will be critically examined. The study will elaborate on what the Reggio Emilia philosophy meant in the Swedish context and, conversely, how that context in turn influenced the philosophy.

The relevance for Nordic educational research lies in the exploration of how pedagogical theories relate to societal, political, and ideological frameworks. This study will offer insights into how educational ideas evolve as they cross temporal, spatial, and cultural boundaries, and how they must adapt to fit new contexts. By historicizing it, practitioners and theorists can better understand the regional educational developments that have shaped, and will continue to shape, contemporary preschool education. This research aims to ensure that the contexts which influenced today's preschools are addressed – preserving insights for future educational progress – and to reflect on what this pedagogical philosophy could mean today.

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## Network: 11. Historical Research

Understanding “livsmestring” through Curriculum Analyses and History of Education: from Christianity and Neo-Realism to Merging Life Skills and Wellbeing as an Expression of Formation?

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Understanding “livsmestring” through Curriculum Analyses and History of Education: from Christianity and Neo-Realism to Merging Life Skills and Wellbeing as an Expression of Formation?

The aim of the paper is to highlight the importance of understanding “livsmestring”. Pupils *struggle to be well*, and “Livsmestring” is in LK20 a contribution to “An Education for a better world”. How does the Norwegian national curriculum from 1939 (N39) express “livsmestring” compared to LK20?

I perceive “livsmestring” as an educational-philosophical phenomenon, including existential values and *how to be in the world in a good way*. The study employs a close-up-reading of the curriculum in relation to historical context. The term “livsmestring” is not used in N39, so concepts and phrases related to “livsmestring” are interpreted, based on the expression of “Livsmestring” in LK20.

During coding and categorisation, I distinguish between “livsmestring”-related sentences that express *view of reality*, *purpose* and *practice*. The findings relate to three pedagogical disciplines; psychology, social pedagogy and philosophy (cf. Bråten, 2011, p. 61).

In its expression of “livsmestring”, N39 is influenced by a biological, psychological, sociological and philosophical *view of reality*. “Arbeidsskoleprinsippet” seems to be a revelation of “livsmestring”, leading to a focus on *how* pupils learn and what they should achieve beyond subject content. Collecting material from several subjects is highlighted as “very useful and natural” for the work to become “a connected whole - a section of life” (N39, p. 8, my translation).

N39’s main *purpose* is Christian wellbeing (collective and individual), emphasizing right skills, good characteristics, right behavior and faith. The practical skills must contribute to belonging, camaraderie and effective work habits. Well-being appears through central characteristics of ethical formation value, expresses life-oriented virtues and traits (cf. Standal & Haugen, 2023).

A *purpose* with “livsmestring” in LK20 was to be a preventive measure in the work with physical and mental health. Pointing at existential themes such as alienation, belonging and inadequacy appears, the concept has an individual, societal and social perspective, to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes to be able to belong and participate in society. LK20 emphasizes a *practice* characterized by psychosocial competence and ability to make responsible life choices for a meaningful life (LK20, p. 16). The *views of reality* appear to be an individualistic psychological, a sociological and a philosophical.

Through curriculum analyses of N39 and LK20, the paper describes and discusses “livsmestring” based on views of reality, purpose and practice, from Christianity and Neo-Realism in N39 to merging life skills and wellbeing as a modern expression of formation.

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## Network: 11. Historical Research

Studying change in educational institutions: The case of educational objectives in the Swedish education system 1900-2020

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Institutional change is a central theme in educational research, with notable studies such as Kliebard's (2004) analysis of the American curriculum struggle and Cuban's (1984) work on changes in teaching practices. In Sweden, the curriculum code approach has been the dominant method (Lundgren, 2015). This study uses historical institutionalism to examine long-term educational change (Fioretos et al., 2016).

As a case study, we examined institutions related to educational objectives in the period 1900-2020. We distinguish between formal institutions - rules and governance structures - that are designed and enforced by policy makers and informal institutions, constituted by norms and practices. We analysed formal institutions in educational legislation (school laws, curricula, etc.) and how they changed over time. In analysing informal institutions, we focused on the role of educational objectives in teachers' teaching. We studied teachers' magazines, teaching manuals and teachers' stories about their teaching. This material provided insights into the norms and practices that teachers associated with educational objectives and how they changed over time.

While the dominant logic of formal institutional change throughout the period was layering (new laws were added over time while no laws were removed), changes in informal institutions point to a critical juncture around the 1980s and 1990s. As with Johansson et al. (2018), we found that teachers welcomed the legislative developments in relation to educational objectives from the 1990s onwards, with little resistance. This was in contrast to the resistance to similar legislative efforts by the state in the 1960s and 1970s - resistance that actually had an effect, halting policy change.

The next step was to analyse the relationship between informal and formal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). This revealed a period in which informal institutions were mainly complementary to formal ones (around 1900-1960), then competing (around 1960-1990), and finally accommodating (around 1990-2020).

Our study provides an example of how historical institutionalism can be used in educational research and study the interplay between regulation and educational practice. The study also provides new insights into the rise of NPM from the 1990s onwards (Biesta, 2009). Both these aspects are of relevance to the Nordic research community.

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## Network: 11. Historical Research

Elucidating thirty years of 'educational revolution' in the making. A historical exploration of the term *Active Learning* in higher education.

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### Research topic/aim:

This is a study of the term 'active learning' (AL) in the context of contemporary higher education. It presents the evolution of the term and the way it has been understood and enacted in different decades. The main focus is on the last thirty years, in which the term AL appears as a desideratum for higher education and becomes an object of intensive empirical research and great institutional support across countries. The aim is to provide a historical contextualization of the current formulation of the term in order to understand AL not only as an ideal, a pedagogy and/or a set of tools, but as an integral component of recent reforms.

### Theoretical framework:

My analysis is inspired in genealogical analyses of educational reforms (Popkewitz 1991) and the critique of the language of learning sciences (Taubman 2009).

### Methodology/research design:

I attempt to elucidate why the increased interest on AL observable since the 90's appeared at this time and in this particular form (Labaree 1992) using the critical apparatus of the method 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Examining a document which is credited with solidifying the current notion of AL (Bonwell & Eison 1991) as well as a number of landmark publications and policy documents in the last 30 years, the goal is to elucidate the context in which this transformation occurs and the way in which the current formulation of AL is researched, talked about, and promoted.

### Expected results:

- 1) Elucidation of the blueprint of contemporary definitions of AL and of the arguments that have since then been used to promote the adoption of AL in HE.
- 2) Pointing out to the origin of a series of deep-seated assumptions and misconstructions in the way AL has been conceptualized in the specialized literature and which limits the usefulness of the concept for research (Lombardi 2021) and compromises the validity of its results (Marchand-Martella & Schneider 2024).

### Relevance to Nordic educational research:

The interest in the promotion of AL in the Nordic countries makes it convenient to carry out stricter evaluations of the claims that derive from educational research and the use of the evidence by policy makers. By pointing out to the shortcomings of the current framing of AL and comparing it with how AL has been understood and enacted in earlier decades, especially in the Nordic context (Jarning 2009), it might be possible to envision alternative ways of conceiving AL.

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## Network: 11. Historical Research

Social conditions of academic philosophizing: Social origins and gender segregation in a cultural elite subfield of Icelandic higher education

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Bourdieu (1983) stresses the fact that philosophers reflect on the condition of everything – except for the conditions of the philosophical institution. In various studies he analyzed sociologically the conditions of the philosophical institution with his field theory.

As a contribution to the study of the social conditions of the philosophical institution we analyze the 1971 grounded philosophy department of the University of Iceland in its first period from the perspective of the habitus of the teachers taking a position in this field. We ask: what is the composition of their cultural and social capital? And to what extend does their habitus influence the position they take within the field of Icelandic philosophy?

In a second part we compare the situation in the same department today, five decades later, and analyze the habitus of its members, and pose the question if there are signs of a pluralization of the philosophical *habitus* of its members. We analyze this in the cases of doctoral candidates, post-docs, and faculty members. To what extends do factors such as cultural capital (on the scale e.g. from having a parent that is a professor down to being a first-generation university attendant), social capital (from being of the Reykjavik cultural elite down to being from being from the countryside or from a foreign country), and gender influence the place individuals take within the field of philosophy. From the perspective of a sociology of education we ask: how much has changed across five decades concerning the social origins and gender segregation in this cultural elite subfield of Icelandic higher education? Has diversification taken place, and if so, which factors have influenced this evolution?

This is a historical study combined with a qualitative case study. I interview 3 doctoral candidates, 3 post-docs, and 3 faculty professors – all of them situated in the faculty of philosophy at the University of Iceland. The semi-structured interviews are done in the second part of the year 2024 and last about an hour each. The analysis is qualitative content analysis. The historical part of the study is combined with interviews with a few elder philosophers who remember the colleagues who have passed away.

A first analysis of the historical material shows that in the first twenty-five years the philosophers of the department were dominantly socially privileged, sons of government ministers, of deans, painters etc. – with one exception of a son of a rural worker. In the case of the interviewees there are some similarities concerning the social and cultural capital; simultaneously there are signs of some diversification in the social background which we hope to be able to analyze through the interviews.

Four related studies in Nordic educational research: 1) Behtoui et al. (2019). The “stranger” among Swedish “homo academicus”; Isopahkala-Bouret et al. (2018). Access and stratification in nordic higher education; 3) Börjesson et al. (2016). Cultural capital in the elite subfield of Swedish higher education; 2) Lundberg, (2014), Philosophical Thought and Its Existential Basis: The Sociologies of Philosophy of Randall Collins and Pierre Bourdieu

# Network: 12. Inclusive Education

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Voicing the student's perspective: Inclusion of student with special needs (SEN) in smaller classes during upper secondary school.

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In this study we have interviewed students with special needs participating in a smaller group in upper secondary school. All the participants are in full-time groups where they receive their education. Their difficulties vary in both severity and needs. The results indicate that even though the groups pr definition can be understood as exclusion. The students describe their educational setting in a positive way, seem to thrive socially in their groups and appreciate the teachers follow them more closely. The students often had special education during their previous school years and seemed to describe their current situation in a more positive.

### Theoretical framing:

Few studies address SEN students own perspective on inclusion. Their input on their education is seldom considered, which appears to be a significant oversight in research, particularly in light of the prevalent discourse regarding student-centered education and the importance of valuing student voices. The student perspective is important to understand whether individuals with special needs feel included in school and if the policies manifest themselves in a more inclusive practice (Nilsen, 2017). Given that students represent the primary recipients of educational services, it is essential to gather their input. It remains uncertain whether teachers' beliefs about fostering inclusivity align with their students' viewpoints (Schwab et al., 2018).

### Methods:

We have conducted semi-structured interviews with nine students participating in smaller groups in upper secondary school. The participants were recruited through a larger Norwegian study addressing the role of special education in upper secondary school in Norway. The students had a variety of difficulties. Ranging from students that are at the risk of dropping out of school, adjustment difficulties to students with mental and/or physical disabilities and social and emotional issues leading them to need support in their educational setting.

### Results and relevance

The results seem to indicate that the students prefer participation in smaller classes, especially socially. They also describe that they learn more in the smaller classes, even though we do not have data supporting this claim (tests, grades etc). Further, they seem to enjoy that the teacher has more time to follow them close and that have a positive view of special classes/smaller classes in general. A recent systematic review of special education in the Nordic countries, conclude that only 6 % of the selected studies had upper secondary schools as their scope of research (Keles, et al., 2022, p. 437). This study adds important knowledge about special education in upper secondary schools and the students' own voices.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Pedagogical hope in community-building school practice

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The presentation will focus on how teachers, in collaboration with children, youth, parents, and other professionals, can create pedagogical development in processes characterized by mutual disengagement and risk of marginalization of some children (Mardahl-Hansen et al. 2020). We aim to contribute to knowledge about teachers' everyday work, and their collaboration with others, in relation to exploring and developing the potential to transform conditions for participation and cooperation in schools (Kousholt & Mardahl-Hansen 2024; Højholt & Kousholt 2018). This ambition involves theoretical and critical discussions on teacher professionalism and understandings of 'professional help' for children and youth who struggle in school (Mardahl-Hansen & Tybjerg 2024).

Based on social practice theory (Dreier 2008; Lave 2019), we assert that the organizational and social conditions for participation in schools are both politically and historically developed, contradictory and changeable in everyday school life (Højholt & Kousholt 2020; Tybjerg 2023). We highlight a professional space for interpretation and agency in the everyday life of schools for situated development (Mardahl-Hansen & Højholt 2024). Professionals' contradictory and conflictual struggles for transformation are linked to creating pedagogical hope by exploring and developing new ways to support children's and young people's engagement and opportunities for participation. The concept of 'community-building school practice' (inspired by Mørck et al.'s concept of community-building practices, Mørck et al. 2023) is introduced to discuss how teachers, in collaboration with children/youth and other school stakeholders, must critically, creatively, courageously, and proactively work to develop pedagogical hope for a common school for all Danish children.

In the presentation, we connect knowledge from childhood and youth research, inclusion research, and research on teacher professionalism to analyze two selected empirical cases. One case departs from a research circle titled 'Community-building School Practice' (2023-2024), carried out in a workshop-based collaboration with several Danish independent schools. The other case is developed from observation studies and interviews conducted in the research project 'Participation and Situated Inequality in Childhood Institutions' (2023-2026) (Larsen et al. 2023). Both projects are based on a critical psychological research tradition aimed at developing mutual learning processes in collaboration between researchers and professionals in practice (Højholt & Kousholt 2011; Højholt 2005). The selected cases are respectively based on a class initiative and an intervention related to a single child of concern. They serve in diverse ways as illustrations of what we call community-building school practice. On this basis, we contribute with an understanding of the development of participation opportunities in school through the development of school practices. Thus, we invite to dialogue on theoretical understandings of teachers' professional work in developing participation opportunities for children in schools.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

”Ropen de skalla: Resurser åt alla!”: A research project on how children in need of special support are described in preschool special educational resource application forms

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Recurring in discussions with professionals, as well as in media and research (cg. Palla, 2021), are concerns regarding the portrayal of children in need of special support in relation to the struggle for resources in Swedish preschools. Perhaps the expressive constructions of children in need of special support can serve as a means to acquire additional resources. A consequence of such an approach may be that the more "special and expressive needs" are constructed and documented, the greater the opportunities for resource enhancement (cf. Persson & Tallberg Broman, 2019). This prerogative of interpretation opens up possibilities for what can be articulated in other arenas, such as in application forms for additional resource allocation. Multiple issues arise, relating to values, perceptions of children, and the formation of children's identities in connection with the preschool's role and mission regarding quality education, making this project particularly urgent. The aim is therefore to create knowledge about how children in need of special support are described in preschool special educational resource application forms. The analysis focuses on the preschool's compensatory mission as a differentiating practice (Foucault, 2000), examining how children are described in resource application forms from an intersectional perspective. In this way, it illuminates notions of normality and deviation within the constructed categories of function, gender, and age. The project is conducted through text analysis of collected authentic documents comprising 169 pages concerning 20 children. Using qualitative thematic text analysis (Atkinson & Coffey, 2011; Silverman, 2006) from an intersectional perspective, the content is grouped according to the categories of function, gender, and age, while also revealing any potential intersections among these categories. The project is expected to contribute to both theoretical development and practice-relevant knowledge.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Ethical Pedagogy: inclusive practice in mainstream schools for neurodivergent learners

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We identify, analyse, understand, and explain inclusive classroom practice in mainstream schools for pupils who have various types of neurodiversity. We define ‘ethical pedagogy’ as classroom interactions with an ethical focus (Riordan, 2024) and think inclusion in classrooms is a type of ethical pedagogy. This partnership of educational researchers, schoolteachers, and pupils builds on our previous work (e.g., Riordan et al., 2021, and 2024).

The theoretical perspective is Symbolic Interactionism, and epistemology is Social Constructionism for this paper (the project used a variety of research designs). Symbolic Interactionism, from social psychology, suggests a classroom can be considered a mini society, “created and maintained through face-to-face, repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals.” (Carter and Fuller, 2016:931). “Social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves.” (Burr, 2015:2-3). We uncover assumptions about neurodiversity and inclusion.

The methodology is Straussian Grounded Theory. Four video-based research methods are used. First, three primary school lessons, with three different teachers in three different schools, are video recorded. Second, each teacher watches clips, from all three lessons, and ‘thinks aloud’ whilst being video recorded (i.e., three teacher verbal protocol interviews). Relevant clips are selected by the teachers and researchers. Third, four volunteer learners who were in one of the lessons watch the same clips back as a group and ‘think aloud’ on video (i.e., three pupil group verbal protocol interviews). Pupils (including some with different types of neurodivergence) are selected by their teacher. Finally, the three primary teachers and four researchers are video recorded in a focus group interview. We will publish ~11 hours of video materials in a secure online repository (UK Data Service).

We present how often inclusive practice for neurodivergent learners occurred during the lessons, analyse transcript excerpts to illustrate ethical and inclusive pedagogy, and develop theory to support ethical pedagogy analysis.

Developing a deeper understanding and ways of explaining ethical pedagogy contributes to building a more equal and just world. This research considers diverse perspectives on classroom interactions and challenges assumptions. Ethical pedagogy can bring hope to marginalised learners.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Balancing Educational Reforms: The Historical Pendulum Swing of Differentiation and Equity in the Swedish Education System

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This study explores the historical evolution of differentiation in the Swedish education system, focusing on the balance between organizational and pedagogical differentiation from the 19th century to the present day. This research aims to critically examine how these forms of differentiation—grouping students by ability or adapting teaching methods—reflect societal changes and impact student inclusion, development, and learning. The analysis offers insights into the complex relationship between educational reforms, social equity, and the ongoing challenge of creating an inclusive education system that serves all students fairly.

This study's theoretical framework focuses on differentiation as both an analytical tool and a lens to understand historical educational trends. Organizational differentiation sorts students by perceived academic abilities, leading to specialized or segregated groups, while pedagogical differentiation adapts instruction within diverse classrooms to meet varying learning needs. The research references earlier works highlighting the dual nature of differentiation, where inclusive policies aim to promote equality but often result in exclusive practices, deepening social divisions. This paradox has been a persistent theme in Swedish educational history and continues to influence current policies.

Methodologically, the study employs a historical approach using snowball sampling to track educational reforms, policies, and practices across different periods. Snowball sampling, an inductive research method, allows researchers to trace information through sources, gradually building a comprehensive picture of how differentiation has shaped the Swedish education system. The use of historical documents such as policy reports and curricula from different eras provides a rich source of data for understanding how societal, political, and educational goals have influenced the shift between inclusive and exclusive practices.

Findings indicate that the Swedish education system has oscillated between inclusive practices and increased segregation. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, organizational differentiation, marked by the introduction of Folkskolan (1842), reinforced social stratification by providing varying education levels based on socioeconomic status and perceived abilities. Reforms like the comprehensive school (Lgr 62) in the 1960s aimed to foster pedagogical differentiation and individualization within classrooms. However, recent trends in the 21st century show a renewed focus on organizational differentiation, exemplified by the rise of specialized teaching groups and emergency schools, potentially exacerbating educational inequalities.

This study's relevance to Nordic educational research lies in its exploration of the tension between inclusion and differentiation in education. The Swedish experience serves as a valuable case study for examining how reforms aimed at equity can increase stratification. Insights into the historical and current challenges of balancing pedagogical and organizational differentiation can inform broader debates on inclusive education across Nordic countries, where similar issues of social equity, differentiation, and educational outcomes are prevalent.

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for ongoing reflection and adjustment in educational strategies to ensure that the balance between differentiation and inclusion promotes social equity rather than reinforces existing inequalities. By tracing the historical trajectory of differentiation in Swedish education, this study offers important lessons for policymakers and educators striving to create more inclusive educational systems in Sweden and the broader Nordic region.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Early interventions and support all the way: preventing that youths with disabilities end up as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Insights from a broad scoping review.

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The aim is to identify protective factors, measures and interventions to adopt in order to prevent students' dropout, non-completion of education and unemployment among young people, in particular regarding young people with disabilities, as they are overrepresented among NEET. Despite resources and good intentions, the equity of the education system in Sweden has decreased over time, and stakeholders are looking for ways to improve the educational system and reduce school failure.

Theoretical frameworks employed are: bio-ecological development theory; Heckman's theory; theories on developmental cascades and resilience. These theories explain how early interventions can promote positive development and prevent later difficulties.

Method. A broad scoping review was carried out, including systematic literature searches of peer-reviewed articles in SCOPUS, EBSCO, and ProQuest databases; relevant reports from authorities; and other sources. The results builds on analyses of a selection of reviews and meta-analyses, and empirical studies, of which 18 from Sweden were reviewed in details.

Results. There is support for initiatives and reforms at different levels: education system, school organisation, teaching, professional development and individual level. More young people would be expected to complete their studies by reforming the education system and introducing adaptations in curriculum and in school organisation. Early evidence-based interventions for families and in preschool can be effective in preventing difficulties, reducing the negative effects of socio-economic factors and disabilities, and promoting good school outcomes later on. There is strong evidence from long-term follow-ups that a preschool of good educational quality has positive outcomes in adult life in terms of education, employment and health. Other follow-ups show positive effects on school-age outcomes, including reduced costs for special education provisions. However, early universal interventions, in term of extended preschool attendance, must have high educational quality and adopt methods supported by the science on child's development. The literature overview finds support for: 1) reforms in the education system: for example, educational pathways that do not exclude young people; continuity of support for transitions, vocational training with more practical elements; support measures that facilitate the transition to work for students with disabilities. 2) Investments in early universal interventions, as early educational environments of high quality have a compensatory effect and should be introduced and evaluated in Sweden. 3) Evidence-based and multi-component systems for support throughout schooling, primarily in inclusive school settings. 4) Targeted and indicated interventions and alternative forms of support can fulfil a function for young people with the greatest support needs.

The study has relevance to the Nordic educational research field for various reasons: it includes a comparison of types of peer-reviewed publications on this topic from the Nordic countries. The comparison shows for example that studies on prevention of NEET and promotion of students' success are more common in Norway than in other Nordic countries.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Experiences of enjoyment and inclusion among pupils with special needs in physical education – participation opportunities in a Danish school context

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Pupil diversity in Danish mainstream schools has increased significantly in the past decade. Consequently, many teachers experience challenges in including all pupils (VIVE, 2022). Physical education (PE) teachers report lacking specialized pedagogical competencies to include children with special needs (SN) in PE activities (Guldager et al., 2023). Pupils with SN report lower well-being and enjoyment at school (Børns Vilkår, 2022). Given the limited knowledge about SN pupils' experiences in PE, we seek to address the following research questions and aim:

How do pupils with SN experience enjoyment and inclusion in school-based physical education? What challenges their participation in PE, and what are the potential avenues for enhancing their engagement?

Our study highlights selected findings from a survey of pupils with and without SN (n=428) using Pearson's Chi-Square test (Guldager et al., in press), and individual semi-structured interviews with pupils with SN (n=53) (Bentholt et al., in press). Data were collected in 2023.

Thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted (Braun, Clarke & Weate, 2016), and emergent themes were subsequently explored using Wenger's theory on social learning (2004).

We found that more than one in five children in mainstream schools have SN. While pupils in general enjoy PE, those with SN enjoy it significantly less. Pupils with SN also report feeling 'less included in PE' on several parameters compared to their peers without SN.

In the interviews, all pupils with SN report a lack of decision-making opportunities in PE, although those who have experienced it express greater joy and participation. Those who enjoy PE often see it as a space to expend energy. Conversely, those who do not, report participation difficulties due to factors such as class size and the teachers' inclusion challenges.

These findings underscore how professionals should organize and adapt PE to enhance both enjoyment and inclusion, with pupil agency highlighted as untapped potential for engagement. The study also raises the question of whether the designation of 'special needs' still applies in a Nordic school context, presenting new demands on mainstream education.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

“You are just a student” – Epistemic injustice in educational internships among pedagogy students

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### Topic aim

Research over the past 20 years has documented the social injustices faced by minority students, revealing how discrimination, bias, and lowered expectations shape their educational experiences (Gilliam, 2008; Kalkan, 2021; Khawaja, 2023). These studies indicate that race, ethnicity, disability, age, class, sexuality, and gender often intersect, compounding the disadvantages faced by these students. For instance, minority students frequently experience microaggressions and systemic barriers that adversely affect their self-esteem and academic success (Belkin et al. 2024).

This paper explores how respect for equality is challenged during pedagogy internships, focusing on the impact of systemic stereotypes related to institutional expectations of the "good pedagogy student." It examines how dignity - defined as the right to demand justification for power relations (Forst, 2015) - is undermined in educational settings. These stereotypes contribute to expressive harm (i.e., detrimental effects on self-expression, Anderson, 2007) and epistemic injustice (i.e., injustices related to knowledge transmission, Fricker, 2007), compelling students to continually demonstrate their competencies (Sommer, 2024). The paper underscores the need to address such power imbalances to promote dignity and equity in Nordic educational contexts.

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical foundation of the paper is rooted in the norm-critique tradition developed over the past 20-30 years, influenced by queer theorists (Butler, 1990) and adapted by Kevin Kumashiro (2000, 2009) in a pedagogical context, as well as Swedish scholars (Björkman et al., 2021; Björkman & Bromseth, 2019). The research emphasizes the importance of intersectional theories for analyzing pedagogical practices from a norm-critical perspective. It investigates how intersecting identity categories—such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and age—shape the challenges faced by students during their internships. Concepts such as expressive harm (Anderson, 2007) and epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007) are employed to analyze how stereotypes affect students' ability to be heard and validated.

### Methodology

This research is based on a survey conducted among pedagogy students at four programs in a Danish University College, with 422 respondents. The survey design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was inspired by Berit Ås' theory of "master suppression techniques" (1979/1981), aiming to reveal subtle power dynamics such as experienced invisibility, ridicule, and guilt imposition among the students. Open-ended questions (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2014) allowed students to elaborate on their responses, resulting in an extensive qualitative dataset analyzed for themes and patterns. Additionally, eight focus group interviews (Tinggaard & Brinkman, 2015) were conducted to deepen insights from the survey findings.

### Results and contribution

Through a norm-critical analysis, the paper highlights the significance of understanding students' identities as "students" during pedagogical internships across intersecting identity categories, including race, sexuality, age, disability, gender, etc., and within the theoretical framework of epistemic injustice and expressive harm. The paper's findings reveal how structural inequalities are perpetuated by normative biases and suggest that critical pedagogy can help deconstruct these biases, fostering equal citizenship and social justice in education. Additionally, the paper seeks to contribute to Nordic educational research by illuminating hidden power dynamics in pedagogical educational internships and advocating for critical pedagogical approaches that support inclusion and equity among diverse student populations.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Prisoners' experiences about education and special education

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### Aim

The aim is to study the experiences of prisoners who have at school age studied in a special group and reflect these experiences with the goals of inclusive education. The RQs are: 1) How was school and specifically special education experienced? 2) What is good teaching and a good teacher like according to the prisoners? In addition, the reason for special education as well as plans for the future were asked

### Theoretical framework

The data is discussed through the three levels of politics of belonging, namely: 1) *social locations*, 2) *identity and emotional attachment* and 3) *ethical and political values level* (Yuval-Davies 2011). These as well as the main goal of inclusive education, to guarantee support to all in local schools (Unesco 1994), are commented on with the results.

### Research design

Together 28 prisoners from several Finnish prisons were interviewed at various prisons. The mean age of the prisoners ranged from 18 to 38 years. As a research method, the analysis of narratives is used. The found narratives are discussed in relation to the three mentioned levels. Also, some typical narratives are formed.

### Preliminary findings

Inclusion was not successful. The extensive support needs were not met in general education. *The social location* of these prisoners had mainly been poor during school time. They had seldom support from home, many had experienced placement in an institution. *Own social location and identity* were under change, for example drugs had been left and professional studies started in prison.

An *emotional attachment* to mother, sometimes siblings was mentioned, but not everyone had any parents in their life. Belonging and longing to belong were vaguely touched and intertwined with experiences of being a bully or being bullied at school. A crucial thing had been the special teacher who was said to be a relaxed person who listened to the pupils and treated them equally.

*Ethical and political values* were present in different kind of opportunities to get support to the pupil and to the family early enough in various communities in Finland.

The reason to attend special education was mainly restless behavior, and difficulties in concentration, but also unspecified challenges. Attending special education had been crucial for finishing compulsory education and was appreciated. Several times a relaxed atmosphere and flexibility was mentioned.

To conclude, children with special needs and with challenges at home need much support, personal touch and often also learning to learn and learning to live skills. These needs were difficult to meet in inclusive settings. A n important element was an adult who listened. Everyone seconded special education and said that it was a good place for them. This conflicts with the current inclusive educational policy.

### Relevance to Nordic research

Only few studies have been done of prisoners in Nordic countries. This group has useful information, and the experiences would be interesting to compare with regards to developing inclusive education.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Resonance in Physical Education: Supporting Pupils with Special Needs in an Accelerated Education System

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This presentation is based on the empirical findings from the project, Moving Physical Activity – for children with special needs in mainstream school and leisure activities (Moving Physical Activity, 2024). Through single case analysis, it describes a child with special needs' experiences of physical education in a Danish elementary school (Flyvbjerg, 2020).

Taking a sociological theoretical standpoint, the presentation focuses on various risk factors that create distress for children in mainstream schools. These factors include: 1) social acceleration, 2) an increasingly performance-based culture, and 3) self-monitored psychologization (Katzenelson et al., 2021; Rosa & Endres, 2017; Frydendal & Thing, 2023). The central question is thus: How can physical education in elementary school serve as a liberating and resonant space for pupils with special needs?

The arts-based interviews, which the presentation primarily centers around, draw their methodological inspiration from Max Van Manen and his approach to practical phenomenological research (Van Manen, 2002). Thus, through the pupil Lærke, her meaningful insights and knowledge are revealed through descriptions of her body and actions in the daily practices of the school.

The analyses reveal that physical education can serve as a refuge in everyday life, in contrast to sedentary, performance-oriented classroom instruction. Examples are given of how physical education is observed as having a positive impact on Lærke. The intention is that this presentation may provide a perspective on physical education as a potential space for resonant moments that can enhance pupils' well-being at school.

The findings of the study are presented and show that when the space is large, with a high ceiling, light, room, and materials available for bodily expression, Lærke's body can be observed as being set free.

The results are interesting as they can potentially be related to all pupils with similar difficulties. Therefore, the presentation concludes with didactic considerations and pedagogical practice with a particular focus on co-teaching.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Students' agency in a research project aimed to get new insight into inclusive education

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Given a persistent gap between ideology and practice regarding inclusive education (IE) in both international and Nordic contexts, there is a demand for research that explores students' perceptions of what inclusion means to them (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018). Accordingly, student voice and agency have received increasing attention in research within this field (Messiou 2023).

This paper reports on a sub-study that is part of a larger research project focusing on inclusion in a "super-diverse" Norwegian public primary school. The purpose of the sub-study is to understand inclusion (and exclusion) as experienced by students and to gain new knowledge about how students' voices can be included in and used as a basis for teachers to develop inclusive practices.

Based on Messiou's (2023, p. 12) understanding of agency as a relational process that emerges through interaction with others, the students in our project were assigned a role as co-creators with researchers and teachers in all phases of the research process.

Intending to gain new insights into students' agency in research in the field of IE, we formulated the following research question:

*How can students' agency be supported when facilitating their role as co-creative partners in research on inclusion in a local diverse school context?*

Research design:

39 students were voluntarily recruited. The research design was developed simultaneously while conducting the study by the initiatives of the students. Firstly, the students were asked to take 5-10 photographs of what is important to them in school, to ensure their well-being and learning. Secondly, their stories connected to these pictures were shared with the researchers, who posed open follow-up questions. In the third step, the researchers analyzed all the transcribed interviews open and inductive, and summarized the preliminary results in a mind map. Then in the fourth step, the students were interviewed about the mind map: What comes to your mind when looking at the mind map? How do you relate to it? Is there anything missing/ anything you would like to remove? If so, what and why?

Results

In this fourth step of the project, one of the students suggested that the mind map could be further developed into a poster through which the students could express what was important for them in school, to the school's principal and teachers. Thus, in the fifth step, the researchers analyzed the transcribed interviews from step four, and reviewed the mind map accordingly, resulting in a poster designed by a professional graphic designer.

Based on the poster, the students proposed suggestions for both 1) further research focuses and methods, and 2) how to support their agency through new forms of interactions with their teachers and other significant adults, potentially leading to actual changes in school. However, the experiences from this project also show that promoting agency for the entire diversity of students can be challenging and has many different layers.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Inclusive Digital Education for all? A Comparative Policy Analysis across Global, European, and National Levels

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As digital skills have become increasingly important for participation in various areas of society, all European states have taken measures to digitalize also their education systems over the last decade. Combining aims of implementing inclusive education and digitalization, global education policy drivers, the European Union and many countries of Europe have promoted what has been termed as inclusive digital education (Daniela, 2022). However, it remains unclear how inclusive digital education is addressed across these levels. Thus, our study seeks to explore and compare the significance of inclusive digital education in policy initiatives at global, European, and national levels.

In line with this focus, our research design is based on a comparative policy analysis approach across three policy levels: (1) global, through United Nations organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF; (2) European and (3) national, with case studies of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Iceland, and Norway. Doing so, we conduct a document analysis of relevant policy papers – in order to explore how national policy initiatives differ and how they relate to the global and European levels in terms of inclusive digital education. As we will, our structured comparative framework allows us to evaluate policy alignment with the inclusive digital education model and differences in regional policy application. This framework is based on Daniela's (2022) model, which outlines four critical policy development areas: (1) provision of access to digital and assistive technologies, (2) support for acquiring comprehensive digital skills, (3) universal design in digital learning content, and (4) flexible educational structures that mitigate learning barriers. This model provides a foundation to assess policy comprehensiveness and inclusivity across regions.

Our findings show that inclusive digital education for learners considered as having special educational needs plays an important role in policy papers of the United Nations as well as the European Union. However, at national levels, a range of approaches in policy support for inclusive digital education is observable, particularly in the areas of access to digital infrastructure, teacher professionalization, and student inclusion. Hence, while global and EU policies advocate comprehensive digital inclusive frameworks, rather strong national differences can be found. For example, in Austrian key policy papers on digital education, there are no specific references to inclusion or inclusive digital education. In our conclusions, we highlight the strengths and limitations of policies of all four countries.

Furthermore, our study seeks to contribute to Nordic and European educational research by identifying policy strengths and gaps in digital inclusion initiatives, particularly relevant as the Nordic region prioritizes digital equity and innovation. By examining policy alignment across levels, this research may support Nordic policy makers in recognizing effective strategies for inclusive digital education and understanding the importance of cross-national policy coherence in addressing the digital divide. Moreover, insights from this study can guide further research on digital inclusion and contribute to a more equitable digital learning landscape across Nordic and European countries.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Teaching Assistants Working with Students in Need of Special Support – a Wish List for Positive Impact

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#### Research topic

The research topic is the work of teaching assistants with students in need of special support. There are many terms used for this professional group in schools, for example support staff, paraprofessionals, special needs assistants (SNAs), teacher assistants etc. In this presentation, we use the term teaching assistants (TAs). Even though TAs often work with students in need of special support, they do not always have formal training in special education (Lindqvist et al., 2020). The overarching aim of the study focus on what could be necessary conditions for TAs to have a positive impact and how their working conditions should be organized according to formally educated special education teachers.

#### Theoretical framework

TAs' specific responsibilities in Sweden are determined locally by each school or principal, often focusing on students in need of special support. There is uncertainty about their roles, and working conditions vary. Therefore, our preliminary theoretical framework is based in a micropolitical perspective, focusing on negotiations and representations of professional relationships, knowledge and power/hierarchy, expressed as experiences and perceptions by different stakeholders.

#### Research design

We conducted a survey asking prospective special education teachers (most of whom already work with students in need of special support and they are all teachers) about the conditions necessary for TAs to perform effectively, both academically and socially. Our focus was specifically on experiences and perceptions of success factors, and the findings are based on 86 open-ended responses, analyzed using thematic analysis.

#### Findings

When prospective special education teachers describe what is needed for TAs to have a positive impact, it can be summarized in a wish list reflecting shortcomings and challenges. High on the wish list is the TAs personality and ability to build good and appropriate relationships with the students. This might compensate for some shortcomings and knowledge gaps.

Education is emphasized on the wish list, as TAs often work with students who challenge the school the most, both socially, pedagogically, and didactically. TAs should also have knowledge of diagnoses, and an understanding of the school's special education organization. Therefore, the participants focus on strengthening the position of TAs in the school's hierarchy and their status in terms of knowledge and influence.

The wish list also includes time for TAs to participate in pedagogical planning, in meetings, and in professional development. For special education teachers, there must be time to mentor them and coach them.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This presentation aims to explore the possible positive impact of TAs in schools, a workforce that has grown considerably over the last 10-15 years. There is not much research performed in the Nordic countries on this paraprofessional group; there is a lack of knowledge about what they do and their situation in schools (Lindqvist et al., 2020).

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

“We don't want to crush their dreams” -the dilemma of balancing protection and participation in supporting students with special educational needs right to express their voice

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

Children's right to be heard was established through the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child, where article 12 asserts that children have the right to express their views freely in all matters that affect them, and that the views of the child should be given due weight. Despite legislation and policy aims supporting students right to be heard, there seems to be a gap between ideals and realities, in particular evident for students with special educational needs (de Leeuw, Little & Rix, 2020). Decisions regarding special education significantly affect children's lives, and they should have the opportunity to be active partners in these decisions. It requires teachers that facilitate students to express their voice, and actively listen and act upon those voices (Lundy, 2007).

In this paper we report from an ongoing study in a Norwegian primary school, where we want to employ the active use of student's voice in the process of planning and implementing (inclusive) special education. The focus is on teachers' conversations with students, and the topic is one dilemma that arose: How can the teachers talk with the students about their learning difficulties in a way that balances both the rights to protection and participation?

Data consist of teacher reflections on conversations with students, with the research question:

What reflective response do three teachers have after engaging in conversations with students about their learning difficulties?

Design:

Students who were at the starting point in a process towards special education were recruited. Conversations between teacher and child were audio recorded, and these recordings were used in stimulated recall interviews with the teachers. Transcripts of these interviews are data in this study. A collective, inductive analysis led to different themes, one being the dilemma of talking about the children's difficulties, which we want to discuss in this paper.

Results:

Our preliminary findings show that the teachers found it challenging to talk with the students about their learning difficulties. They expressed that the learning difficulties might conflict with children's prospects for their future. Teachers main concern was that the conversations could be uncomfortable for the child, and they wanted to protect them from facing this reality.

Relevance:

With relevance to Nordic educational research, we want to discuss how the teachers' need to protect children might paradoxically hinder their participation.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Exploring teacher preparation environment to develop inclusive education in Nepal: Teacher educators' perspectives.

Ram Chandra Giri

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This paper investigates teacher educators' understanding of inclusive education and their perception regarding the prospective teacher preparation environment that has shaped or will shape the implementation of inclusive education in schools in Nepal. Yet 4.4 percent of children of school enrolment age are out-of-school (MoEST, 2023). Amidst such challenges of ensuring access to education for all, inclusive education has become a growing agenda for school education, particularly for a person with disabilities. Nepal has adopted a few measures such as free-of-cost education, disability-friendly materials, and accessible infrastructure as a commitment to CRPD protocols through legislative provisions. However, in policy and legislation, there remain ambiguities and paradoxes regarding special education and inclusive education (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2024; MoEST, 2021). In such a context, mainstream school teachers' role has been acknowledged as crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Forlin & Lian, 2008), which can be more than significant in a complex situation like Nepal, where they need to work without basic resources and support services (HRW, 2011). Teachers' knowledge, skills, and attitudes, mostly shaped by the teacher preparation environment, are critical to being an inclusive teacher (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). Teacher educators' perspectives and experience can be useful ways to know about the strengths, and gaps of teacher preparation which shape how inclusive education is implemented to a large extent. For the in-depth analysis, this study uses the concept of decolonizing inclusive education (Walton, 2018) together with a socio-cultural approach (Bruner, 1997) as a theoretical framework. This can shed more light on the problematized approach of applying knowledge produced in the northern context, directly and uncritically (Singal & Muthukrishna, 2014) to Nepal and analyze the uncoordinated and top-down approach to curriculum development through the idea of decolonization to uncover the ingrained problems.

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with eight teacher educators within the Department of Education, Tribhuvan University to collate their experiences about teaching students with disabilities, their perception of the suitability of curricular practices to prepare inclusive school teachers, and their understanding of inclusive education. Reflexive thematic analysis will be carried out following all six steps (Braun et al., 2022).

This study is expected to uncover some positive initiatives in the context. However, it further may indicate a lack of cultural consideration in formulating and implementing the curriculum, and the absence of systematic efforts to ensure channelizing existing policy with stakeholders' needs to develop and reform the teacher preparation environment for the success of inclusive education. This study of low-resource environment, will be relevant to the Nordic countries in several ways. It can provide new insights to the aid providing Nordic nations with the challenges and possibilities of a highly diversified society. Moreover, it opens symmetrical global conversations and can produce a solid base for future north-south collaboration in research and institutional development. Additionally, decolonizing and culturally appropriate practices informed by this research can be a matter of interest in understanding inclusive education from the sociocultural perspective, which has the potential to transcend the right-based approach towards the societal common goods (Felder, 2019)

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Teenagers' sense of school belonging at the transition to lower secondary school.

Fredrika Selberg Zolland

Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

### Research topic/aim

This paper draws on a current doctoral project exploring teenagers' experience of their everyday lives at school and their transition to year seven and lower secondary school. It specifically focuses on how teenagers' sense of school belonging is understood, constructed, and enacted at this transition. In the project, belonging is viewed as a dynamic, multi-layered, and intersectional phenomenon, where individuals belong to multiple groupings simultaneously. It is also seen as a relational and context-dependent process that is continuously renegotiated based on various situations and relationships (Yuval- Davies, 2006, 2011).

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is based on the idea that human identity is shaped through social categorization and collaboration with others, and belonging is understood as being formed through interactions with others, and by more collectively abstract concepts (Jenkins, 2014; Mead, 1976).

### Methodology/ research design

This project employs an ethnographically inspired approach over an academic year at a 7-9 school, involving fifteen teenagers in year seven, aged 12-14. Various qualitative methods focusing on the teenagers' perspective are used for data collection, including participant observation and individual interviews. Additionally, photo-elicitation (Harper, 1998, 2002) is used to enrich and deepen the participants' 'stories, incorporating photographs taken by the students themselves into the interviews.

### Expected results/ findings

By utilizing the voices of teenagers regarding their everyday lives at school, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the factors and aspects that promote teenagers' sense of belonging at school. This is particularly important for those who feel a lack of belonging or experience exclusion. In this presentation, I will discuss preliminary results.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This presentation focuses on teenagers' everyday lives at school and the transition to lower secondary school, and their sense of school belonging within a Nordic educational context. This knowledge is relevant because, in all Nordic countries, teenagers experience the transition to lower secondary school with a range of feelings and experiences, and many teenagers in these countries also struggle for belonging at school.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Ethical issues in Early Childhood Intervention and Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) implications internationally.

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This paper looks at the use of AAC applications and considers a number of issues that might have ethical inputs on the course of an Early intervention (EI) program and its implications on three areas embarked on: a) a policy context (what ethical issues are central for EI globally and how they are contextualized nationally?); b) a case study based on family- and child-centered intervention (retrospectively), presenting results of ethical challenges met through relations among professionals; professionals and family; professionals, family and aided AAC solutions for a child (what are key ethical issues experienced by main actors, involved in the EI program of the case?); c) different ways by which EI professionals can approach ethics in the area of AAC as a support for a professional vision, which is proven to influence their judgement (what are central features of professional ethics in common? what ethical theories could support inter-professional visions?)

The conceptual framework is based on inter-professional ethics 'from institutionalization to deinstitutionalization and inclusion'. This study identified several areas potentially sourcing resolutions of dilemma issues in a family centered EIP, based on sharing among professionals: ethical duties, grounded in common generic axiological foundation on moral judgement (*deontologically based ethical practice*); essential amount of knowledge; feelings and care incorporated in recognition of the uniqueness of a family context within the character of a child impairment ; translation of ethics into the practice, focusing on a dialogue (*informed consent*) with parents on communicative aids for adjusting child-parent communication and optimal home environmental conditions for child development as a first line of support (*'action principles'*) as well as ethical reflection as an experience of *'ethical event'* and *'ethical claim'* .

The research has retrospective application and describes intervention results of 'a single case study', meeting deaf parents and their infant- blind son (from 1 month) in EIP between 2006-2009 in the Nordic municipality of Russia. The focus of the intervention was to provide this family with meaningful support adjusting parental patterns to their first line needs in daily life communication, defining optimal solutions and strategies for aided tolls for child-parent interaction. It was expected that the complexities of the child-parent communication would take a long time and that there might be a need to find out strategies for inclusion of aided communication in the course of boy's development as well as framed for communication between parents and professionals. Case studying allowed to include rich contextual information of the intervention in real-life settings and situations. Meetings with family and child-parent communication were systematically documented in written/video records, were used participant observations in home and EIP environmental contexts, the adjustment of aided communication was regularly registered and discussed with parents. There were identified three main ethical dilemmas, the most sensitive to a child rights perspective and his basic needs satisfaction.

This study is focusing on Systems of professional values and beliefs cultivated in unique communicative environment, making this study highly relevant to Nordic Educational Research

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Creating hope in parent-teacher relationships in digital and multilingual settings – adding Mediagrams to the toolbox

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Migration and technology saturation has led to highly diverse populations both linguistically and culturally in the Nordic countries. The political and societal debates about the role of Nordic language skills for the social inclusion of migrants are increasingly polarized. In this context, the school is one of the key domains for social inclusion of both children and parents, and the day-to-day parent-teacher communication and interaction is primarily digitally mediated in Norway. In this way, teachers are uniquely positioned to bring hope into schools through contributing to parent-teacher relationships built on recognition (Honneth, 1995), in terms of valorizing parents' linguistic repertoires and aligning with their preferred modes of communication. As research consistently shows, inclusive practices with parents is crucial for their social and academic development (e.g. Cummins, 2009).

This presentation builds on previous work on an innovative use of a visualization of parents' linguistic and media repertoires, the mediagram, as a tool to provide teachers with important information about the parents. Importantly, this may potentially enable teachers to adopt a resource orientation towards multilingual parents (Thyness, forthcoming 2024). The mediagram represents a person's multilingual, multimodal and transnational digital communication. In this presentation, I draw on data where pupils and parents created a shared mediagram on the teacher's initiative. The research question of this paper is: How can the use of the mediagram create hope for more inclusive parent-teacher relationships in multilingual settings? In an exploratory approach to this question, I analyze qualitative, in-depth interviews with three teachers and four family members through the lenses of critical multilingual awareness (García, 2017). The analysis is based on the assumption that this visual tool offers an alternative access to information and critical reflection (e.g. Busch, 2012).

The aim is to understand how the teachers and parents evaluated the use of the mediagram as a tool that has the potential to enhance inclusive language and media practices with multilingual parents. The analysis shows that, despite important discrepancies between the parents and teachers, the mediagram has the potential to bring hope for enhanced inclusive practices between teachers and multilingual parents by providing the teachers with an important information base and a striking visualization of the parents' linguistic and media repertoires. The presentation sheds light on an under-researched area in the Nordic countries and in Western Europe in general: digitally mediated parent-teacher communication and interaction in multilingual settings.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Collaboration for the benefit of the youth

Hege Solheim, Bjørk Kehlet

University of Southeast Norway, Norway

This project explores experiences of collaboration between services and families when a user faces cognitive challenges and receives multiple services. The article focuses on parents' experiences during the transition from middle school to high school. The research questions are: How do parents experience the collaboration? What is important for parents for a successful transition? How does the process affect the family's and the young person's quality of life?

It is crucial that services collaborate and base their work on the adolescent's life situation and needs (Forskningsrådet 2021). A lack of coordination may lead to blind spots, which could be due to different assignments, solutions, values, and norms. Fylling and Sandvin (1999) show how recognition of parents' competence and ensuring their involvement is central to successful transitions, and this can affect the young person's quality of life. According to Almudena et al. (2015), quality of life during transitions can be identified through eight dimensions: emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, material well-being, personal development, self-determination, social inclusion, and rights. Another relevant concept in connection with the experience of quality of life is the Sense of Coherence (SOC) (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007). SOC describes a person's ability to manage stress and maintain good health, based on three main components: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. The latter is the most motivating component, referring to the extent to which a person feels that life's challenges are worth investing energy in. For our participants, this will be relevant to how they experience whether the collaboration between the support system provides them with the tools they need during the transition from middle school to high school. Parents may view support from these various levels as crucial for their child's quality of life (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

This is a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews to collect data. The study has been approved by SIKT, and the data will be handled according to ethical guidelines. The parents of adolescents with cognitive challenges who receive services from multiple agencies have volunteered to participate and can withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews were conducted either in person or digitally, and the audio recordings were transcribed, analyzed, and categorized using thematic and reflective analysis (Brown & Clarke, 2023).

Expected results will relate to what parents prioritize in collaboration and what is necessary for them to experience high quality of life, and to understand, manage, and find meaning in the changes associated with the transition between schools. It seems that recognition of parents' competence and the history they carry with them plays a significant role, as does mutual understanding of various professional perspectives.

In all Nordic countries, children with cognitive challenges receive different services. These children often require a clear connection between these services, and the school plays an important part in their daily lives. This group is particularly vulnerable during transitions between services, and how schools can collaborate with other agencies to promote coping and quality of life is an important aspect of the school's work.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

"The connection between assessment and interventions is usually easy to see, but the actual implementation can be more challenging": A pilot study on the realisation of special support in compulsory school in Sweden.

Stina Tolgfors<sup>1,2</sup>, Anna Sjöqvist<sup>2</sup>, Kerstin Göransson<sup>2</sup>

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This study focuses on the realisation of interventions decided in individual education plans (IEP, in Swedish *åtgärdsprogram*). There is a considerable amount of research on how to effectively identify students' special educational needs (e.g. Deno, 1985; Forcht & Van Norman, 2024). Different aspects of the content of goals and interventions in IEPs have also been investigated in several studies, for example parent/guardian and student participation in IEPs (Keles et al., 2022; Sanderson & Goldman, 2022), and academic versus social goals in IEPs (Kurth et al., 2021). Less attention has been paid to conditions for the realisation of interventions in the every-day practices of schools. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the conditions for the realisation of special support.

Based on the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis, 2022) the study explores how cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements creates conditions for practices. Research questions are: 1) What traces of instability in the practice landscape can be discerned in schools' arrangements regarding special educational support? 2) What arrangements at the schools can enable and constrain the realisation of special support?

Methods used were collegial learning dialogues and open-ended survey questions, with a total of 47 participants from eight compulsory schools in two municipalities in central Sweden.

In the results, two areas of instability in the practice landscape were identified. One instability concerns different ways of understanding and explaining school difficulties in terms of compensatory and relational perspectives. The other concerns the imprint on the practice architecture of a governance ideology rooted in NPM (New Public Management). Arrangements in three areas were identified as particularly important for the realisation of special support, namely organisation and structure, collaboration, and consensus. The results make apparent that schools are complex practices with multiple purposes, which can sometimes be contradictory. The realisation of special support is not merely a matter of implementation; rather, it requires changes in arrangements, which in turn affect other practices within the school. The study provides new insights regarding special support specifically and special educational support generally, thereby contributing to both research and educational practice.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Politics of belonging in an integrated group of children in early childhood education

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### Research topic

In this ethnographic dissertation research, I am studying the politics of belonging in an integrated group of children in early childhood education (ECEC). The study is located in the multidisciplinary field of childhood research, combining educational and social science perspectives.

### Theoretical framework

Belonging is a widely accepted basic psychological need (Bitteberg, 2013), built on an individual level as an experience of belonging, and on the other hand more broadly as social, cultural, political and spatial structures and modes of action, politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2010). Research on the topic has so far mainly been conducted with children over the age of three, who may have been expected to have a richer range of means of communication and better social and self-expression skills at their disposal (Erwin et al., 2022). In particular, the views of children in need of support and those who use non-verbal language have been overlooked in the study (Karlsson, 2008). In this doctoral study, I examined the nature of child-to-child negotiations on belonging and inclusion in an integrated group of children, where about half of the children receive intensified or special support, and half the general support.

### Methodology

The study involved 12 children, five of whom received intensified or special support, and 5 educators. My multi-method research material includes ethnographic observation, interviews with children and educators, photographs, videos and visual materials produced by children, in line with the mosaic approach (Clark, 2017). The material was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### Findings

Preliminary results show that in an integrated group of children, children use multiple, sometimes more visible, and sometimes subtle ways to influence their own, or another child's belonging. The policies of belonging to a group in everyday life are built into a system in which children use both verbal and body and gesture language means for self-expression. In addition, questions of power, responsibility and demarcation are present in the interaction between children. In this way, the politics of belonging appear as a dynamic whole, at the center of which tensions and negotiations between children about morality arise, and which guides them to concrete actions that guide their interaction and experience of belonging or unbelonging.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The results of this study help to understand children's perspectives on belonging and its construction in more depth. The study brings a whole new kind of contribution to the study of the belonging of young children in the Nordic countries by looking especially at the perspectives of children in need of support. Thus, the study contributes to the discussion of organising inclusive early childhood education by asking whether these values are realised for all children and how children negotiate their belonging from a variety of starting points. The results can be used to develop support and pedagogy in early childhood education and to strengthen child-friendly political decision-making.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Navigating tensions between compensatory and inclusive approach: Insights from the Faroe Islands

Frida Poulsen

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

This paper, based on an extensive study in developing inclusive education in the Faroe Islands (Poulsen, 2023) explores the tension between general education and special needs education, examining the interplay between compensatory and inclusive approaches. It aims to investigate how these approaches influence the policy and practice of inclusive education and address the dilemmas between these two educational paradigms (Norwich & Koutsouris, 2017).

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in the conceptual frameworks of compensatory and inclusive education (Haug, 2017). The compensatory approach emphasises creating separate, supportive environments for students with special needs, while the inclusive approach advocates integrating all students within general education settings. These frameworks are critically analysed to identify their limitations and how they intersect with societal and cultural factors in the Faroese environment.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

Through an analysis of empirical material, the research examines perspectives from educational actors and actants within the Faroese education system (Clarke et al., 2018). It investigates structural, legislative, and cultural dimensions that influence the transfer, translation and transformation (Cowen, 2006) of inclusive principles into practice. Key focus areas include collaboration, professional understanding, and the roles of pupils, parents, and other stakeholders in developing inclusion.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The findings suggest that the Faroese education system predominantly employs a narrow approach to inclusion, often favouring compensatory practices. While the inclusive approach is viewed as desirable, it is hindered by significant legislative, structural, and cultural challenges (Norwich, 2014). Transforming inclusion requires addressing these challenges through local policy anchored in Faroese culture, fostering agonistic collaboration patterns, and ensuring that educators and stakeholders actively engage in inclusive policy and practices.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This research contributes to Nordic educational discourse by examining inclusion within the unique cultural and ecological context of the Faroe Islands. It highlights the importance of contextualizing inclusive education within small-scale societies, where close relational networks and cultural norms shape educational practices. The study underscores the need for tailored, culturally sensitive approaches to navigate dilemmas between general and special needs education in Nordic settings.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### To Be Capable: School Professionals' Conceptions of Student Competence and Agency and their Implications for Equity in Upper Secondary School

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#### Research topic/aim

This paper examines school professionals' conceptions of student competence and agency and how they can be related to educational equity. A particular focus is directed towards students in need of special support and additional adjustments. The importance of equity, inclusion, and pluralistic teaching approaches to support students' development of knowledge, self-efficacy, and the ability to act (i.e., competence and agency) in a complex world has been widely recognized and put on the educational agenda (OECD, 2019; SNAE, 2021; UN, 2015; UNESCO, 1994). However, previous research indicates several challenges, including a lack of inclusive practices (Giota et al., 2023) and limited pedagogical differentiation (Ramberg, 2015) as well as a decline in school belonging, especially among low-achieving students (Högberg & Lindgren, 2023). Additionally, existing research highlights the prevalence of normative ideals regarding who the "competent student" is (Ideland, 2018) and what such a student "does" (Törnqvist, 2019). In response, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (i) how is student competence and agency described and communicated by, and amongst teachers and student health team members? and (ii) how can these notions be understood with regards to educational equity?

#### Theoretical framework

The study applies Nussbaum's (2001) capability approach in conjunction with Fricker's (2007) ethical-philosophical theory of epistemic injustice. This combination allows for a nuanced analysis that combines a normative outlook regarding what capabilities students need in order to be able to develop and flourish in their own right, with a critical perspective on structures that limit such opportunities.

#### Methodology

Data is collected through ethnographic fieldwork in two upper secondary schools, incorporating participant observation and semi-structured ethnographic interview (cf. Hammersley, 2019) with subject teachers and members of student health teams, including special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and principals.

#### Expected results

The findings of this study can shed light on the abilities that school professionals consider essential for students' development in an increasingly complex world, the rationale behind these perspectives, and the implications for students requiring special support and additional adjustments. Moreover, the focus of the study provides space for an eclectic analysis where, as suggested by Thomas & Loxley (2022), the topic of inclusion can be addressed in relation to other humanities, in this case the ethical aspects of equity. Furthermore, the study may provide insights regarding collaboration between school professionals and critical discussions on justice, equity and participation in upper secondary school.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

How schools can support *all* students with equitable opportunities for developing their unique potential should be of relevance for the Nordic research community, particularly for those interested in questions regarding equity, inclusive education, and student well-being, as well as policy, and school organization.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Understanding Differentiated Instruction: Pupils' Perspectives and Participatory Research

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Adapting instruction to address the heterogeneity of primary school pupils remains a significant challenge for teachers. While differentiated instruction is often proposed as a strategy to enhance educational equity, research highlights the difficulties teachers face in implementing it effectively (Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). Concepts such as differentiated instruction, differentiation, and individualization are frequently discussed as means to create inclusive classrooms and promote equity in education (Gheysens et al., 2020; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Maia & Freire, 2023).

Focusing on pupils' needs is widely regarded as a foundational step towards equitable and fair education systems (Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). However, how pupils benefit from differentiated instruction remains underexplored (Herold, 2017; Johler & Krumsvik, 2022). Furthermore, the perspectives of pupils themselves are seldom addressed in existing literature (Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Scarparolo & MacKinnon, 2022; Zahnd & Oberholzer, 2024). To address this gap, the project presented here seeks to analyze pupils' perspectives on learning in contexts where differentiated instruction is applied.

This study employs ethnographic methods, including classroom participant observation documented through field notes (Beuchling, 2015). Aiming for a more inclusive approach, the research integrates participatory processes in which pupils collaborate with academic researchers as co-researchers (von Unger, 2014; Zahnd & Oberholzer, 2022; 2024). This participatory element aligns with the broader goal of education: to empower pupils by providing opportunities to voice their experiences and shape their educational environment.

The project will be conducted in six classrooms, involving approximately 5-6 pupils per class. The selection process seeks to include a diverse group of pupils, considering factors such as academic performance, gender, and special educational needs. Workshops will prepare the co-researchers for their role, introducing them to the research questions and methods, which will be adapted to their knowledge and skills. Data collection will occur during reflection meetings where pupils collaborate with academic researchers to analyze and systematize findings. Pupils will also be equipped with research diaries and smartphones to employ photovoice as a participatory method (Wöhrer et al., 2017).

The collected data—encompassing pupils' contributions through participatory processes, photovoice documentation, field notes from academic researchers, and findings from another subproject on pupils' performance and equity issues—will be analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This comprehensive analysis aims to highlight the role of pupils' perspectives in shaping inclusive education systems. Their experiences as the primary beneficiaries of differentiated instruction are critical to understanding and improving its implementation (Böing & Köper, 2020; Buchner, 2018; Lindner & Schwab, 2020; Zahnd & Oberholzer, 2024).

The findings from this study will offer valuable insights into developing inclusive education practices centered around differentiated instruction. Although conducted in Switzerland, the study's participatory approach and its focus on differentiated instruction may serve as a basis for comparative research with Nordic educational contexts and international school systems.

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Capturing stories of culturally-sustaining practices: methodological challenges and opportunities

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This paper reports of the initial stages of a year-long research project, which stemmed from a ‘parent’ project regarding the limitations of anglophonic interpretations of pedagogy, which focus on ‘methods’ and ‘techniques’ (Adams and Paulgaard, 2023). Drawing inspiration from Indigenous and Arctic pedagogies, encourages broader, relational and responsive interpretations of pedagogy: interpretations that recognise and value the lived experiences, heritages, languages and cultures.

Building on these insights, this project is being undertaken in a primary school in Scotland that serves an economically-deprived, yet culturally-and-linguistically-rich community. The project, which is in the process of being carefully and sensitively shaped by the researcher with members of the school community, has the broad aim of capturing ‘stories of practice’. More specifically, the research is being designed to capture the ways in which the teachers and staff across the school – from nursery to management – ‘explore, honor [and] extend’ (Paris and Alim, 2014, p.86) the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the local school community as part of their day-to-day pedagogical practices.

By viewing the practices within the school from the perspective of culturally-sustaining pedagogies, the research aims to challenge deficit narratives of ‘gaps’ and ‘under-achievement’, which can dominate D/discourses (after Gee, 2012) of schools that share similar profiles across Scotland, and beyond.

Approaching this type of research requires methodological care, particularly when seeking to weave together the perspectives of children, including very young children, and teachers from across the school. Drawing influence from participatory, arts-based research methods, this paper seeks to explore the methodological, ethical and practical challenges and opportunities when seeking to capture the perspectives of linguistically and culturally diverse children/YP and staff. The weight and responsibility of these challenges will be reflected upon from the perspective of a monolingual researcher, with the hope of surfacing insights that will support and encourage school-based research that moves beyond an evaluation of pedagogical techniques and methods that ‘work’.

Such approaches resonate across Nordic regions in that they explicitly draw upon indigenous methodologies at the heart of efforts to decolonise, not through the deployment of the ‘exotic other’ but as underpinning philosophies rooted in pedagogy as ‘being an and acting on the world, with and for others’ (Adams, 2022: 107).

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Sustainable Development of Higher Education in Georgia: 'A Disability path'

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The overall purpose of the study is to make a policy analysis of Georgian Higher Education (HE) for Sustainable Development (SD) in education across the national policy priorities in education, specifically impacting to the target 4-4.5 of SDGoals '...to ensure equal access to all levels of education... for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities...' (the Global Goals), following the state transition period since its independency 1991 till 2024. The applied period has its historical point of view on the formation of the legal policy response to democratic processes assuming a progress towards inclusion in HE.

The conceptual frame of the study is based on the transformative paradigm in disability research, taking into account four basic assumptions arguing 'a disability path' in HE policy transition axiologically, ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically. For targeting the study methodologically, the emphasize is that the education policy transition was challenged by three political regimes accompanied by policy shifts in education accordingly and by that applies an original pattern of 'a disability path' in Georgian HE. The conceptual framework defined a unity of dimensions for further analysis of impacting national policy education on the target 4.5 of SDGs, making requests to each political regime. Taking these dimensions together methodologically, the attention was paid to the analysis of the national documents legalizing rights on HE in the Constitution, Laws in education, Directives of the Ministry of education, etc. and how these legal rights are formulated axiologically, ontologically, epistemologically.

The evidence of the study stands from multiple data of primary and secondary sources. Policy documents represent primary sources of data. These data were gathered in the form of retrospective inquiry and were analyzed interpretively. Being questioned in a form of inquiry, these data directly addressed the agenda of this investigation. The secondary sources methodologically were treated as a supplemental source or Existing Statistics of data to broaden the understanding of the study phenomena and contextualization reasons such as: statistical data from national Department of Statistics of Georgia; international documents signed and ratified by the government, etc. Some of the secondary sources were collected through 'manual' procedures, signifying 'pre-requisites' of the undertaken research intention (number of students with disabilities in HEIs of Georgia). The ethical aspect of analysis was held by acknowledging contestations about identity-first and person-first language, choosing person-first language for clarity of understanding the 'policy text'.

Three main shifts, containing these documents, were identified across each political regime accordingly. Overall, representations of the unity of dimensions of the conceptual framework in policy documents, allowing to find out a certain pattern of a transformative paradigm in policy formulation retrospectively.

Sustainable development in HE is a global issue of navigating and constituting justice and equity in education internationally. The trajectories chosen by the states in policy formulation are impacting scientifically on a greater geographical area including Nordic countries.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

From influence (påvirkning) through co-determination (medbestemmelse) towards cooperation (medvirkning) and fellow citizenship (medborgerskap) as a result of communication.

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Background and research theme. Participation is an important goal within special education services. The basic idea is that all people, also persons with comprehensive linguistic challenges, do have the desire, need, and joy of participating in small and large decisions related to their own life. *The aim of the research project is to increase co-determination and co-operating in daily decisions that we believe are important to the children.*

Theory We combined different theories focusing on having influence in one's own life in simple model illustrating progression from unconscious influence (påvirkning) through co-determination and co-operation towards fellow citizenship. This model is used in the analysis of the level of the children's co-determination and co-operation. Newborns move from unconscious towards conscious influence on their environment (Lorentzen, 2013). This consciousness is related to the development of communicative competences. Increased communication leads to participation in simple decisions, the child is now co-determining (medbestemmende) (Bae, 2006; Eide & Wenger, 2006). The next step is co-operation (medvirkning) (Bae, 2006) where the participants act in, and affect on the community. The ultimate goal is to become a fellow citizenship in a democratic society.

Research Method.

A shared development project inspired by "self-studies" (Laboskey 2004). This means that we, together with the xx planned a program with the intention to increase participation, we and documented the experiences of the process and the result.

Informants are a group of pupils, AAC- users, in a special school and their teachers. Data is gathered in processes of cooperation with the teachers, observation of the pupils in the classroom and interviews with the teachers.

The data is coded and categorized in a process of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Preliminary findings. We have two main findings. 1) The underlying theory did not cover our need to analyse the process towards co-operation for ACC-users. Data showed us that the children's development process could be described as development from unconscious influence through conscious influence towards co-determination before we reach a degree of cooperation and the model, described above, was developed.

In this work, we have documented that even children with comprehensive linguistic challenges gradually are able to influence and co-determine more and more consciously. and this is a process of communicative development. Further communicative development seems to lead to a level of co-operation.

Discussion We discuss both findings: 1) the importance of and the need for a set of theoretical concepts that can reveal the process towards co-operation and further on towards fellow citizenship became visible early in the process. This led us to clear descriptions of the concepts.

2) People with weak verbal linguistic expressions, as other persons, experience increased quality of life when they gain some influence on and control. Even though most of these pupils lack the opportunities to participate in a larger political and social context they appreciate to get the opportunity to influence on their own everyday life.

Both these findings seem to be relevant for the international researchers and fields of practice for AAC-users globally.



## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Sloyd education in compulsory school for students with intellectual disability in Sweden: A didactic study of conditions for Bildung

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This study, a PhD thesis, is situated at the intersection of arts education and special education. This has turned out to be an under-researched field with a significant need for empirical original research (Crockett et al., 2015; Horowitz, 2018). Studies that have been conducted have primarily focused on teachers' confidence and education (e.g. Begeske et al., 2023) and instructions and materials (e.g. Strycker, 2020), while studies on emancipatory and democratising aspects of arts education and special education are scarce. This reveals a knowledge gap, particularly in relation to individuals with intellectual disability (ID). As evidenced by a Swedish report (Myndigheten för delaktighet, 2020), this group often lives in social exclusion and economic hardship, with very limited opportunities to influence their life situation. Therefore, to highlight democratising aspects of education, the aim of this study is to increase knowledge about teaching and education in relation to Bildung, in terms of ways in which arts education, specifically the Nordic-coded school subject of sloyd, can offer students with ID opportunities to develop self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity.

The study is based in critical-constructive didactic theory (Klafki, 2018) and joint action theory of didactics (Sensevy, 2012). Two part-studies produced the empirical material: 1) a web survey answered by 124 principals, and 2) a multiple case study with video-recorded classroom observations and interviews at two compulsory schools for students with ID and a total of 4 sloyd teachers, 19 students and 12 paraprofessionals as participants.

The results highlight factors at two levels related to students' acquisition of Bildung. At school level, sloyd differs from music and visual art regarding teaching facilities and teachers' competence. Conditions also vary depending on students' age, the extent of students' disability and principals' school responsibility. At classroom level, the conditions for Bildung vary depending on the content knowledge and the teachers' and students' moves in the joint actions, in the sense of who chooses and takes responsibility for developing the content and whether or not there is room for changes of the content over time.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Teaching teams understanding of the participation model to support inclusive education

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Inclusive education has been a goal in education all over the world for many years. There are still difficulties how to reach this goal. Swedish government agencies give prominence to a participation model in order to support inclusive education (Szönyi, 2020). Edström et al. (2022) investigated how the model theoretically matched definitions of inclusive education and suggested to develop it in order to make it match Göransson and Nilholm's (2017) community level definition of inclusive education. This presentation aims to present teaching teams' understanding of criteria of a model intended to support inclusive education.

The participation model consists of six criteria that all together sum up to participation. The criteria are; acceptance, accessibility, autonomy, belonging, interaction, and involvement (cf. Edström et al., 2022; Szönyi, 2020).

Two Swedish compulsory school teaching teams were introduced to and educated in the developed participation model to implement it in their work. They answered individual surveys before and after the implementation project and one focus group discussion was conducted with each teaching team afterwards.

The focus group discussions showed that teaching teams can gain professionalization in the teaching team when working with the model. The teams had different perspectives on professionalism and one occupational and the other organizational (Evetts, 2013) and this affected the outcome. The team in the occupational perspective gained a professional language they could use in their every day school work (Edström & Cervantes, forthcoming). In this presentation the teaching teams' use and understanding of the participation criteria are presented.

There is a lack of research on how inclusive education is put into practice in the nordic countries (Buli-Holmberg, 2023) and this can offer an example on how inclusive education can be supported in school.

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# Network: 13. ICT & Education

Students' perspectives on digital platforms and applications in Norwegian classrooms - Bringing books back?

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The digitalization of Norwegian classrooms has brought with it an abundance of choice. How to choose between devices, platforms, and books that are still present? The availability of diverse learning resources opens for a more adapted and inclusive education. Simultaneously, it has complicated the pedagogical process of choosing learning resources.

The digitalization of schools should be understood against the background of "platformization" (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) of our lives. Socialization is increasingly controlled by digital platforms that collect data and create data infrastructures (Larkin, 2013) that control a "flow" of data between users. Infrastructuralized platforms determine how participants can interact, and by extension platforms allow, disallow and control social activities (Plantin et al., 2018). This applies to all platforms. This perspective can help reroute our discussions about "digitalization" away from the "technologies" per se, and towards more productive ecological perspectives beyond the direct device or software.

In our study, the students actively created different materials on their contemporary digital lives, which were then further examined in group interviews. Six groups were interviewed, each lasting 17-30 minutes. The interview material was complemented by a short period (3 days) of micro-ethnography.

Students display uncertainty about how and when to use which learning resources. This may be seen as a negotiation, but much of the negotiation is done outside of the students' spheres of influence. Teachers and, to some degree, students can make choices regarding the use of learning resources, but many terms are still set by the design of digital platforms and devices. When students reflect on digital or analog resources, their answers indicate that digitalization in their school has gone full circle and teachers are bringing books back with the argument that it supports learning. This may be true for some students but is a nuanced issue. Bringing books back may also be a way for teachers to regain classroom management control, as some students indicated. The way digitalization has been carried out in the school that we studied seems to reflect that the technology led the way and pedagogical arguments had to keep up and be modified along the way.

Nordic schools have partly been privatized by the big software and hardware corporations that gladly sell sets of hardware, software, and future upgrades and updates. Looking at the digitalization of Nordic schools, one aspect that jumps out is that we have let tech companies and their products and platforms make pedagogical choices for how we organize education. This is, to a degree, apparent in this study, as students display uncertainty as to how and when which resources are used.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

How can we conceptualise use of a generative AI chatbot for learning

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Generative AI chat bots are entering the schools in the Nordic countries as well as the rest of the world. This development is largely happening without schools or teachers facilitating the use of the tools (see e.g. Cotton et al. 2023), but also with schools framing and putting generative AI-chat bots into a pedagogical structure (see e.g. Elstad & Eriksen 2024). To try to understand how generative AI-bots are used in activities relevant for learning we need to analyse use and try to conceptualise it. A generative AI chatbot escape categories used in the past, such as pedagogical structured content, learning resources or tools (Kluge 2021). Being versatile, this type of technology can be used in a variety of ways that we do not find by introspection of the technology itself, but rather by trying to test different ways to categorise the use of them.

The two goals of this exercise are (1) to find a way to map the different forms of use and (2) to investigate whether the categories are a fertile way to understand the used of the bots and to bring the research in the area forward. Initial observations in classrooms and interviews with teachers indicate three types of use, forming a triangle. The suggestion for the corners is text generation (as help for producing a text e.g. about a particular subject), as a conversation partner (exchanging notions and statements) and as a kind of quasi search (similar to what we would do using a search engine). There will be examples of use in between these categories, being on the lines between two (e.g. chatting and producing text) or in between all three (e.g. making a text by quasi search, chatting and asking the bot to generate text on a subject).

Three classes and teachers in upper secondary school will be challenged to use a generative chat bot in different types of tasks related to science and technology subjects. The classes will be observed as they use the bot, and the activities will be categorised according to the framework above. The evaluation of the usefulness of the categorisation will be done three-ways: Firstly by presenting them to the teachers in the classes (categories and placing of the data within the categories), secondly by applying them to 3-5 existing studies to investigate the how the categories can contribute, and thirdly to investigate how the categories shed light of the activities the students engaged in.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### The Future of Privacy: Preparing Students to Navigate Personal Boundaries in an Era of Ubiquitous Surveillance

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As digital surveillance becomes an unavoidable part of modern life, preparing students to understand and protect their personal privacy is increasingly crucial to responsible digital citizenship. This paper examines how privacy education can serve as a foundational tool in helping young people navigate a landscape where data collection and sharing are embedded in daily interactions—from social media and online learning platforms to location-based services and personalized advertisements. With digital spaces becoming ever more integral to personal and academic lives, this study proposes a privacy-centred framework that integrates digital literacy, ethical awareness, and critical boundary-setting into the educational experience, empowering students to make conscious, informed choices in their digital interactions.

Drawing on Helen Nissenbaum’s theory of “privacy as contextual integrity,” which emphasizes privacy as dependent on context-specific information flows, this research explores how students can learn to manage their privacy by understanding the different expectations and norms that apply to various digital contexts. Additionally, by incorporating concepts from digital citizenship theory, the paper presents privacy not only as an individual right but as an ethical responsibility toward others, underscoring the need for a collective understanding of data ethics within digital communities. Theoretical analysis and case studies from Nordic countries—where digital integration in education is advanced and privacy policies robust—serve as a backdrop for examining effective strategies for implementing privacy education that aligns with democratic values.

The research draws on existing studies and illustrative examples from classrooms in Sweden, Finland, and Norway that have incorporated privacy literacy modules and exercises in ethical decision-making. These case studies reveal that students who receive privacy-focused instruction display a heightened awareness of digital boundaries and are better equipped to navigate ethical dilemmas associated with data sharing. Furthermore, findings suggest that students who understand the contextual nature of privacy are more confident in managing their online identities and more conscious of the implications of data sharing, both for themselves and others. Educators, meanwhile, play a key role in fostering a classroom culture that encourages open discussions on digital rights, helping students develop a sense of agency and responsibility.

This study contributes to Nordic educational discourse by positioning privacy as a critical component of modern ethical education, reinforcing the Nordic region’s commitment to autonomy, personal responsibility, and informed citizenship. By advocating for privacy literacy as a means to equip students with the skills needed to engage thoughtfully and responsibly in digital spaces, the paper addresses the broader goals of safeguarding individual rights and maintaining ethical standards in increasingly complex digital environments.

Network: 13. ICT & Education

ChatGPT and education: transforming relationships, balancing professional autonomy and rethinking the purpose of education

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Research topic/aim

Over the past year, generative AI language models, such as ChatGPT, have been widely debated across various contexts. When ChatGPT was launched in November 2022, it changed the conditions for teaching and learning in schools and created tensions between elements within the educational system. The purpose of the study is to deepen the understanding of how generative AI, specifically ChatGPT, affects teaching and education in secondary and upper secondary school, as well as the challenges and opportunities experienced by teachers. What tensions and underlying contradictions manifest in teachers' discussions about the challenges and opportunities when ChatGPT was introduced in schools? How do the teachers negotiate tensions that occur in relation to ChatGPT?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is the second generation of cultural-historical activity theory. The study embraces the assumption that teaching in the wake of AI is contingent upon both individual characteristics of teachers and broader structural dynamics within school environments and society at large. Cultural-historical activity theory provides deeper insights into how tensions and contradictions drive transformation and development, highlighting the complexity of change processes.

Methodology/ research design

In this study, fifteen teachers from secondary and upper secondary school participated. They teach in different subjects and in the upper secondary school, in different programs, both vocational programs and academic programs. The teachers have varying levels of experience with ChatGPT – some have extensively tried the tool, while others have just begun exploring it. Focus group interviews were carried out at two occasions during Spring 2014.

Expected results/ findings

The analysis of tensions within the activity system, manifested in teachers' speech, revealed three themes: *Transforming relationships in the age of AI* and *Navigating professional autonomy and institutional support in a new teaching landscape* and *Rethinking the purpose of education in a dynamic educational context*.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

A Swedish study on ChatGPT in education provides the Nordic research community with valuable insights into both the challenges and opportunities from a national stance, creating an opportunity to reflect on similarities and differences with other Nordic countries. This, in turn, may contribute to shaping a Nordic perspective on the global issue of how chatbots impact teaching and learning

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Teachers and educational technology: The characters of teacher agency in digitalised schools

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The aim of this research is to characterise teacher agency in educational technology contexts. Teacher agency as a concept is widely used in research on professional learning (Brodie, 2019; Toom et al., 2021) and change (Reinius et al., 2022; Vähäsantanen, 2015), but less so in the context of teaching and educational technology (Albion & Tondeur, 2018; Reinius, 2024). The data of our study were motivational letters and personal development plans of 41 classroom and subject teachers, who started a long-term professional training in pedagogy of teaching in digitalised environments. We analysed these documents as manifestations of teacher agency (e.g. Kauppinen et al., 2020). According to our qualitative, data-driven and theory-informed analysis, we formulated a characterisation of three different types of teacher agency in educational technology contexts. These types represent how teachers act as implementers and developers of educational technology as individuals and as part of their work community. The first type is the industrious worker, whose agency is directed towards educational technology as a common part of everyday work in schools. They want to do digitalisation together and according to common rules and strategies. The second character was individual developer whose goal is in their own work and career and they are not so communal. The third character consists of idealists who emphasise values and future skills. Their goal is to educate citizens for a digitalised society. Even if we could place every teacher in one of these characters, we have to admit that these teachers have more in common than they have differences as teaching professionals. In our presentation we discuss these findings further. From the point of view of Nordic educational research, it is important to present the human factor of digitalisation in schools.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Empowering Legal Education with AI: ChatGPT as a Tool for Teaching Child-Friendly Justice and Children's Rights Principles

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A sustainable society, with the goal of leaving no child behind (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015), urgently requires legal professionals equipped with sufficient knowledge, skills, and attributes to effectively advocate for and protect children's rights. However, research reveals a lack of practical knowledge among legal professionals to understand and apply core child rights principles in complex situations (Vlaskovic, 2014, Archard, 2010), as well as to uphold all standards of a child-friendly justice system (UNGA, 2013).

The aim of this research is to explore the potential use of AI as a support tool in legal education (Ajevski, Barker et al., 2023) to foster child-friendly justice practices (Jánoskúti, Kiss, 2024). This study focuses on evaluating ChatGPT's effectiveness in two key areas: its ability to employ child-friendly language and other requirements of a child-friendly justice system, along with its capability to suggest methodologies that adhere to core children's rights principles, particularly in complex situations and practical dilemmas. The research question explores how effective ChatGPT is as a supportive tool in legal education for fostering child-friendly justice practices among both future lawyers and current legal professionals.

The methodology is based on desktop research, content testing, and comparative analysis with the relevant legal documents (UNCRC General Comment No. 14 on the Right of the Child to Have His or Her Best Interests Taken as a Primary Consideration, 2013, UNCRC General Comment No. 12: The Right of the Child to be Heard, 2009, CoE Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice, 2010, *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989).

Preliminary findings indicate that ChatGPT has the potential to serve as an innovative educational tool in certain areas, enhancing the capacities of future lawyers and current legal professionals, and building capacities in the field of child-friendly justice and children's rights education. This can be relevant for Nordic countries as it offers the potential to enhance higher legal education, specifically in the area of children's rights, as an important aspect of building a sustainable society.

This research is part of the postdoctoral project *Lawyers' Practical Knowledge of Children's Rights Principles Towards a Sustainable Society – Experiences from Sweden and Serbia*, funded by the Foundation for Baltic and European Studies.

Network: 13. ICT & Education

Algorithmic mediation in the classroom

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#### *Research topic*

The introduction of generative AI means that we need to fundamentally rethink conceptions of literacy, and particularly the role of computational agencies. Through analysis of a case of ChatGPT use in the classroom, we explore how AI transforms literacy practices.

#### *Theoretical framework*

The introduction of generative AI means that new text assemblages emerge as humans and AI together create multimodal texts, and this changes how we think about the entwined nature of readers and writers (Burriss & Leander, 2024). While agency is emergent and relational, the products of this entanglement are read, felt, and made sense of by humans (Ehret, 2024). Thus, it becomes expedient to understand *both* the new, emergent characteristics of text production *and* how the generated texts are met, ignored, and validated by humans. In this paper, we address the following research question:

What characterizes students' use of generative AI in project work, and how are AI-generated texts made sense of and validated?

#### *Case and Methods*

We analyse interactional and textual data from a case study involving one class of lower secondary students and their teachers engaged in an interdisciplinary project about sustainable consumption. Central in the project was students' use of various digital resources, among them generative AI. We used microethnography combining observations with detailed sequential analysis of interaction (Jordan & Henderson, 1995).

#### *Findings*

We found two emerging patterns in how students used AI-technologies: 1) as a dialogical partner in learning, or 2) as part of copy and paste strategies. The students who engaged in more lengthy "conversations" with the generative AI-tool, actively made choices about the information they received. Thus, even though the AI tool was agentic in generating text, students actively oriented to and assessed the information in relation to pragmatic criteria for text inclusion.

#### *Relevance to Nordic educational research*

The introduction of AI tools into classrooms disrupts literacy practices in that the construction of text more explicitly becomes a human-machine collaboration. Understanding how this transformation plays out in the classroom is particularly relevant to Nordic education which has a high level of technology adaptation. Furthermore, in the Nordic countries, teacher autonomy and professionalism has been underscored. We find that while generative AI create tensions and opportunities for literacy, the teacher's role in framing tasks, supporting the construction of relevant prompts, setting parameters for generative AI, and aiding students in interpreting AI generated text is crucial.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

When documentation becomes communication - Insights from walking through a school administration platform

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In this study, we contribute with an understanding of how an administration platform is infrastructural to the educational work in schools. How does the technical architecture of the platform provide for the conditions of teacher work and shape pedagogical practices?

In Finland, the platform Wilma, owned by Visma, hold a position in the school system that is globally unique, providing the practically only available digital solution for documentation and communication in schools. The widespread use of Wilma connects to the platformization (Pangrazio, et al., 2023) of society which means that school activities and other types of social interaction are increasingly governed by digital platforms that collect data and create data infrastructures that control a “flow” of data between different users. These infrastructuralized platforms, and in extension their social, technical and political-economic dimensions (van Dijck, 2013), fundamentally affect the operations of the schools using them.

The study is part of a pilot project and employs ethnography, combined with digital walk-along interviews with key users of Wilma (Møller & Robards, 2019). We also use digital walkthroughs of Wilma’s app and website from a teacher and administrative personnel perspective (Light et al., 2018). With the help of these methods, we can understand both user perspectives on Wilma and aspects beyond users and content, such as the socio-technical and cultural aspects of the infrastructuralized platform.

Preliminary results show how Wilma is oriented to as an omnipresent depository of information and what is documented in Wilma is what is considered worth registering. The platform becomes infrastructural for teachers’ work as the technical conditions determine what interaction, communication, and documentation is possible. Most of teachers’ work on Wilma is invisible and frictionless with the main purpose of documentation: surveillance of attendance, registering remarks regarding behavior, registering grades, as well as documenting lesson content and homework. However, the documentation creates friction when students regard the registered remarks as being unfair or wrong. Therefore, the documentation also becomes communication, since caregivers and students get notified on their Wilma apps regarding what has been documented with regards to the student. The platform is infrastructural to teachers’ work and the pedagogical autonomy that teachers have, has been gnawed at.

Platforms are not neutral tools, they create technical conditions that determine what is technically and socially possible on the platform. In order to understand the impact of the platforms on our school lives, we need to de-romanticize and demystify the promises of technological progress and instead better understand the infrastructure behind and around platforms.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

Primary school students' multiple source behaviour based on log data analysis – how does it change after an intervention?

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### 1. Research topic

The purpose of this study is to explore primary school students' online multiple source behaviour and quality of their performance in an inquiry task in science domain. We are especially interested in how students allocate their time and perform the process in searching, bookmarking and synthesising.

### 2. Theoretical framework

Multiple source comprehension model by Rouet & Britt (2011) is used as theoretical lens. Multiple source comprehension is a complex process starting from reading a task, searching for relevant sources, evaluating sources, finding the relevant ideas and finally writing a synthesis based on multiple sources. Based on previous studies using log data, such as time on task, have indicated quality learning (Greif et al., 2016).

### 3. Methodology

The participants were 331 fifth and sixth graders, who took part in the intervention study using quasi experimental design. The intervention group took part in a nine-lesson intervention, while the control group received normal instruction. A closed www-environment provides all the necessary views for online multiple source comprehension like, searching, processing the pages, and writing the synthesis. The environment can be used in a very flexible way. The student can select and use the views in any order and duration, for example for iterative cycles. The work process itself becomes observable in the form of log data.

As time on task measurements we used the total process time and the accumulated allocation time for the views *search*, *pages*, and *synthesis*. For the view *search* the quality performance measurement is the number of relevant sources in the SERP, for the *pages* view the number of relevant bookmarks, and for *synthesis* view the number of written main ideas.

The research question is: How do students allocate time in multiple source process? How do students in intervention group perform compared to control group?

### 4. Findings

Both the intervention and control groups used significantly less time in the post-test than in the pre-test. Furthermore, they allocated their time in both tests in a similar manner. However, the intervention group improved their quality performance in all three views in a statistically significant way, they searched better, bookmarked better and wrote more main ideas, while the control group only improved their search.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Our Nordic societies are preparing their citizens for using information effectively. For new challenges like climate change the citizens have to identify trustworthy information and synthesize it to understand and base their actions on it. The education systems have to find ways to teach even young children. This research contributes to this discussion.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Teachers' and pupils' views on using video games as part of cross-language tandem collaboration

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#### Aim

The aim of this presentation is to study teachers' and pupils' views on including video games as part of cross-language tandem collaboration between pupils in Finnish- and Swedish-medium schools in Finland. The study is included in a project aiming to explore the potential for reciprocal tandem language learning through in-game interaction.

#### Theoretical framework

Tandem language learning entails that students with different native languages learn each other's languages through reciprocal collaboration and meaningful interaction (e.g., Karjalainen et al., 2013). Playing video games engages children and youth and offers a potential for learning in general and language learning in particular (e.g., Gee, 2007).

#### Methodology

In this case study, Minecraft Education Edition was used during three tandem language learning lessons, in which pupils and teachers from a Swedish- and a Finnish medium primary school participated. The data for this study comprises interviews and discussions with the teachers' before, in between and after the lessons. The pupils' views were collected through post intervention surveys directed to all participating pupils as well as focus group interviews with nine pupils.

#### Expected results

The preliminary results indicate that both pupils and teachers see great potential for the use of video games in cross-language collaborations, for instance in terms of engaging and empowering pupils that otherwise may not actively participate or get to show their competence. Challenges were also identified, e.g. in connection to language use, and suggestions made for how these could be overcome.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Although interaction and collaboration are central aspects of online gaming (Rusk et al., 2021), the existing research on language learning in and through video games is somewhat fragmented. Previous research on language learning in games has primarily focused on games and literacy (e.g. Gee, 2007) or games as an engaging platform for vocabulary acquisition (e.g. Reynolds, 2017), focusing mostly on English as L2 (Acquah & Katz, 2020). We wish to explore the engaging potential of game-based second-language learning in formal educational contexts, focusing on the reciprocal learning of languages other than English, which is of relevance also for Nordic educational research.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

Platform pedagogies in Swedish upper secondary education. Cohesion and distribution in students' learning trajectories.

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Education today has become *platformised*, meaning that online platforms, often commercial, has become integrated on all levels in ways that may alter key functions of educational systems (Decuyper et al., 2021). There is a growing interest for studying platformisation processes from within classrooms, sometimes discussed in terms of *platform pedagogies* (Sefton-Green, 2023). This study draws on socio-material understandings of how classroom practices are composed in relations between human and material components (Fenwick et al., 2011), in combination with conversation analytic methods of multimodal interaction analysis (Goodwin, 2000). The specific aim is to contribute with a critical investigation of the role of digital platforms in the social, material and temporal organization of teaching and learning trajectories in upper secondary classrooms. A total of 47 lessons in subjects Swedish, mathematics and history in study preparatory programs at two upper secondary schools was followed. Both schools used the digital platform Itslearning. Three to four consecutive lessons in 11 different classes were recorded with two video cameras. In addition, voluntary focus students used screen recording programs to document their individual use of digital resources during school work. The analysis was made in several steps, starting with coding of the lesson trajectory followed by multimodal interaction analyses of moment-to-moment unfolding relations between verbal interaction, students' and teachers' corporality and material and digital artefacts in the classroom space. Preliminary findings show that the platform became a both cohesive and a distributing actor in teaching and learning trajectories. The common platform Itslearning was not primarily used for adaptation and personalisation in relation to the individual student. Instead, it was used as a pedagogic planning device that structured work. The functions of the platform enabled students and teachers to keep focus on the same content and tasks, while also allowing students to make different choices regarding both physical location in the work and which texts, links, programs connected via the computer screen's various windows and tabs. In this way, fields of tensions emerged between the platform's cohesive and its distributing function, which gained significance from several aspects; 1. Access to the same content for all students vs. school work become possible to conduct anytime and anywhere, 2. Teachers' curation of content on the platform vs. students' individual configurations of digital resources, 3. Platform as container for large amount of content, links vs. limited possibilities for sharing content collectively in class. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions about platform pedagogies and the role of platforms in relation to teacher and student agency versus techno-determinism in digitalisation processes in education.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Artificial Intelligence Curricula in Nordic Schools: Policy Ideas in Institutional Change - The Swedish Case

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As artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes society (Örtegren, 2024), education systems both in the Nordics and globally face the challenge of preparing students for socio-technical change, including AI-related digital competence with knowledge, skills, and democratic values. The challenge of preparing students for such changes play out in the field of digital education, where various actors (e.g., think tanks, media, researchers, teacher unions, commercial actors) engage in knowledge production and policy construction (Rensfeldt & Player-Koro, 2020). Such policy processes include curriculum change, where some countries have embedded AI-related digital competence within existing subjects, while others have created separate AI school subjects (UNESCO, 2022).

The aim of this paper is to examine the integration of AI into the Swedish upper secondary school as a separate school subject, particularly how policy ideas about AI education are shaped and legitimized within the context of Nordic education. The theoretical framework used for analysis draws on new institutionalism, with attention to how ideas, institutions, and policy actors interact in educational change processes. The analyzed data include policy texts and interviews with key policy-process participants.

The early results indicate how AI as a separate school subject is shaped by ideas embedded within discourses about future readiness and educational responsiveness to societal change. The influence of ideas seemingly stem from policy-process participants' positions within the policy process combined with their networks outside the forum for official AI school subject policymaking. Ultimately, the ideas create tensions between democratic citizenship and social equity on the one hand, and labor market demands and global competitiveness on the other. These tensions reflect broader challenges in Nordic education systems as they adapt to technological change while committed to democratic values and social justice. The tentative results point to how AI education in the Nordic context can become a political project (cf. Selwyn, 2022), characterized by competing values and technical-instrumentalist perspectives that shape institutional structures and educational goals.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, New institutionalism, Policy ideas, Upper secondary school, Sweden

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There is no consensus around the definition of computational thinking – what next?

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#### 1. Research aim

Computational Thinking (CT) has been introduced as a key transversal competence in curricula, either as a domain general or a domain specific competence in several countries, including the Nordic countries (Bocconi et al 2022). However, the lack of a clear and unanimous definition has been identified as a significant challenge, particularly regarding CT's integration into curricula. Related issues include the various terms used in the field, such as computational thinking (Brennan & Resnick, 2012) and computational literacy (diSessa, 2018), and their complex relationships. Furthermore, another issue that arises is how observable is CT in school and teacher education? This paper focuses on the following questions:

How does the lack of a unified definition reflect the complex nature of CT?

In which ways are school subjects developing their own digital epistemic practices?

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Recognising disciplinary content is not always an easy task, it is often a question of what is foregrounded and what is relayed to the background. In this paper we draw on Goffman's (1959/1971) front and backstage to understand the nature and practices of CT.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

To illustrate the conceptual analysis of CT, this theoretical paper draws on literature regarding CT in school and teacher education.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

We argue that there are three conceptually distinct yet overlapping forms of computational thinking. CT1 represents an intention to integrate computer science contents, such as programming, in different school subjects to empower students, often situating CT content within mathematics. CT2 reflects an intention to shift epistemic strategies of school subjects to highlight practices of CT such as creating algorithms, modelling, finding patterns and generating abstractions, practices that can be integrated without computers, commonly referred to as "unplugged" activities. CT3 aims to foreground an intention to highlight disciplinary practices related to what Hudson (2018) describes as epistemic quality knowledge, or understanding.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

All Nordic countries have incorporated CT in their curricula (Bocconi et al., 2022). However, it is essential to examine the intentions behind this inclusion and how they align with teachers' and teacher educators' interpretations and practices of CT.

#### 6. Selected literature

Bocconi, S., Chiocciariello, A., Kampylis, P., Dagienė, V., Wastiau, P., Engelhardt, K., ... & Stupurienė, G. (2022). Reviewing computational thinking in compulsory education: State of play and practices from computing education.

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Finnish Upper Secondary School Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Digital Competence and the Digital Matriculation Exam

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The digitalization of the matriculation examination within Finnish upper secondary education has, to a large extent, guided the digitalization of teaching, and it is within this context that teachers' digital competence has developed. Teachers are expected to support students' digital skills, teach in increasingly technology-rich classrooms, use digital technology for teaching and learning purposes, and be proficient in assessing and adapting digital tools to specific knowledge areas (Brevik et al., 2019). As a result of this development, researchers have introduced the concept of Professional Digital Competence (PDC), which specifically refers to the digital skills required for the teaching profession.

Kelentrić et al. (2017) developed a framework for PDC that includes the areas of expertise that teachers need to develop. This includes an awareness of how digitalization impacts schools and subject areas. Teachers should be engaged in educational change processes and be knowledgeable about ethical dilemmas and how these should be addressed. Finally, teachers should understand how to lead learning processes and facilitate interaction and communication. Recent research has reached a consensus that the different dimensions of PDC are not separate but interconnected and mutually constitutive. However, Nagel (2021) points out that continuous digital development or transformation is underway that influences teachers' pedagogical practices. Teachers who have developed these PDC skills feel empowered to handle ongoing technological advancements in education rather than feeling constrained by the technology.

The study is based on three focus group interviews conducted with teachers in three Swedish-speaking upper secondary schools in Finland in 2024. The interviews were conducted with groups of 7–8 teachers per school (in total 22 teachers) and were analyzed using a thematic analysis that was inductive in nature. Some conclusions that can be drawn based on the results of this study are: Teachers generally feel confident in their professional digital competence but express concerns about students' digital skills. The attitude towards AI is positive, but teachers call for more support in how to use and approach it in educational settings. Teachers emphasize the importance of the matriculation examination but believe it should be more closely linked to the curriculum and further developed using both digital tools and AI. The teachers' workload has increased as a result of digitalization, larger class sizes, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to engage with students.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

Teachers' experience of their own agency regarding digital and analog learning resources

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The introduction of 1:1-units in classrooms has fundamentally changed teaching practice (Islam & Grönlund, 2016). Digital devices require digital learning resources (LR) and technological infrastructure. In Norway, public schools struggle to provide both analogue and digital learning resources in each subject due to financial restrictions (Vennerød-Diesen & Pedersen, 2023). Hence, teachers are not necessarily able to use a combination of digital and analogue learning resources which they find most suited to the subject matter, their professional digital competence, and to pupil diversity in their classes. The current situation challenges the teacher's professionalism, particularly their autonomy and sense of agency. This is a phenomenon shared by the educational system in all the Nordic countries. Whereas the pedagogical and effects of digital learning resources have gained substantial attention, less focus has been on the teachers own agency in the choice and use of different learning resources (Siddiq et al., 2024).

We apply the theoretical construct of "teacher agency" (Biesta, Priestly & Robinson, 2015; Siddiq et al., 2024) which is understood as the teachers' active contribution to influence the conditions of the teaching profession. In the present study, we aimed to explore how teachers express and negotiate their agency related to the use of LR. There are three guiding research questions:

What are teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding digital and analog LR?

How do teachers experience their own agency regarding the use of different LR?

How do the teachers understand their own position as an actor in the actor-situation transaction regarding LR?

The present study draws on a longitudinal study collaboration between an interdisciplinary research team and a Norwegian school district from the onset of a one-to-one digital device program (Wollscheid et al., 2021). In the present study, we use a mixed-method design to analyze both standardized items and open-ended questions from a cross-sectional teacher questionnaire (N=418).

Preliminary analyses show that 49% of teachers found their access to both analogue and digital LR to be satisfactory while 19% did not have sufficient access to digital LR and 32% did not have sufficient access to analog LR. Thematic analysis of text data implies three main challenges to teacher agency: 1) quality challenges with digital LR, 2) analogue LR not aligned with the curriculum, and 3) financial restrictions inhibited access to both analogue and digital LD in all subjects. Further analysis will highlight reasons for lack of agency and involvement in the process of acquiring LR.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Teachers' Digital Agency – The Unstudied Territory

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In this presentation we focus on teachers as users of digital technology, from the perspective of agency. In their profession teachers need to include digitality in their work to educate citizens for future societies. Digital technologies evolve rapidly, novel solutions develop quickly, offering both pedagogical opportunities and challenges and demanding to meet the expectations of the digitalized society (Weller, 2020). The use of technology by teachers has been studied through various theoretical models that address areas such as, teachers' knowledge related to digital technology (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and teachers' attitudes towards the technology (Davis, 1989). According to Pettersson (2018) current research on educational technology focuses strongly on specific competencies of teachers, leaving the larger contextual setting outside. In this study we focus on this challenge using teacher agency as a theoretical framework to understand teachers' use of digital technology within the context of the school community. Teacher agency has extensively been studied (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) but the context of digital technology has remained in a minor role.

In this study we focus on teachers' digital agency targeting 883 K-12 teachers. Data was collected using an instrument, modified from earlier teacher agency instruments to target digital technologies. The instrument contains three digital agency factors: *Developing one's teaching practices with digital technology*; *Participating in shared decision making regarding digital technology*; and *Experiencing being heard on shared digital technology development*. Along with digital agency factors, the instrument also contains an additional element: *Participating in shared decision making in the community*. The aim of this element is to serve as a reference. For the analysis we used Confirmatory Factor Analysis to test the psychometrics of the instrument. Additionally, we used descriptive measures and K-means cluster analysis to study the digital agency and especially to identify different digital agency groups.

The results show differences among teachers. They suggest four different digital agency groups from high to low assessments with slightly different agency profiles. Additionally, results show a strong difference between teacher agency and teachers' digital agency when comparing variances between respondents. The variation among digital agency factors is much stronger. Altogether, this study introduces teachers' digital agency as a concept to study and understand teachers as users of digital technology. This is relevant especially in digitalized Nordic countries where teachers are a key-factor in school development.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Experiences from introducing AI literacy in K-12 classrooms

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Introducing AI competences, or AI literacy (Long & Magerko, 2020), in K-12 education poses challenges as the topic is unfamiliar to most teachers and seldom has a clear space in the curriculum. In this paper we present preliminary results from a qualitative study with the aim of introducing AI literacy in grades 3-6 (students aged 9-13) in two Finnish schools. Focus is on “learning *about*” rather than “learning *with* AI”, which tends to dominate current discussions on AI in education.

The study draws on frameworks for AI literacy (Long & Magerko, 2020) and human-centered AI principles (Shneiderman, 2022), emphasizing the integration of equity, democratic values, and social sustainability in educational practices. The pedagogical approach is informed by socio-cultural theories, which support collaborative, student-centered learning processes.

Lesson plans and activities were co-created together with 38 students, three teachers, one IT educator and four teacher trainers according to a human-centered process (Steen, 2013). Each plan focused on a specific topic, with the three plans together covering the five questions presented by Long & Magerko (2020): 1) what is AI, what can AI do and how is AI perceived 2) how does AI work, and 3) what should AI do?

Data were collected throughout the co-creation process via focus group and individual interviews with educators and classroom observations during three lessons. The qualitative data were transcribed and analysed using content analysis addressing two research questions:

RQ1: How can AI literacy lesson plans be co-designed and adapted for primary education?

RQ2: What best practices and lessons learned can be identified when co-designing and implementing lesson plans in an iterative process?

The findings indicate that AI topics can be accessible to young students when teaching methods and content are age-appropriate, using relatable examples and hands-on assignments. Students exhibit varying knowledge and skills, highlighting the teacher's role in adapting content to diverse needs. However, as AI is also new to teachers, they require support to learn about AI themselves and in finding suitable pedagogical approaches. This includes leveraging their tacit knowledge, aligning content with curricula, and addressing potential gaps between teachers' and students' mental models of technology and AI.

The study underscores the value of human-centered, collaborative approaches to foster equity and democratic values in education. It aligns with Nordic principles of equity, inclusivity, and sustainability, addressing global challenges in integrating AI literacy while offering insights for Nordic and international contexts. By sharing lesson plans and stakeholder experiences, this study supports socially sustainable AI education that respects human rights and supports democratic engagement.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Educational Power of Ease: Smoothness and Friction in Datafication of Education

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The integration of data technologies, such as digital learning platforms utilising data analytics, or information management systems, into education is often justified on the grounds of making things easier. However, ease in the context of education is not a straightforward issue.

Ease is often understood as something inherently desirable in educational technology and is rarely questioned. The integration of data technologies is justified, for example, by their ability to streamline everyday life: technologies offer a way to automate processes, replace manual work, and simplify the day-to-day educational practices.

However, in education, ease is not always an unproblematic goal. Thinking, learning, growing as a human being, and other broader educational goals are not inherently easy; they require time, effort, and challenges. This presents education professionals with a dilemma: to what extent and which situations is ease desirable, and what consequences can making things easier might have for broader educational objectives?

This study is based on what Timmermans and Tavory (2022) call an "abductive moment." In analyzing qualitative data collected through semi-structured thematic interviews with 25 national-level experts working in the field of the datafication of education in Finland, we discovered that ease emerged unexpectedly in conversations. Further analysis revealed that ease carried a variety of meanings in the experts' discussions. Ease was used to describe, among other things, the difficulty of doing things, the amount of work something requires, or a general state of being.

Ease also had paradoxical features. On the one hand, ease was seen as an attraction, something valuable and desirable. It was used both to justify the use of data technologies in general and to characterize the nature of these technologies more specifically. On the other hand, it was also used to justify the status quo of the current state of things. In this way, ease both smoothed the path for datafication and simultaneously introduced friction to it.

In this study, we reflect on and discuss the meaning of ease in the field of education. We argue that ease has so far been a largely overlooked element in discussions on the datafication of education. However, because it is used to justify decisions about the educational practices, ease holds a certain level of educational power. Through abductive analysis of the interview data and reflection on the research literature, we identify the role of ease in educational datafication and critically assess its potential consequences.

In summary, the study revealed a wide range of meanings and paradoxical features of ease in relation to the datafication of education. This provides an opportunity for more in-depth exploration, which can support further discussion and research to understand the current state and possible future directions of educational datafication in the Nordic education systems in a more nuanced way.

The research is part of the MODALITY - Movement for Data Literacy project (2023-2027) funded by the Research Council of Finland, which explores the consequences of datafication in schools and develops ways to address them and support students' data literacy.

## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### "Navigating Uncertainty: Future Educator's Evolving Engagement with Generative AI for Learning and Teaching"

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This exploratory study stems from the multiple layers of uncertainty faced by first-year graduate students in Education at a Japanese university as they navigate both their new role as future educators and the rapidly evolving landscape of generative artificial intelligence (AI). These prospective students confront dual challenges: adapting to graduate-level study while simultaneously grappling with how AI technologies will shape their ongoing learning and upcoming teaching careers. By examining their learning and engaging with AI amid such uncertainties, this research seeks to understand how future teachers develop technological competencies when their own learning context is in flux.

Started from April 2024 and January 2025, a graduate seminar course was selected for the research field. This opportunistic sampling provided the direct observations which covered the unique set of first-time users of AI showcasing mixed feelings and emotions toward the new technology and unique backgrounds of five first-year graduate students whose teaching domains vary in English as a Second Language, Music, Physical education, and Japanese literature.

Drawn from observational field notes, students' products (comments, additional resources, reflection notes both before and after class, and documentation of prompt), the documentation of in-class experiments, and partial audio recordings of discussions, the grounded theory approach was applied for how these future educators constructed their understanding of AI uses for teaching. Our preliminary findings reveal significant shifts in how they conceptualize various aspects of AI uses and how these practices are operationalized based on both local and agency-driven pedagogies. The observed shift from fear to critical engagement with the new technology in which students' evolving understanding exemplifies how disorienting dilemmas can lead to critical reflection and facilitate meaning making as well as transforming perspectives through dialog indicate learning (Mezirow, 1978). Also, the "what if" questioning and contextual peer observation show how uncertainty-oriented learning can foster further inquiry for collaborative and situated learning (Howard-Jones & Demetriou, 2009). This situated help-giving informs with theoretical grounding on teacher preparation for technological integration with the emphasis on human-centered contextual help (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Mackay & Tymon, 2013). The findings contribute to growing literature, in particular Nordic contexts on preparing teachers for various kinds of uncertainty (Twidale, 2005; Götl et al., 2024) and suggest new approaches to fostering technological competency development.

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## Network: 13. ICT & Education

### Preschool teachers' experiences of using Slowmations to teach and learn science content

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Digital tools, artefacts and resources for teaching and learning have created new learning contexts as digitalisation continues (Arnold & Yelland, 2020; Otterborn et al., 2023). As a result, there is a growing interest in technology-enabled artefacts being used in science teaching to stimulate young children's science learning. With their inherent technological functions, digital tools create opportunities and constraints for different actions in learning contexts in relation to children's learning of science content. Slowmation, a slow animation consisting of five cumulative representations (Background, Storyboard, Models, Digital photographs and Animation), allows children to repeatedly represent science content based on their experiences (Hoban & Nielsen, 2010). The design of Slowmation promotes 'shared sustained interactions' between teachers and children, encouraging reflection about significant concepts and ideas throughout the process of creating a Slowmation (Fleer & Hoban, 2012). Previous research on Slowmation has focused on how it enhances learning about science content for learners in various pedagogical contexts (Fridberg et al., 2018; Nielsen & Hoban, 2015; Hoban & Nielsen, 2010) or how it is used to support the learning of science content (Fleer & Hoban 2012). More research is needed on how digital tools enable or constrain children's learning of science content based on teachers' intended and implemented teaching with a focus on planning, teaching and reflecting.

The study presented here is based on teachers' reflections on their intended and enacted teaching of science content using the digital tool Slowmation. The study explores how teachers' experiences of using Slowmation for teaching and learning science content in preschool education. It is guided by the following research question 'What are the opportunities and constraints of using Slowmation for teaching and learning science in preschool?'

The research involved four preschool teachers in a Swedish preschool who had previously worked with children on the science content dinosaurs and bees together using Slowmation. Initially, the teachers articulated their intended planning and reflection on the construction of Slowmations, through a reflection tool called Content Representations (CoRe) (Loughran et al., 2004).

Data were generated through the reflection tools, audio recordings during the completion of the reflection tools, and stimulated recall interviews. Preliminary findings from the thematic analysis show that the teachers experience opportunities and constraints when using Slowmations. For example, according to the teachers, the children have many repeated opportunities to encounter the science content through the Slowmations. Furthermore, the teachers have to prepare the children about what an animation is. This research is of interest to Nordic educational research as digital tools are a part of the learning context in preschool. The findings of the study can provide knowledge about how Slowmations can support science teaching and learning based on the teachers' intended and enacted experiences.

# Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Bridging the 'Us and Them' approach: A case-based study on student teachers perceptions about refugee experience

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This study aims to explore how senior students nearing the completion of their teacher education programs in different countries, namely Greece, Norway and Türkiye, respond to a complex classroom scenario involving multicultural and refugee-related issues. The research is designed as a case-based study, focusing on the individual analysis of a hypothetical situation. The case presented to the participants describes a conflict involving a student with a refugee background who feels excluded from a social event, resulting in a physical altercation. This case-based study raises critical questions about teacher-student communication, cultural sensitivity, and behavioral management in diverse classrooms. Fifty senior students from three countries participated in the study, with approximately 15-20 students from each country. Each participant analyzed the case individually, reflecting on the perspectives of various stakeholders, including the teacher, the students involved, and the parents. Through content analysis of the participants' responses, we identified common themes, challenges, and potential strategies for addressing similar situations in real-world classrooms. When future teachers envision cultural clashes or issues in their teaching practices with students from refugee backgrounds, they indicated several potential challenges or considerations including but not limited to cultural misunderstandings, identity and belonging, equity and fairness, and integration vs. exclusion. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on how teacher education programs prepare future educators to handle cultural and behavioral complexities in increasingly diverse classrooms. It also highlights the need for enhanced communication strategies and cultural competence in order to foster inclusive and harmonious learning environments. This study, therefore, aims to further our understanding of how future teachers engage with their potential refugee students and highlights the need to consider contextual variables in studies of teacher education. This study could serve as an example of what could be done in both Nordic and other contexts—other similar teacher education programmes in other universities around the world.

## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Discourses of religion and religious dimensions in civic orientation courses for newly arrived adult migrants in Sweden

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Discourses of religion and religious dimensions in civic orientation courses for newly arrived migrants in Sweden

The aim of this paper is to present how religion and religious dimensions are viewed, understood and discursively negotiated in the classroom for civic orientation for adult migrants in Sweden. Civic orientation courses are organized by the state/municipality for adult migrants who have recently been granted a residence permit in Sweden (cf. Bauer et al.; von Brömssen et al., 2022). The aim of the courses is to inform about Swedish society, with the intention of furthering migrants' "integration" into the new country (informationsverige). For this paper we use ethnographic data from civic orientation courses and explore how religion and religious dimensions are located, presented and discursively negotiated in the classroom. Theoretically we draw on a Foucauldian framework and the concept of *governmentality* (Dean, 2010) complemented with theories on religious pluralization and secularization in contemporary Western societies (Davie, 2001, 2023; Nordin, 2023). Our analysis shows that in the civic orientation courses, religion and religious phenomena are generally avoided or silenced. Instead, there is a strong discourse, emphasizing the separation between religion and state in Sweden. Also, the recognition of non-Christian holidays such as Walpurgis Eve and Midsummer Eve are articulated as Swedish, and interesting and fun to take part in. This can be understood as a transmission of "civil religion"; the implicit religious values of a nation, as expressed through public rituals, symbols, and ceremonies on sacred days and at sacred places (Davie, 2001). We show how Sweden throughout the courses and through the communicators' articulations, positions itself as a highly secular country vis-à-vis assumed religious migrants. This paper adds to previous research exploring the "civic turn" in migration studies (Bech et al., 2017) and raise critical questions concerning religion, the state, integration, and education for adult migrants in Sweden, as well as in all Nordic welfare states.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Beyond Colour-Blindness: Reconstructing teachers' frameworks for understanding diverse students in a Danish high school

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In recent years, increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds have enrolled in schools in the Nordic countries. While an awareness of cultural diversity has been raised, little attention has been paid to inequality or racial discrimination, due to the dominant discourse of 'colour-blindness' in the Nordic region (Gullestad, 2004; Sandset, 2018). Several studies have already exposed racism in Nordic schools, revealing how unconsciously generalised Christian norms operate as a form of cultural heritage in schools and consequently marginalise Muslim students (Rissanen, 2020; Shirazi & Jaffe-Walter, 2021).

This study focuses on Denmark, which has the strictest immigration policies among the Nordic countries. The principle of equality, while well-intentioned, often results in a homogenous approach, and it manifests as a colour-blind perspective where differences are overlooked (Khawaja, 2022). Despite the issue being highlighted, research suggests that teachers' multicultural education training is ill-equipped to prepare them for these challenges (Horst and Pihl, 2010), yet individual teachers are still responsible for addressing them. Bearing this in mind, this qualitative study aims to clarify how teachers interpret the needs of students who require special support and how they apply their interpretations of students in their educational practices.

This is a single-case study conducted at a high school in Denmark, where 60% of the students are ethnic minorities and the remaining 40% are ethnically Danish; all students have been diagnosed with autism. Data were collected in 2023 and 2024 and included school documents, educational materials, classroom observations, teacher meeting observations and semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, counsellors and students. By examining a high school that has implemented a mentor system for ethnic minority students, this study aims to understand their needs and analyse how teachers' understanding of students is formed from a constructivist approach.

Teachers in the case study strive to employ colour blindness to address the unique needs of their ethnic minority and autistic students, ultimately aiming to foster an inclusive environment that acknowledges and supports students' diverse identities. In Nordic schools, colour blindness is often employed to ignore religious differences, in an effort to treat all students equally (Rissanen, 2021). However, the data indicate a more nuanced approach among some teachers. Despite identifying with colour blindness, these teachers avoid assimilation practices, to better address the special needs of their students through mentoring systems for both teachers and students. The data reveal three points: 1) Teachers understand that students have complex identities shaped by diverse backgrounds, including different nationalities, religions and reasons for immigration. 2) Teachers actively resist social and media-originating stigmas to release students from these negative perceptions. 3) Through frequent meetings and interactions, teachers reconstruct their frameworks for understanding students, moving beyond superficial labels to appreciate each student's unique context.

This study is relevant to Nordic educational research in terms of multicultural education. The findings provide insights into practical approaches for supporting socially disadvantaged students and contributing to more inclusive educational practices.

## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

English teachers' beliefs about newly arrived migrant students and reading in the mainstream lower secondary classroom

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As the world is changing and more people than before are affected by wars, humanitarian and climatic crisis, the number of newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) in the Norwegian school system and in the mainstream classrooms is rising (SSB, 2024). Where the students in the classroom were previously more linguistically homogenous, the student groups are now more diverse (Ringrose et al., 2023). This can challenge established teaching practices in the Norwegian EFL classroom (Burner & Carlsen, 2023), which has to become more multilingual (Beiler, 2020; Cummins, 2009; Tishakov & Tsagari, 2022). Norwegian schools are structured according to the “principle of the unitary school” where all students have a right, and are expected, to attend the same schools (Helakorpi et al., 2023; Ringrose et al., 2023), and according to the curriculum multilingualism is to be recognized as a resource (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2022). However, both classroom teaching and school organization need be better adapted to fit multilingual students' needs (Lødding et al., 2024).

This presentation unveils findings from the initial phase of a PhD project on teaching and learning English reading in mainstream classrooms, with a focus on newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) in lower secondary school. This phase involved two semi-structured focus group interviews with six English teachers who teach in linguistically diverse mainstream classrooms. These interviews explored the teachers' beliefs, experiences, and practices (Fives & Gill, 2015) concerning teaching English reading to NAMS in multilingual settings. The aim was to gather insights into the teachers' perspectives, which are crucial for developing effective teaching strategies for English reading in the mainstream classroom. The findings are grouped into three categories: the organization of teaching, teachers' beliefs about newly arrived migrant students, and teachers' beliefs about their own competence and abilities. In brief, the teachers feel that they lack support structures and teaching skills to teach English reading in the mainstream classroom to the NAMS.

## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Relationship building in European culturally diverse classrooms – a scoping review

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In recent years, classrooms and school communities in the Nordic countries have undergone rapid social and cultural changes related to migration (Corral-Granados, Rapp & Smeplass, 2023). Education systems have become meeting points of diverse social and cultural groups, but often struggle to adapt to the changing realities, with school staff, students and parents struggling to connect with culturally 'others' (Kim & Cook, 2022). Nonetheless, relationships with teachers have been identified as a signifier of students' academic success and wellbeing (García-Moya, 2020; Gisewhite, Jeanfreau & Holden, 2019), especially for students from culturally diverse backgrounds (den Brok et al., 2010). However, there is no clear view on the research so far.

This scoping review provides a structured overview of the methodology and objectives of published research on relationship building in culturally diverse school contexts. It aims to identify research relating to relationship building between different stakeholders in culturally diverse classrooms through a comprehensive search strategy using three databases, a reference search, and a Google Scholar search. This resulted in the identification of 32 English language peer-reviewed articles, published in 14 different European countries within the last 10 years.

Initial findings revealed certain trends, such as a general lack of representation of the perspectives of stakeholders besides teachers and students, such as parents or community leaders, and little focus on the development of pre- and in-service teachers' abilities to foster relationships between culturally diverse students and themselves, their classrooms, and wider school communities. Furthermore, an emphasis on quantitative research in student-centered studies, and on qualitative research in school staff-centered studies, was noted.

This review is intended to serve as a guide for conducting and developing further research in the area of relationship building in culturally diverse classrooms. It concludes that future research on relationship building in culturally diverse school contexts should (1) broaden the scope of studied groups to include other stakeholders, (2) provide a more comprehensive and holistic view by using different research methods, (3) focus more on practical applications for teacher education, to help navigate the socially and culturally changing classroom environments.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Multiple perspectives on parental role and responsibilities in the language upbringing and academic progress of school-aged children with immigrant backgrounds

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Iceland's compulsory schools reported that nearly 30% of pupils had a foreign background, underscoring the steady immigration trends and increasing linguistic and cultural diversity in the country (Statistics Iceland, 2024). This paper explores the multiple perspectives of parents with immigrant backgrounds, their school-aged children, and their teachers regarding the parental role in language upbringing and academic progress. The study is part of a bigger research project entitled, *Language Policies and Practices of Diverse Immigrant Families in Iceland and their Implications for Education* (LPP), which investigated families with various linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds from different localities and lengths of residence in Iceland.

The theoretical basis for this study integrates Family Language Policy (Curd-Christiansen, 2018), immigrant parenting (Ochoka & Janzen, 2008), and parental involvement in schools (Leyendecker et al., 2018). FLP's components—language ideology, practice, and management—align closely with Ochoka & Janzen's (2008) parenting approaches, where families adapt practices and modify parenting strategies within the new contexts. Leyendecker and colleagues (2018) further highlight the importance of how families navigate potential gaps and challenges in family-school engagement to foster their children's languages and education.

The study employed semi-structured interviews with immigrant parents, school-aged children, and teachers to capture their multi-faceted viewpoints. Parents from each of the nine participating families were interviewed twice, with an interval of one or two semesters. The individual interviews with ten students aged 14-16 also included language portraits to reflect on their unique linguistic experiences. Individual and focus group interviews were held with six homeroom teachers and two teachers of Icelandic as a second language.

The findings revealed that the families' practices and strategies regarding the children's languages and education were guided by diverse ideologies and orientations shaped by experiences from their country of origin, present-day life in Iceland, and future aspirations. Perspectives on the parents' role in language and education also varied and sometimes conflicted among parents, students, and teachers. The differences stem from varying expectations and viewpoints, cultural diversity, and unfamiliarity with rules and norms. Overall, the findings emphasized the need for collaborative efforts among families and educators, which integrate diverse views, reliable information, and expert guidance, to enhance parental engagement in fostering their children's languages and academic progress.

This study enriches Nordic educational research by addressing the role of immigrant parents in their children's language upbringing and academic progress from multiple perspectives, while also offering valuable insights and suggestions.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Parallel participations and the imagined communities of highly educated immigrants learning the Finnish language

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Research and practice about the language learning of migrants in the Nordic countries have focused mostly on how we access and integrate into their linguistic communities. This includes our strategies, the challenges we encounter, and our participation in these language communities. In other words, how we become proper Nordic language users. I offer a different perspective, by examining how we allow parts of the languages and communities to become part of ourselves and how we also create parallel language communities. I build upon the work of scholars Bonny Norton, Aneta Pavlenko, and Yasuko Kanno who propose that the migrants' relationships towards imagined communities influence their learning, agency, investment and resistance to the process of language learning (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2001; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007).

These scholars have addressed issues of non-participation, peripherality and marginality (Wenger, 1998) and appropriation mostly focusing on the English language. This study addresses similar forms of participation in the cases of highly educated adult migrants learning Finnish in Finland. I argue that beyond desiring to access and belong to an unattainable imagined community of proficient Finnish users, highly educated migrants incorporate aspects of this linguistic community to create parallel communities where they participate with the Finnish language but not depend on it.

The study is designed around narrative methodologies, facilitating sharing experiences and providing a space for self-reflection, negotiation and creative imagination. I use longitudinal interviews produced with seven highly educated adult immigrants learning Finnish in the city of Turku. We produced these interviews over the course of approximately one year of their Finnish language learning. In this study, I explore participants' narratives of language learning as storylines of appropriation of the Finnish language and the creation of more suitable imagined language communities. Preliminary results include storylines which deal with learning to love, perfect or leave the Finnish language and its current communities. These storylines provide a model of experience of the Finnish language and new language communities which can be recognised beyond the individualised narratives of these participants. This study also expands our understanding of migrant linguistic integration in Finland and beyond as more than a one-sided effort to belong.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Supporting multilingual learning — Teachers' perceptions, everyday practices and leadership in Finnish lower secondary education

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As the Nordic countries are becoming increasingly multilingual and ethnically diverse, new challenges are posed to public institutions. In Finland, schools have not managed to turn students' multilingual resources into an advantage or create structures for creating linguistically and culturally responsive school culture. According to recent studies (Repo 2020, Alisaari et al. 2023), linguistically responsive teaching (e.g. Lucas & Villegas 2013) and practices supporting multilingual learning have not become mainstream in Finnish comprehensive education. Research on how school leadership encourages this change is scarce. These questions are not only specific to Finland but to all Nordic countries with a recent increase in immigration.

This presentation investigates the challenges and possibilities of supporting linguistically diverse students' learning and sense of belonging in Finnish schools, which often are framed by monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1997). My research asks, 1) what are the teaching staff's perceptions and means of supporting multilingual student's learning, and 2) what is the role of school leadership in creating a linguistically and culturally responsive school culture? Validating the students' individual identities calls for valuing their previous knowledge, including their language skills (Cummins, 2021). The ethnographic research data were produced in two lower secondary schools in the Metropolitan Helsinki area. The data consist of field notes on multilingual pedagogic practices during one school year and individual interviews of teachers and principals.

I argue that even linguistically diverse Finnish schools lack systematic practices in supporting multilingual students' learning. Students were rarely encouraged to use their languages in class and multilingual pedagogies were not familiar to most of the teachers interviewed. However, certain teachers used these methods regularly and verbalized the significance of these practices in the interviews. One of the schools was more organized around multilingual and multicultural practices, which reflected the principal's views on students' agency and inclusion. Different school cultures derived from different kinds of school leadership and influenced how school language learners were perceived.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Supporting Immigrant Students in Finland's Education System: An Assessment of Finnish Policies Using the Multidimensional Support Model

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This paper examines if educational policies are systematically supporting immigrant students in basic education in Finland. As Finland's immigrant population continues to grow, educational policies must establish a comprehensive framework to aid in integration. Education systems are essential to integration, necessitating that educational policies must consider the diverse needs of immigrant pupils to establish a comprehensive support framework (Bilgili et al., 2018). Through a content analysis this study used the Multidimensional Support Model to collect and analyse educational policies into the framework's six dimensions of support: (1) linguistic support, (2) academic support, (3) parental involvement, (4) intercultural and friendly learning environments, (5) psychosocial support and (6) addressing low socioeconomic barriers (Volante et al., 2020). The model was developed to analyse how immigrant student integration is supported within policy and programming (Volante et al., 2020). Policies at both the national level of Finland and in Vaasa, a city in the Ostrobothnia region, were analysed to understand the support structure established in the basic education system. Preliminary findings reveal a dispersed legislated support system for immigrant students. The study suggests that educational policies directed specifically for immigrant student groups should incorporate cross-sectoral collaboration to leverage government and public or private sectors to build a supportive infrastructure. Using cross-sectoral collaboration is a key strategy for successful policy and programming (Bloemraad & De Graauw, 2017). This paper argues that a structured support system addressing the diverse needs of immigrant students is essential for supporting Finland's growing immigrant student population. By building a comprehensive support system that considers the Multidimensional Support Model's six dimensions in educational policy, immigrant students can acquire social and academic skills, increase community participation and develop a sense of belonging.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Towards Inclusive Education: A Multi-Stakeholder Investigation of Barriers and Supports to Migrant Learner Integration in Finland

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

The Schools as Inclusive Hubs Erasmus+ funded project investigated the process of transforming schools into dynamic centers for inclusion in Finland and other EU locations. After searching for best practices as well as identifying gaps, strategies were collated and materials were created to bolster inclusive practices in schools. Targeted areas include: academic success through school, family and community engagement along with cultural mediation and overall well-being in order to build the capacity of a wide range of stakeholders to support migrant learners' integration into the Finnish education system and society.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The desk research for this project took a practical approach and investigated the status of migrant background learners and identified areas for improvement in the current situation (<https://inclusivehubs.eu/reports/>). Our theoretical approach combines the sociological perspectives of systems and constructivist frameworks (Amor, et al., 2019; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021).

#### 3. Methodology/research design

Our presentation will focus on the data collected through focus group interviews with 37 participants (students, parents, and teachers) and an online questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions from 29 respondents in Finland. The same protocol was applied in the other countries involved in the project. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the qualitative data and descriptive statistics was applied for the quantitative data. (Ward & Delamont, 2020)

#### 4. Expected results/findings

In addition to articulating best practices in the co-creation of inclusive environments, analysis of data collected after a pilot implementation underscores the positive potential of putting these suggestions into practice. Our presentation will highlight the trends and threads brought out in the data collected from Finland and discuss the implications in both a European and a Nordic context.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Our work directly contributes to the idea of a Pedagogy of Hope with significant connections to several of the NERA networks especially that of Inclusive Education. Through the materials we have developed and the data gathered around their implementation, we hope to empower Nordic educators at all levels with proven strategies and approaches to improve outcomes for populations at risk for marginalisation, especially our migrant students.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

English as a medium of instruction in Finnish vocational education and training: beyond opportunity and threat.

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### Research Topic/aim

Effective January, 2023, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture authorised the adoption of English as the language of instruction in selected Vocational education and training institutes across Finland. This language policy is intended to address labour shortages in industries like catering and hospitality, and cleaning and property services. Since its inception, there has been a topical discussion in the parliament as to (a) whether legislation should require that customers get service in Finnish or English, and (b) how teachers in vocational education and training will handle the new language of instruction.

### Theoretical framework

Using Holland & Lave's (2019) theory of social practice, and framing teachers as knowledge brokers (Lockton et al., 2022), this study highlights the under-researched role of non-native teachers who use English as a medium of instruction within multilingual learning environments, like the Finnish vocational education, and adult immigrant students in vocational education.

### Methodological design

Qualitative data was collected through fieldnotes, observations and semi-structured interviews with five expert teachers and two keypersons in one vocational qualification program, which was analysed with content analysis.

### Expected conclusions/findings

Preliminary findings reveal that the impact of the new language policy in Finnish vocational education and trainings is on the teachers, some of whom express feelings of insecurity and difficulty with students' assessments. Feelings of insecurity surface in the face of students' varieties of English, some of whom have a high level of linguistic competence, which contributes to some teachers' difficulty to understand these varieties and provide fair assessments to students. To address these challenges, a series of seminars and workshops are being developed to provide further support to teachers in navigating English as a medium of instruction effectively.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This research fills a gap in understanding the experiences of non-native teachers in non-native settings, such as in Finland, since not much attention has been paid to this group of teachers (Kimoga, 2014), as it has been about English language teaching from native speakers to non-native speakers. Additionally, it contributes to ongoing debates about the pragmatic function and rise of English in Nordic education (Peterson & Fägersten, 2024). This paper therefore offers a vital perspective by moving beyond the ideological debates and tensions of English in Nordic education, to providing empirical insights of its practice in vocational education.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Navigating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Swedish Preschools: A Study of Principals' Enactment Practices and Leadership

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This study examines how preschool principals in Sweden enact national policy frameworks for diversity within culturally and linguistically diverse preschools. Situated within the broader Nordic context, where early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions address increasing diversity, Sweden presents a case study of how educational leaders adapt to these demographic shifts. The research investigates the organizational and structural conditions that shape principals' implementation of diversity policies in their local context.

The study draws on policy enactment theory (Ball et al., 2012), framing policy enactment as a complex, non-linear process involving interpretation, translation, and negotiation by key actors within specific contexts. The theory emphasizes how local contexts, resources, and external pressures influence how policies are understood and enacted differently across institutions (Maguire et al., 2020). It particularly highlights the active role of school leaders in shaping policy implementation through their interpretations and decisions in highly diverse preschool settings.

Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative research design centered on in-depth interviews with Swedish preschool principals. It uses thematic analysis to explore how principals translate policy into practice, adapt to institutional contexts and develop strategies to address locally embedded challenges.

Preliminary findings show a complex landscape of policy translation where principals adapt national frameworks to local needs. The data highlights the significance of contextual mediation, as leaders navigate diverse demographic landscapes while working within available resources. Moreover, the findings reveal a leadership stance characterized by principals' firm opposition to lowered expectations and their commitment to maintaining high standards regardless of geographical location. Implementation gaps emerge between institutional ambitions and practical limitations, particularly in areas of parent engagement and resource constraints.

The study contributes to Nordic educational research by illuminating the complex interplay between policy, leadership, and practice in diverse preschool settings. It provides insights into how educational leaders can effectively support diversity while maintaining educational quality and equity. The findings have implications for policy development, leadership preparation, and practical support for preschool principals working in increasingly diverse Nordic ECEC contexts.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Teachers' estimation of multilingual Eight grade students' challenges in reading texts

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Reading comprehension is an important factor for academic learning across school subjects. At the same time, in Norway, data from National Reading Tests, PISA and PIRLS, show negative results regarding students reading performance.

According to The Simple View of Reading (Gough and Tunmer 1986), decoding and oral language comprehension are equivalent and necessary prerequisites for reading comprehension. Thus, students' vocabulary and word knowledge is important for the understanding of texts related to school subjects (Hjetland, Lervåg et al. 2018). In this paper, we present preliminary results from an ongoing project at a junior high school. The school is located in a multiethnic neighborhood outside the center of Oslo. About 80% of the pupils have a minority, multilingual background. For this purpose, we concentrate on a subsample consisting of 90 eight grade students distributed in four classrooms.

The ongoing project is initiated by the Educational Department of the Municipality of Oslo, and the overall aim is to produce joint knowledge through collaboration between schools and research staffs. Concretely, the aim of the current project is twofold, firstly to increase the teachers' awareness on which words the students find difficult to understand and secondly to develop and test current educational strategies for vocabulary learning within the context of school subjects and classroom practice. The hypothesis underlying the project is that teachers' understanding of the challenges the students face in text reading is an important prerequisite for their ability to provide adapted and adequate help.

### Method

To provide details concerning the students reading levels we used two standardized screening measures guided by the SVR model; The Word Chain Test (Logometrica) was used to measure the decoding skills and a measure on reading of passages (S40) (Logometrica), was used to measure the reading comprehension component.

Furthermore, we tried to go deeper into the background of the students results. This was done through a method where the teachers selected a text from their teaching subject and distributed it to the students. In advance, the teacher should read through the text and mark which words he/she assumed would be challenging for the student to read. The same text without the teacher's markings was copied and distributed to the students, who each had to mark words they found difficult to read.

### Results

Results from the screening showed that the students had minor challenges related to technical decoding of text, while reading comprehension at sentence level was challenging.

The results from the survey on the teacher's estimation of student's word knowledge indicate great agreement between teachers' and students' markings, but also show that students additionally report challenges in understanding words that teachers do not consider challenging.

### Literature

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Language ideologies in Norwegian teachers' narratives of practice describing their work with multilingualism

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Language practices in schools are influenced by various ideological regimes, including those that underpin the educational policies of nation states (Bartolomé, 2008; Uysal & Sah, 2024). While many researchers call for changes in work with multilingual students, translanguaging pedagogies has not yet gained proper acceptance in the educational practices and monolingual ideologies still prevail in many classrooms (Alisaari et al., 2019; Elshafie et al., 2023; García, 2020). Some of the challenges in adopting multilingual pedagogical approaches may be rooted in “unacknowledged discriminatory ideologies and practices (Bartolomé, 2008, p. ix).

The Norwegian school curriculum asserts that multilingualism is a resource. Yet, merely acknowledging or using students' different languages in education doesn't ensure their language practices aren't marginalized or that social justice is achieved (Mendoza et al., 2024). The aim of this study is to investigate how teachers in Norwegian basic education conceptualise the use of multiple languages in their classrooms, and what language ideologies they express in describing their experiences of multilingualism.

Data were collected from in-service teachers taking CPD courses in Norwegian as an additional language and English for primary school. As part of their coursework, teachers wrote narratives of practice describing situations where multiple languages were used. A corpus of 30 narratives is analysed exploring language ideologies expressed. The results are discussed in light of theories of language ideologies, translanguaging pedagogy and social justice (Li Wei, 2023; Mendoza et al., 2024).

The results show that teachers' narratives express often contradictory language ideologies. While the practices teachers describe in their narratives have a goal of promoting multilingualism and making students' languages visible and valued in the classroom, the normativity, one-nation-one-language, and deficiency discourses are also present in the narratives. We discuss what implications these ideological tensions have for enactment of translanguaging pedagogies in Norwegian classrooms.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Plurilingual pedagogies in a small rural school: A case study from the North of Iceland

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Plurilingualism in Icelandic schools is becoming a norm, and this trend is similar in all Nordic countries (Emilsson Peskova et al., 2023). About 15% of students in Icelandic compulsory schools have other mother tongues than Icelandic (Statistics Iceland, 2024). Immigrant students in Nordic countries often achieve poorer at school than their monolingual peers and they feel worse (Helakorpi et al., 2023). The aim of the overall research was to explore plurilingual pedagogies used by Icelandic and migrant teachers that enable them to build upon the linguistic repertoire of their plurilingual students and their own, and to identify learning strategies of plurilingual students that they use to draw on their own linguistic repertoires. In this presentation, we will introduce a case of a small multilingual school in a rural area in the North of Iceland. The research questions answered in the presentation are: 1. How did immigrant teachers, Icelandic teachers, and plurilingual students in the school use their plurilingual repertoires in learning and teaching? 2. How did the language landscape of the school reflect and support the plurilingualism of the schools' students and staff?

The research is qualitative, a multiple-case study. The presented case entails the language landscape of the school, the interview with the school director, three teachers of foreign origin and one Icelandic teacher, as well as interviews with two 13–16-year-old-students. Semi-structured interviews were analyzed with thematic analysis, and additionally, the language landscapes of school environments were analyzed.

The findings showed that the school management actively searched for ways to make students plurilingualism visible and appreciated. Migrant teachers showed insights into students' plurilingualism and often used their own linguistic repertoire in their teaching. However, they also expressed uncertainty about their own skills in Icelandic and reflected on parents' and Icelandic colleagues' concerns for their children to learn Icelandic well. Students reported on various strategies and how they used their linguistic repertoires at school and beyond. The school's language landscape reflected students' plurilingualism, specifically student projects and word walls but also the ongoing discourse and search for appropriate pedagogies to meet students' needs.

This research is an important contribution to the research field of plurilingual pedagogies, it fills out a gap in Icelandic research on plurilingual students and complements Nordic research in the field. Additionally, it shows that the Nordic educational landscape faces similar challenges to those of the rest of Europe, as to educating plurilingual students equitably, and that the Nordic research is aligned with European streams as well.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Multilingualism and Global Competence Education in a European University Alliance: Engineering a Pedagogy of Hope?

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This paper critically examines the ongoing implementation of a policy of multilingualism and multiculturalism for global competence development within an engineering-focused European University Alliance (EUA), situating it within broader discussions of European values, global citizenship and sustainability. Through the lens of a newly developed policy and its accompanying implementation guide, we aim to assess whether and how these initiatives contribute to what might be termed a pedagogy of hope - a framework that can help to foster reflective critical consciousness, justice, and humanisation alongside technical competences.

Engineering and technical education, traditionally firmly rooted in an instrumentalist paradigm, often neglects explicit engagement with values or emotional dimensions, despite its central role in addressing global sustainability challenges. In the context of the EUA, the policy under review seeks to promote inclusive multilingual and multicultural practices that foster gratitude, empathy and intercultural understanding, referring to European values and the EU motto 'united in diversity', but perhaps thinking more in terms of Freire's concept of 'unity in diversity'. By linking policy work to global citizenship and sustainability, the paper asks to what extent such frameworks can shift educational priorities from the mere production of solutions to the development of reflective, empathetic and globally competent individuals.

Based on participatory action research and focus group workshops with students, educators, and staff, preliminary findings suggest that the policy can foster reflective practices, empathy, and interpersonal curiosity. It also shows potential to help reframe technical education as a force for transformative change that goes beyond technical solutions. However, its implementation faces significant challenges. These include overcoming bureaucratic routines, entrenched monolingualism of international education initiatives, and the technocratic ethos that persists in engineering education. Ultimately, the study contributes, from a Nordic perspective, to an understanding of how a pedagogy of hope - where gratitude, diversity, and sustainability converge - might emerge in the context of engineering education.



## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

Diversity and education for citizenship in the digitalised society. A policy analysis

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### Research topic/aim

This study is about how schooling in adapted upper secondary school in Sweden prepares students with intellectual disability (ID) for citizenship in a digitalised society. The part presented here concerns an analysis of Swedish and international policy documents about digitalisation processes. The purpose is to contribute with knowledge about how the notion of citizenship in a digitalized society appear in policy documents, in relation to diversity among citizens, with specific focus on education and schooling of pupils in adapted secondary education.

### Theoretical framework

This study is based on a relational understanding of citizenship, drawing on Marshall's (1950) model of civil, political, and social citizenship. Together, these components must guarantee all citizens a reasonable standard of living and level of knowledge. Citizenship is defined as being a full member of a community, meaning that everyone with that status is equal in terms of the obligations and rights included. Marshall uses the concepts of contract, negotiation, rights, and duties to illustrate the evolving relationship between citizenship and how it relates to civil rights and their impact on social inequality. The relationship between the citizen and the state forms a kind of social contract where the citizens gains access to specific rights in exchange for fulfilling certain obligations.

### Methodology/research design

The study employs a critical analysis of the construction of digitization in national and international policy documents inspired by Carol Bacchi's (2009) analysis tool "What's the Problem Represented to be" (WPR), policy documents that guide and shape education in general and adapted upper secondary schools in specifics are examined.

### Expected results/findings

Preliminary results indicate that citizenship in a digitalized society emerges as a discourse about a changed social contract between the state and the citizens. These changes indicate new demands and rights on behalf of the state and the citizens. Preliminary results further indicate that diversity among citizens is not particularly prominent in the discourse about a changed social contract and that education/schooling of students with ID in adapted secondary education is even less prominent in this discourse of a changed social contract.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Preliminary results suggest that citizenship in a digitalized society is emerging as a discourse concerning a redefined social contract between the state and its citizens, a topic of particular importance for Nordic educational research. These changes suggest new demands and rights for both the state and citizens. Furthermore, preliminary results indicate that diversity among citizens is not particularly emphasized in this discourse, and that the education of students with intellectual disabilities in adapted secondary schooling is even less prominent in this discourse.

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## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Putting Immigrant Food Poetry on the Lesson Planning Table, for Intercultural Communication and Student Empowerment

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My paper highlights the relevance of immigrant experience poetry in lesson planning, for intercultural communication and student empowerment purposes. Immigration poems can be quite diverse formatwise, or bear non-traditional poetic modes, yet tend to centralize tropes where place/space and belonging, individual and cultural memory and testimony, and nurturing practices are recurring. Immigrant experience poems on food cut through these thematic areas offering different perceptions on practices that are common and essential to all humans. From a classroom pedagogy perspective, such poems merit attention for the empowering potential they hold, especially if viewed with the need for cohesion in today's multicultural classrooms in mind. My suggested use of such poems is meant to encompass ways of enhancing cultural awareness and provide strategies for developing intercultural teaching competence as part of a Teacher education course entitled Intercultural Communication and Pedagogical Competence (7.5 credits, forthcoming).

My approach addresses organizing classroom activities and/or designing learning situations, with a student engagement and confidence (guided discovery, modeled active inquiry, Brown, 1992) and self-efficacy (Moreno & Kilpatrick, 2018) scope, resonating with design-based research. It also involves broad critical perspectives on language/culture/identity and power dynamics, perspectives on the potential merits of multicultural poetry (Xerri 2015, Hanauer 2003) and privileging a personal response pedagogy (Rosenblatt 1994) for the employment of inclusivity strategies and adaptations.

A lesson planning model is presented comprising a chain of activities that facilitate a viable introduction of contemporary immigrant experience poems in (non-subject specific) teaching contexts. I propose the exploration of poems that carry immigrant stories specifically referencing cultural approaches to foods (from <https://poets.org/text/immigration-poems-kids>), utilizing multimodality, aligning popular culture inserts, and probing for oral and visual storytelling enhanced readings.

I exemplify how explorations of poetry in pedagogical work contexts with the scope of fostering student empowerment, intercultural understanding, and by extension social coherence, are relevant and tangible. Exposing students to their own and others' cultural experiences leads to student empowerment (Xerri 2015). Moreover, engaging in the study of multicultural poetry where everyday life perspectives are visited upon offers validating insights on human diversity (Hanauer 2003): as a poem's narrative is released from the printed page, it poetic registers emerge as entrenched in broader human communication modes. Accessing poems intertextually while placing focus on their language(s) and cultural settings also instrumentalizes poetry for showcasing likely intercultural pedagogy paradigms.

Suggesting how/why incorporating poems in teaching can materialize responds to a lack of attention paid to poetry pedagogy within TE in Sweden and the need for research-based guidance for teachers who must follow poetry mandating national course curricula has been documented by Sigvardsson (2020). Such a poetry teaching approach can serve as an intercultural pedagogy strategy, contributing to solidifying an intercultural communication and pedagogical competence outlook in TE.

# Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

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Phenomenon-based Learning and Students' Performance in a Finnish Comprehensive School

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### 1. Research topic/aim

In light of the rapid changes in today's global landscape, many countries have shifted curriculum reforms to focus on cross-disciplinary teaching and learning. This study examines how Finland's Phenomenon-Based Learning (PhBL) approach, introduced in the 2014 core curriculum, is applied in schools to foster interdisciplinary learning and develop essential 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and self-directed learning. Additionally, the study evaluates students' performance within this framework to assess how effectively it cultivates these competencies.

### 2. Theoretical framework

This study draws on three vital theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory, curriculum integration theory, and inquiry-based learning. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that cognitive development is shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts, with real-world problem-solving being central to meaningful learning. Learners need scaffolding to connect their everyday experiences with academic concepts. PhBL, grounded in this theory, encourages active participation and the integration of new knowledge into existing cognitive structures. According to Drake and Burns (2004), curriculum integration moves from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, moving beyond isolated subjects to real-world applications that promote higher-order thinking. Inquiry-based learning, particularly in problem- and project-based learning, fosters active, collaborative learning and shared knowledge creation (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). These approaches complement PhBL by emphasizing teamwork, inquiry, and problem-solving, essential for developing 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

### 3. Methodology/research design

This qualitative case study, aimed at providing contextual insights (Yin, 1989), was conducted in a seventh-grade classroom at a public school in Helsinki. Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis during the school's *PhBL Week*, from mid-February to early June 2018. The research focused on how PhBL principles were integrated into the curriculum design and evaluated students' performance in interdisciplinary learning throughout this process.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The key findings reveal that PhBL integration emphasizes conceptual exploration of phenomena, fosters active student participation in curriculum design, and promotes the integration of knowledge. Students showed notable improvements in learning through "pop-ups learning," where spontaneous, real-time learning opportunities arose. The assessment practices used during *PhBL Week* further supported cross-disciplinary learning and encouraged self-assessment, contributing to the holistic development of the students.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by providing insights into implementing PhBL in Finnish schools. It demonstrates PhBL's effectiveness in facilitating interdisciplinary learning and developing 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. The findings offer valuable implications for educators and policymakers seeking to integrate PhBL into educational systems worldwide.

Keywords: Finland education, phenomenon-based learning, curriculum integration, inquiry-based learning, pop-ups learning.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Student Teacher Literacy Practices: A Cross-Country Examination of Writing and Attitudes

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This study aims to explore the literacy practices and attitudes of student teachers in their first semester of teacher education. The research seeks to understand how student teachers approach writing or broader literacy tasks, and how their attitudes toward these practices might differ across educational contexts. A questionnaire-based method was employed, using the WASP (Writing Attitude Survey for Teachers and Pupils) alongside additional items designed to capture attitudes toward reading and writing. The sample includes participants from multiple universities, with potential cross-country collaboration, including institutions in Sweden, Belgium, and Türkiye, ensuring a diverse representation of student teacher profiles.

Factor analysis will be conducted to identify underlying patterns and profiles of literacy attitudes and practices, aiming to create a nuanced understanding of student teachers' approaches. By keeping the methodological scope focused, this study will initially concentrate on writing, with the option to expand into broader literacy practices (including reading) in subsequent stages of the research. It is anticipated that the factor analysis will reveal distinct profiles of student teachers based on their literacy attitudes and practices in each country. These profiles may indicate varying levels of confidence, engagement, and self-efficacy in writing, with some student teachers displaying more positive attitudes toward literacy practices than others.

This study offers valuable insights that can inform teacher education programs in diverse contexts in Europe. By investigating the literacy attitudes and practices of student teachers, the findings provide a framework that could be adapted and applied to similar programs in universities worldwide, contributing to the broader discussion of literacy education in diverse educational contexts. This study is a first step toward building a comparative framework for understanding the literacy development of student teachers in various educational systems.

## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Methods for Reproducing Literary Content: Pedagogical Insights from Classrooms with Young Literacy Learners

Catarina Schmidt

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Students' encounters and in-depth engagements with literature, facilitated through early literacy education and beyond, provide a crucial foundation for developing the ability to read, understand, and think deeply. However, previous research indicates that interactions and conversations based on children's literature are not commonly employed teaching strategies in Swedish preschools (e.g. Alatalo & Westlund, 2021) and primary school classrooms (Damber et al., 2011; Ewald, 2007; Schmidt, 2013).

Based on a balanced literacy approach, this study focuses on young students' opportunities to learn about sounds, letters, and vocabulary in meaningful settings while simultaneously exploring literary content (Schmidt & Hvit Lindstrand, 2022). Building on a practice-oriented research project conducted at two multilingual primary schools, this presentation examines an intervention investigating the potential of teachers' interactive read-alouds of the picture book *Pudlar och Pommies* (Lindenbaum, 2016). The aim is to contribute pedagogical knowledge regarding 6-7-year-old students' opportunities to reproduce narrative literary content.

The research questions explore how the teaching involved the students in such activities and how individual students approached the task of orally retelling the entire story. Inspired by design-based research, the teachers received theoretically grounded pedagogical suggestions based on Langer's (2011) framework for envisioning, which they adapted and developed in their classroom contexts.

The analysis of teachers' (n=10) documented teaching activities and reflections, along with individual student interviews (n=8), reveals the potential for win-win situations where practices of emergent reading and writing, exploration and experiencing literary content, and retelling can be integrated into meaningful classroom contexts. Furthermore, vocabulary learning occurs in immediate moments of reading, through teachers' planned stops and explanations of words connected to the written and visual content.

Lastly, the results highlight that the ability to retell needs to be practiced repeatedly and that visual illustrations provide significant support for the students. The ability to retell and relate textual content to personal experiences is emphasized in the steering documents to achieve comprehension (National Agency for Education, 2022). Hence, the results illuminate classroom pedagogies on how to proceed with this and why.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Creating Democratic, Dialogic Space in L1 Classrooms

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“There's all the difference in the world between having something to say, and having to say something,” Dewey wrote already in 1900 (p.67). Dewey pointed at the fact that in traditional schools, children and young people were not addressed as if they had something to say, that is something that they cherished and found of great importance. Instead, in these schools, pupils were expected to deliver the answers that the school system (via teachers) acknowledged as correct. In this paper, we report overall results from a Research-Practice-Partnership (RPP) project, *Partners in Practice*, where researchers and teachers aimed at creating democratic, dialogic space, where L1 students (grade 6-8) were addressed as subjects having something to say about literature. We will discuss the results with reference to Dewey's understanding of democracy and learning as realized in communicative practices (1916) combined with Bakhtin's concepts of eventness and addressivity (1986) as key features of dialogue.

The project involved two groups of teachers: First, a group of three primary school teachers (Year 6/7, 2021-22), and then 5 lower secondary school teachers (Year 8/9, 2023-24). The same pre-planned progression was applied: We started out focusing on first-hand experience (Dewey, 1903) of “the text as a problem” in the seminars, based on the assumption that we shouldn't expect teachers to be familiar with this kind of experience. Further, teachers organized student group conversations in the classrooms where the text was introduced as an open-ended problem for them to explore. Recordings of student conversations were further transcribed and discussed in seminars. In the last part of the RPP focus shifted towards the role of the teacher in whole class conversation, typically following up the group activity. Data consists of transcribed recordings of seminars and classroom activities along with fieldnotes and text material.

Looking back we can see a process towards increased ownership to key ideas on the hands of the teachers (Hultin et al, coming), and also moments of inspiring student engagement (Sønneland, 2019). Experiences from upper secondary school is still being processed, but overall there was a shared sense of setting things in motion, and perhaps, most importantly, a sense of the partnership as a safe and genuine dialogic space where there is room for tensions and for both trial and errors.

Sadly, Dewey's words are still highly relevant. Today, our schools seem torn between new liberal economic principles calling for systematic control (where students should come up with correct answers), and policy documents worshipping key concepts from progressive education (where students should have the freedom to express their own opinions and judgments), which demands a minimum of productive uncertainty (cf. Biesta, 2013) and a kind of addressivity rooted in the depth of the philosophies of Bakhtin and Dewey. RPP seems to us a place – or a dialogic space – where the deep implications of Dewey's philosophy of education might take root and grow.



## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

Literary art intervention supporting expressive language and social-emotional skills

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Literary art intervention supporting expressive language and social-emotional skills

Reading enables children to put themselves in the shoes of others and understand their own experiences more deeply. However, some children may miss out on opportunities to learn these valuable social-emotional skills through books due to difficulties in reading and learning. Creative and collaborative reading methods, such as literary art, can offer students with special educational needs opportunities to practice social-emotional and language skills. Literary art refers to methods for interpreting literature, for example, through creative writing (FINAE 2014). According to Aerila & Rönkkö (2015), literary art practices engage students in reading and expressing themselves in literacy instruction. This study investigates the impact of literary art intervention on the expressive language skills and socio-emotional skills of 8–10-year-old students with special educational needs. The theoretical basis of the intervention is the simultaneous learning of language and socio-emotional skills: strong language skills are associated with successful social functioning (Durkin & Conti-Ramsden 2007).

The intervention runs in autumn 2024 in three special educational groups consisting of 15 picture book-based literary art lessons. In each lesson, a book containing social and emotional themes is read. The book's themes are used as a basis for literary art activities such as writing, storytelling, or illustration.

Students' pragmatic language comprehension, narrative skills, socio-emotional competence, and reading motivation will be tested before and after the intervention. During the intervention, students fill in a questionnaire to assess their perceptions of the lessons' themes. In addition, a field diary is kept of the students' outputs in the lessons. The data will be analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Based on experiences so far, literary art intervention seems to be well suited to the training of expressive language skills and socio-emotional skills. Similar results have been obtained in studies using children's books to support the learning of socio-emotional skills (Daunic et. al 2023). It also appears that the current intervention may improve students' narrative and writing skills and students' motivation for reading and writing.

Picture book-based literary art activities may increase accessibility for books and reading for students, who are at risk of being excluded from literary culture. In addition, these methods could enable students to have experiences of success in literacy instruction, which is valuable for their development as readers.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Primary School students' individual reading of Children's Literature

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This study examines the role of eight-year-old students' individual reading of children's literature within contemporary digital classrooms in Sweden. The aim is to contribute pedagogical insights into teachers' perspectives and practices in designing individual reading activities for students. RQ1 investigates classroom situations, specifically the activities and literary resources utilized. RQ2 explores observable student actions during individual reading, and RQ3 examines teachers' stated motivations for their instructional approaches. The study is grounded in both cognitive and sociocultural frameworks of reading, addressing word decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Langer, 2017) as well as reading engagement (Gambrell, 2011). The study observed individual reading sessions (n=8) conducted by four teachers, followed by semi-structured interviews with each teacher (n=4). Initially, classroom observations were analyzed for patterns in teaching activities and available literary resources across the whole class and in relation to two individual student actions in each classroom (RQ1+RQ2). In the second phase, these activities and student actions were examined in relation to scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Lastly, teachers' perspectives were analyzed through qualitative content analysis (RQ3). Preliminary findings indicate that students were frequently given choices about how to engage with literature and through which medium. The choices made suggest a predominant pattern of audio narration via e-books with headphones during individual reading, with independent decoding activities—whether through e-books or print—rarely observed and minimally scaffolded. Additionally, the e-book platform provides access to an extensive selection of children's literature, which often leads students to browse and switch between texts without completing them. Teachers cited the motivation for incorporating audio-based reading as a way to support comprehension and ensure accessibility for all students, regardless of decoding skill. Observations and teachers' comments reflect a skills-focused approach to reading instruction, with limited discussion of literary content or connection to individual students' interests. Overall, the results underscore the importance of teachers' intentional pedagogical decisions when designing individual reading practices in contemporary classrooms.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Disciplinary teachers' perspectives on Academic Literacies: A Key Competence for a Pedagogy of Hope

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Since the 1990s, the number of students at Swedish higher education institutions has doubled. Nowadays roughly every third person in an age cohort studies at higher education (Brommesson et al., 2024). Thus, Higher Education institutions in Sweden have taken an inclusive perspective and worked on widened participation, sustainable development, and increased accessibility to university studies (UHR 2022:8). Despite these efforts towards inclusivity, a common (mis)conception remains: That students lack language skills (e.g., language proficiency, writing skills) and that referring students to writing centres is the solution. However, research (e.g., Blåsjö, 2004; Barton, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Wingate, 2012; Catell, 2013; Solheim et al. 2022) shows that integrating literacy efforts within disciplines is a more effective way to scaffold student learning.

In this paper we explore the changing views of university teachers scaffolding academic literacy. The aim is to discuss how strategies to integrate academic literacies in the discipline (e.g., modelling) can contribute to the development of disciplinary content knowledge. The study rests on Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis, 2003; Lea, 2004; Eklund Heinonen et al., 2018) as its theoretical framework. The data consists of video-recorded ethnographic interviews with two lecturers in an undergraduate programme in the Social Sciences; text analysis of, e.g. assignment instructions, feedback provided by lecturers, and samples of student writing; and workshop-style sessions where the informants were given opportunities to explore hands-on strategies to scaffold the development of their students' academic literacy. The preliminary findings show a change from a discourse of deficit and a remedial approach to integrating academic literacy in the discipline. More specifically, the findings illustrate the lecturers' transformation views in relation to:

1. The students' needs: From basic proficiency to disciplinary practices.
2. The lecturers' own abilities: From outsourcing to collaboration.
3. Teaching practices: Modelling, strategy use, and formative feedback emerge as useful scaffolding tools.
4. The role of writing in the development of content knowledge.

This study highlights the benefits of a collaboration between researchers at a writing centre and subject lecturers. Our study is relevant to Nordic educational research in that the number of university students is steadily increasing all over the Nordic countries. Many students without an academic background make higher literacy demands on the teachers and contribute to making the teaching and learning situation more complex. Literacy and learning are the basis for success in almost all aspects of studies in higher education and future professional life.

## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Teachers' beliefs about teaching beginning readers – a phenomenological study in Swedish primary schools

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Students' reading competence and reading motivation are frequently discussed. It has been suggested that the main factor influencing reading outcomes, surpassing other factors such as available methods or standards for teaching, is teachers' practices (Damber et al., 2012; Snow & Juel, 2005), shaped by prior experiences and beliefs (Buehl & Beck, 2014). In the Nordic countries, it is the teachers, with colleagues or by themselves, who choose methods for reading instruction (Hagtvét, 2017). A systematic literature review conducted within this doctoral project shows that teachers, independently of their educational environment, share a dedication to ensuring students' success, relying on their own beliefs about students' needs (Cuevas, 2020; Sandberg & Norling, 2020).

This presentation is based on an ongoing study that aims to contribute knowledge about the complexity of teaching beginning readers by exploring how "first-teachers" express their beliefs related to their daily practice in the first grades in primary school. The study is based on theories about how teachers' beliefs shape actions and teaching (Fives & Buehl, 2012). A phenomenological perspective is used throughout the project, to describe teachers' tacit knowledge (Bengtsson, 1998) and to allow teachers to reflect on their beliefs.

The empirical material in this study is gathered through semi-structured interviews with nine first-teachers working in Grades 1-3 in three different municipalities and nine primary schools. The teachers' stories about their daily practices are processed by an interpretative phenomenological analysis, to capture the broad range of beliefs among teachers.

Preliminary findings indicate various beliefs among teachers about for example reading development, pedagogy, and student motivation. Findings also indicate the impact of personal interpretations about the role of the teacher.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Assessing Computational Literacy in Language Education: A Nordic Perspective on Pedagogy Sustainable Literacy Practices

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In this presentation connects to the literacy research network. We wish to address the assessment of computational literacy (CL) in first language (L1) education (Hachmann & Slot, 2024), emphasising how computational approaches in language learning can create opportunities for creativity, inclusion, and sustainability in education in Nordic contexts. The central aim of our work is to develop assessment frameworks that situate computational skills within broader pedagogical goals, supporting democratic and sustainable education. The study we use as an offset reflects on the ongoing Nordic educational reforms to integrate computational literacy and computational thinking (Sundtjønn et al., 2024). We use the study as an offset to discussions on sustainable educational practices and underscore computational practices' potential for learning within the Nordic context.

Our research draws on computational literacy (diSessa, 2001; Hachmann, 2024), which integrates cognitive, social, and material aspects of learning within specific subject domains. Building on Papert's (1980) vision of computers as tools for engaging with "powerful ideas", we critique the computational thinking framework and the idea of the application of generic cognitive skills across disciplines (Wing, 2011), advocating for a literacy-based, context-specific approach to CL. DiSessa's ecological model frames CL as way to develop explorative, critical and creative engagement, reflecting Nordic values of democratic, contextually grounded education.

Using a design-based research approach, the study employs data from three design interventions in Danish primary schools. These interventions involved collaborative, creative projects where students engaged in computational tasks using digital and tangible tools, such as Twine and custom-designed wooden artefacts. Assessment data include observational records, student interviews, and digital artefacts, with formative assessment criteria informed by Jølle and Skar's (2021) model, aligning CL assessment with Nordic priorities on dialogic, democratic learning.

Our results contribute with suggestions of principles for CL integration in L1 fronting students' interdisciplinary skills, empathy, and critical awareness. Students demonstrated increased competency in navigating complex texts and computational tasks, with material and cognitive tools promoting inclusivity and sustainability in learning. Collaborative storytelling in Twine, for example, revealed how computational tools encourage interdisciplinary thinking and bridge language arts with computational methods.

## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

What kind of picture do Finnish primary school textbooks paint of science and scientists?

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The nature of science (NOS) is widely recognized as a critical component of scientific literacy, as it provides students with insight into how knowledge about their world has come about, how that knowledge is continuously developing, and broadens their view of scientists to include themselves. This fosters not only critical thinking and a deeper understanding of scientific content but also increases students' interest in science-related studies and careers (Michel & Neumann, 2016; Osborne et al., 2003; Sjøberg, 2010). Despite its significance, NOS is often underrepresented in primary education due to the lack of formal training among teachers and their reliance on textbooks that frequently omit explicit NOS instruction (Cofré et al., 2019; Karaman, 2017).

This study examines how NOS is incorporated into two textbook series (N=24) commonly used in primary schools (grades 1 to 6) in Finland. The analysis focuses on three core aspects of NOS: 1) the tools and products of science, 2) the human elements of science, and 3) the boundaries and limitations of scientific knowledge. Preliminary findings indicate that many of the textbooks inadequately cover these areas, highlighting the need for both improved instructional materials and teacher education that explicitly address NOS to better equip teachers to integrate these concepts into their teaching practices.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Socio-academic listening in Systematised Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (SYKL) in Danish L1

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#### 1. Research topic

Conversation dominates teaching, yet orality – including listening comprehension – remains underexplored (Holmberg et al., 2019). Its didactics are often unsystematic (Adelmann, 2012; Høegh, 2018; Otnes, 1997), especially when students work independently in pairs or groups. Systematised Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (Danish abbreviation: SYKL) offers potential for enhancing listening comprehension in schools. In SYKL, students work in pairs on academic tasks, alternating roles between tutor and tutee, with pairings based on social as well as academic criteria to foster socio-academic participation (Schmidt & Thygesen, 2024). This presentation explores the implementation of SYKL in Danish L1 for grade 4 students (ages 10-11), examining their listening skills and strategies (Adelmann, 2012; Høegh, 2018) during SYKL sessions and how listening comprehension (Adelmann, 2012) can be scaffolded.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Design and analysis are primarily informed by research on peer tutoring (Schmidt & Thygesen, 2024), scaffolding (Sutherland, 2015), and listening as an interactional (Adelmann, 2012) and interpersonal (Otnes, 1997) activity, including non-verbal features like body language, gazes, and gestures (Høegh, 2018).

#### 3. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research design to analyse video-recorded SYKL sessions in four grade 4 classes, encompassing 12 Danish-L1 lessons. Selected dialogues are examined through embodied interaction analysis (Streeck et al., 2011), focusing on students' socio-academic listening skills and strategies. Additionally, focus group interviews with students, teachers, and advisors provide deeper insights.

#### 4. Expected findings

Preliminary findings indicate that students' socio-academic listening strategies and comprehension can be enhanced within the SYKL framework, especially when dialogues are scaffolded through careful pairing, task design (Author, 2024), and systematic use of metacommunication and conversational ground-rules (cf. Sutherland, 2015). Furthermore, engaging in SYKL dialogues allows students to express and share their curiosity, frustrations, and potential solutions in pairs, which over time can improve their oral participation in class discussions.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

By focusing on listening strategies in SYKL, the presentation contributes to research on orality and peer tutoring, enhancing the quality of pair work in schools. The study offers insights into how more students can actively participate in Nordic classrooms, where collaboration and dialogue are fundamental.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Exploring secondary student self-perceptions as online readers: Insights from a classroom intervention

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As texts increasingly transition to digital platforms, reading skills must now encompass multimodal interpretation, hyperlink navigation, information management and strategies to combat distractions (Lim et al., 2022). Additionally, online readers face the challenge of critically evaluating content created by users and influenced by algorithms and AI (Kalantzis & Cope, 2024). Schools play a crucial role in preparing students to meet these demands. This study investigates how 14-15-year-old Swedish students perceive their online reading skills before, during, and after a structured classroom intervention. It aims to explore how targeted lessons can enhance students' ability to comprehend and critically evaluate complex digital texts.

The study is grounded in theories of multiliteracies and multimodality (New London Group, 2000; Jewitt et al., 2016). Explicit teaching frameworks (Almqvist, 2015) also informed the intervention, focusing on scaffolding students' critical awareness of online content construction, multimodal elements, and evaluation strategies.

A design-based research approach (McKenney & Reeves, 2014) was employed to collaboratively develop and refine three lessons with two teachers and one researcher. These lessons were carried out in two classes across two Swedish urban schools, including 45 students. The intervention aimed to increase students' awareness of online texts' complex structures while fostering critical evaluation skills. Data were collected through focus group interviews and student exit tickets, capturing students' self-perceptions as online readers across three stages: pre-intervention, during the intervention, and post-intervention.

Findings reveal that students initially generally considered themselves proficient online readers, particularly in navigating digital spaces. However, they struggled with critically evaluating content and fully understanding the layered complexity of multimodal and hyperlinked texts. Post-intervention reflections highlighted a newfound awareness of how images, videos, and hyperlinks contribute to meaning making. Students also recognized the importance of slowing down their reading to capture textual nuances and critically analyze multiple perspectives within similar content.

The study underscores that structured; reflective teaching practices can effectively enhance students' online reading skills. Students became more attuned to the unique demands of digital texts, including potential biases in user-generated content. By offering insights into pedagogical strategies for fostering digital literacy, this study contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing the need for knowledge on how education can support students in highly digitalized societies to become more advanced users of online texts.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Primary School Students' Interpretation of a Narrative Character in the Context of Grief

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This presentation builds on a larger practice-oriented project investigating the potential of teachers' interactive read-aloud sessions of picture books with primary school students. Specifically, we focus on one intervention involving 6-10-year-old students' interpretations of the owl character in the picture book *Blue Owl* (Geffenblad, 2023).

Students' opportunities to interpret literature are crucial, as such classroom situations can support positive reading experiences. For example, literary interpretation can lead to students identifying with characters and encountering unfamiliar living conditions (e.g., Langer, 2011; Nussbaum, 2010). Interpreting as relating, as suggested by Felski (2020), emphasizes students' engagement in interpretative processes - processes of will and intent closely connected to the literary content. Theoretically, the study draws on the concept of iconotext (Hallberg, 1982, 2002; Nikolajeva, 2000) and its potential for interpretative processes (Felski, 2020; Langer, 2011; Solstad, 2015). Additionally, the study is grounded in Cummins' (2001) perspectives on comprehensible input and active language learning, which involve understanding literary content.

The study was conducted at two Swedish multilingual primary schools from 2020 to 2024. The aim is to contribute pedagogical knowledge regarding young students' opportunities to interpret and understand iconotexts within picture books. The research questions explore how students interpret the owl character, considering that the main character's friend suddenly dies at the beginning of the story. Based on Langer's (2011) framework for envisioning, teachers received theoretically grounded pedagogical suggestions, which they adapted and developed in their classroom contexts (n=12). In online logbooks, teachers documented teaching activities, including students' drawings, writings, and classroom discussions.

The analysis reveals that the six-year-old students initially interpreted the owl character as either a potential friend or as frightening. Gradually these interpretations evolved towards the idea that the owl might be a transformation of the deceased friend. Older students made more explicit interpretations regarding the theme of sorrow and the symbolic meaning of the blue owl. This does not imply that younger students did not achieve in-depth interpretations; rather, they may have fulfilled the task differently.

The results highlight children's ability to interpret written text, images and symbols, and the role of conscious pedagogical choices, facilitating this. Emphasizing a picture book is significant when interpreting with the goal of reading comprehension, and when learning to read and write in Nordic classrooms.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Formulating questions in the AI-enriched writing process of high school students

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In recent years, AI and students' digital agency has emerged as a relevant issue in education. However, empirical research on the use of AI in education is scarce, especially in the field of learning in interaction. So far, research has been conducted mainly from a technical perspective, for example to develop feedback generated by language models (Meyer et al., 2024) or to identify the potential of AI in different stages of the writing process (Levine et al., 2024; Kangasharju et al., 2022). In this study, we explore the use of digital tools from the perspective of social interaction.

The theoretical and methodological framework of the study is multimodal conversation analysis (e.g. Mondada 2016). The data consist of group work sessions video-recorded with 2-3 cameras in a Finnish upper secondary school in spring 2024. Students are working on their first draft of the essay on the basis of teacher feedback. In group work sessions, they use the Copilot conversational bot in discussing how to further develop their texts. The aim of the study is to investigate how students orient themselves towards the use of AI chatbot as a tool in writing process and how students' embodied and linguistic actions sequentially intertwine with chatbot conversation. The analysis focuses on episodes, in which students collaboratively formulate questions for the chatbot. The research provides new insights into emerging writing processes in digitally rich learning environments (e.g. Juvonen et al. 2019; Musk 2022) and contributes to research on literacy, specifically writing in interaction. The research is a relevant additional contribution to the Nordic educational forerunner research on digital learning environments.

Three forms of orientation towards AI have been identified in the research data: negotiating the task (e.g. formulation of questions), receiving information/responses to the conversational bot, and commenting on and evaluating the bot's actions (e.g. epistemic negotiation). The analysis reveals the ways in which the question formulation is co-constructed and negotiated during group work, how questions are related to the teacher feedback, and how the bot activities affect the reformulation of questions. The study provides insights into the effective feedback on writing and the potential of digital tools in the writing process.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

### Reading and Discussing Texts – Teachers Reflecting

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This study is based on theories of reading development and discusses reading and literature discussions as support for the development of students' knowledge language. The knowledge language involves expanding students' everyday language to a more general academic language and to the specific language that carries the knowledge content of different subjects. The aim of the study was to investigate and describe teachers' reflections on literature discussions in multilingual classrooms. Based on literature discussions prepared and conducted by the researcher, teachers reflected on how student groups worked with the literature, in this case, a picture book. To interpret and analyze the teachers' reflections, a thematic analysis was conducted where the material was analyzed inductively with a focus on identifying what the teachers noticed and highlighted in the situations when the literature discussions were conducted. Four overarching categories based on the teachers' reflections emerge from the material. Literature discussions, especially those based on picture books, were found to contribute to deeper understanding and engagement, where students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds found meaningful ways to express and reflect on their thoughts. The teachers' reflections point to the importance of creating an inclusive discussion environment and using authentic texts that challenge students' critical thinking. The results illustrate the process of literature discussions and reflections on these and point to the need for teachers' professional development in the area. Opportunities for teachers to observe learning situations together with researchers and engage in dialogue about learning processes can create a form of professional support and learning, which in turn can have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and thereby students' learning. The material in the study highlights to some extent teachers' need for opportunities for this type of joint reflection to develop in their profession. The study is relevant to Nordic educational research as we observe increasing differences in students' reading comprehension abilities and linguistic diversity in our schools.

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## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

Creative literacy to enhance children and young people at risk

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The WHO-UNICEF-Lancet commission[1], led by Clarke, stated that despite dramatic improvement, children of today face a future placing them at risk for physical and psychological risk. They are exposed for climate change, ecological degradation, displacement, violence, harmful marketing and growing inequality. To ensure “the children’s rights to survive, thrive, and participate with no exposure to discrimination and best interest at heart...” the expert commission call for coalition across sectors to overcome the challenges and invest in children’s health and education. The report advocates a holistic strategy to enhance right and wellbeing for children. This calls for a just education system that contribute with knowledge for the children future independence and manageability, and furthermore to learn how to create new solution to meet new challenges. The education system globally main learning objectives are the five UNESCO literacy concepts: the ability to read, write, count, communicate, and use digital tool. These gives capacity to grow competence and skills to manage the world as it is. However, it lacks enhancement of creativity. To meet new challenges and identify new solutions, the ability to create is important. It is necessary to include critical thinking, claimed in the UNESCO Courier[2].

Therefor I will explore creative literacy as an additional objective for the education system. Creative literacy, also including cultural literacy, provide skills to rebuild relationships between the individual, technology, and nature, and enable the children to contribute to change. Creative literacy can enhance the education systems respond to diversity, and provide pathway to pedagogic strategies that is democratizing, and prohibit marginalization.

The research topic in this presentation is the possibility of creative literacy in formal and informal education to create hope for children and young people at risk. The theoretical framework is the concept creative literacy outlined by Antonio Leal[3]. He demonstration of pedagogic strategies that does not give ready-made methods, but open for dialogue and reflection to enhance critical thinking. This concept contributes with a perceptive that can facilitate a pedagogic of hope, that enhance gratitude, diversity and Sustainability in Education. The methodological is theoretical and the discussion is based on reviews and concept analyses. Expected results is the ability to address how creative literacy might give pedagogic strategies to facilitate transformative education and provide a pathway to pedagogic that enhance critical thinking through the creative literacy. Children and young people in the arctic face challenges of rurality, rapidly environment changes, putting their wellbeing at risk. This calls for pedagogic strategies that enhance critical thinking and creative literacy. On these grounds this is highly relevance to Nordic educational research.

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# Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Troubling the (neo-liberal) human in physical education

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The Swedish educational system rests on the ethics of Western humanism (SNAE, 2011; 2022), which places humans at the center (Clarke & Mcphie, 2016). However, scholars from different disciplines have argued that centering humans too much effectively silences other bodies upon which we depend, and thereby contributes to the precarious state of the world. Subsequently, there is a call for troubling the human and its position as an ethical strive for a more just world (e.g., Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016; Kahn, 2010; Goga et al., 2023; Sanders, 2019; Wall Kimmerer, 2020)

In this presentation, I will inquire into the human in Swedish physical education. Following Karen Barad's ethico-onto-epistemological framework of agential realism, I posit that relations are at the core of the world's becoming, and that all we perceive as individual entities, including humans, are entangled through material-discursive phenomena (Barad, 2007). Aided by empirical material from my ongoing PhD-project, I will show how the (neo-liberal) rational individual human subject is both performed and troubled in physical education practice, and I will discuss the ethical implications of reconceptualizing the human as a material-discursive phenomenon. I thereby address a gap in research on physical education concerning the material-discursive dimensions of the human (for notable exceptions see Andersson et al., 2022; Engdahl & Ceder, 2023).

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

### Labourfication and populism – a threat to the democracy-education nexus in education

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#### Introduction

Education has in the last decades been ‘infected’ by neoliberal labour market policy and populism that break it down from within. This makes it difficult for educators to provide ‘free time’ for students to take part in and engage with the world in free, pluralistic and democratic ways released from the dominance of productive time and economic logics (Säfström, 2023). That said, education in Denmark has been narrowed down by populist policy discourses to be about labour market training and preparation, which contradict the democracy-education nexus that (still) is a vital purpose for education (Rüsselbæk Hansen, 2024).

#### Theoretical framework.

Inspired by psychoanalytical theory and concepts such as the object-cause of desire, lack, fantasies and the Big (neoliberal) Other (Ruti, 2012; Žižek), we argue that if educators desire to live up to what they think and imagine this Other wants from them, it can capture their attention in ‘meaningless’ and non-educational ways that can create frustration, despair and anxiety as well as make it difficult to act as public intellectuals in favor of the democracy-education nexus in education (Bøje, 2023 et. al). To analyze how this takes place, we also draw on discourse theory. More specifically, Laclau’s (2005) theory on populism in western democracies.

#### Methodology

We take point of departure in a series of reforms, which are currently transforming the Danish educational system, among others a reform of upper secondary school attempting to increase the number of students opting for vocational programs. Based on our analysis of these reforms, we argue how a *populist* discourse – what may be called ‘neoliberal workerism’ – is framing these reforms with various consequences for the democracy-education nexus.

#### Conclusion

If the democracy-education nexus should not vanish as ‘romantic’ ideal, it is of vital importance for education, including educators, to reclaim agency as public intellectuals who are willing to critical confront labour market and populist policy infections that are a serious threat to the existence of this nexus.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper contributes to educational research in the Nordic region by analysing how neoliberal policies are increasingly ‘sold’ through labourist articulations envisaging the folk.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

What's Love got to do with it? Thinking Democracy in Early Childhood Curriculum with Hannah Arendt

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This essay explores how Hannah Arendt's (1958) view of education as love for the child and for the world can contribute to refreshed perspectives of contemporary democratic education. In recent decades, the task of contemporary early childhood education (ECE) has gradually moved towards an enhanced focus on individual learning and freedom of choice, closely intertwined with an image of the child as an active participant with rights (Sjöstrand Öhrfelt 2019). The increased emphasis on subject knowledge, measurable achievements and competition, mainly driven by a neoliberal agenda, is seen to affect and possibly reduce the role of care and democracy within education (Moss 2017). Arendt's views on education as love offer a thought-provoking mirror to the changed landscapes of early childhood education. She was critical of the emancipation of children and claimed that, as newcomers, children need to be protected from the public political world, and the world from the children. It is the task of education, according to Arendt, to introduce the child and the world to each other.

Using the Swedish ECE as an example in a theoretical conversation between Arendt and Joan Tronto's theory of democratic care (2015), the paper suggests that interdependency and vulnerability need to be acknowledged within contemporary democratic ECE, and that allocation of responsibility continues to be an essential issue within education. Taking responsibility for both the child and the world requires that educators and policy makers acknowledge the fundamental condition of human life: that we need each other in order to act, and the world needs us to act in order for it to survive. In this way, both the world and the newness of the child can be loved and protected, and the common democratic world can become a home for the children of both the present and the future.

The paper contributes with theoretical concepts of love and care as relevant perspectives for both contemporary ECE and democratic education at large. Care as a political, democratic ideal can challenge the view of care as a subordinate part of "early childhood services", and contribute to an awareness of care as important for all education. The view of education as love offers an important statement regarding the children's ownership of rights; it should not remove the asymmetry of responsibility between adults and children. The notion of love also offers alternatives for an instrumental, technical and economic language, as it challenges the adults to acknowledge an uncertainty regarding the future of the world, and their responsibility to bear it.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Pedagogical interventions are not interventions

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In educational sciences, we use pedagogical interventions to generate knowledge about the effectiveness of pedagogical practices. In a short and simplified form, we wish to gather causal evidence in the form of 'X affects Y in context Z,' when X is an intervention, Y is the supposed causal effect of intervention X, and Z is the context in which intervention X is conducted.

In this presentation, I argue that pedagogical interventions (including randomized controlled trials, RCTs) are technically not interventions, or they are, at most, what are called 'soft interventions' in causal modeling literature (cf. Kvernbekk, 2016, p.87). I explore the implications of this claim for empirical research in educational sciences and argue that we should give less value to RCTs and more value to natural experiments and observational studies, given that we analyze the results from these using structural causal models (SCMs) and directed acyclic graphs (DAGs).

I base my argument on Judea Pearl's (2009) and James Woodward's (2003) formal definitions of interventions and recent empirical research on causal modeling pedagogical interventions (Mikkola et al., 2024). Pearl and Woodward both subscribe to the interventionist theory of causation and approach causation and causal inference using causal graphs (i.e., DAGs) and structural equations, which together comprise structural causal models (SCMs) in Pearl's (2009) mathematical framework. Some philosophers of science regard this approach as the most refined general approach to causal inference (e.g., Kuorikoski, 2018). In terms of methodology, my work follows Woodward's (2023) pragmatist approach to philosophy of science and methodological research, focusing on how causal claims function within the context of educational research.

The relevance of my topic is as follows: Assuming my argument holds, the current practices of evidence-based education and empirical research on pedagogical practices are misguided in their hierarchies of evidence and desired research methods. This is relevant for Nordic educationalists, as well as educationalists in general.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Heidegger's hermeneutics and qualitative research in educational science

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### 1. Research topic/aim

Applying Heidegger's hermeneutics to educational qualitative research keeping in mind the Nordic context of philosophical and educational discussions.

### 2. Theoretical framework

Hermeneutics in Heidegger's philosophy refers to a philosophical understanding of *Dasein*. Understanding and interpreting are *existentiales* (ways of being in the world) of *Dasein*. Interpretation is always together with understanding. In understanding, beings are seen in the world as "something" (*als etwas*), and the interpretation explains this "something precisely". Thus, hermeneutics is not a method for Heidegger, but the content of philosophy. Interpretation is grounded on three factors that are in advance and are already understood in advance in one way or another. These three factors are: 1) something we have in advance -- fore-having (*Vorhabe*), 2) something we see in advance -- fore-sight (*Vorsicht*), and 3) something we grasp in advance -- fore-conception (*Vorgriff*). These three interpret Something as "something". Something is always seen as something, and it is not the case that one first has a pure perception without preconceptions and then interprets it as something and understands it. Understanding and interpretation presuppose each other in a circle.

According to Heidegger's notion of a hermeneutic circle, the truth (as *uncovering*) is discovered within the occurrence and happening of research. As an example, Heidegger refers to the laws of Newton, which were neither true nor false before Newton discovered them. Through the laws of Newton, the world is uncovered in terms of Newton's laws. In other words, truth happened as *uncoveredness*. If Newton's laws are someday refuted or forgotten, for example, because humankind has vanished, the laws of Newton will no longer be true in the sense that the world would no longer be uncovered in this way.

It is in the nature of qualitative research that the researcher does not start from a blank (*tabula rasa*) horizon, with no preconceptions about what he or she is studying. Qualitative researchers "fore-have" something, and have some fore-sight and fore-conception. Having these pre-abilities researchers move forward in the hermeneutical circle where truth uncovers itself. In our presentation, we will open up these arguments with examples.

### 3. Methodology/research design

Research is philosophical within the framework that combines Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Habermas critical hermeneutics in a manner that philosopher Gianni Vattimo has done (*Verwindung*; "weak thought").

### 4. Expected results/findings

We do not yet know the results or conclusions of our philosophical research, but we are in the hermeneutic circle. We have a fore-sight (*Vorsicht*) that Heidegger's hermeneutics has a significant contribution to make to the methodology of qualitative research.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

In particular, Nordic educationalists have done excellent methodological research by applying phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics to qualitative research. The authors of this paper wish to contribute to this very tradition by bringing in the somewhat less-used philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Further adventures of Sisyphus: broadening the scope for freedom and joy in the academy

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This presentation offers hope to those who have languished in ‘those waterless deserts where thought reaches its confines’ (Camus 2013: 9). It is surely not too far-fetched to suggest that this applies to almost all those who work and study in universities. The dialogic mode of delivery foregrounds *companionship*, *passion*, *solidarity* and *generosity*, while demonstrating a flair for revolt and a dash of absurdity. Therein lies our method, not our madness.

Drawing upon a range of conceptual resources, and speaking across lines of difference, we address the following question. How can academics find the courage to stay in the desert, ‘to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions’ (Camus 2013: 10)? The distinction between freedom as a *principle* and freedom as a *practice* (Snyder 2024: xvi) seems relevant in an institutional environment increasingly dominated by mechanisms of surveillance and control. In addressing the question above, we shall explore the connections between the *forms* of freedom that unite principle and practice and ‘create a world where people act on the basis of values’ (ibid. xv).

The discourse relating to academic freedom tends to relate to principles rather than practice: academic freedom is under threat and must be defended at all costs (even if this involves much shouting into the darkness). It is often viewed in highly reductive terms, e.g. as the freedom to give offence. Freedom as *practice*, as a way of being in the world with and for others, is relatively unexplored (Pirrie and Manum 2024). We suggest that the reason for this is related to the intellectual and institutional climate in which so many of us ‘operate’, which obliges us to ignore the fact that the world is not constituted as a unity, and that what we touch often resists us. The prevailing expectation in an increasingly risk-averse academic culture is that, to paraphrase Karl Jaspers, we withdraw behind an objective point of view where we are encouraged to merely represent; where neither we nor the existence of others can any longer become an object of inquiry (see Camus, 2013: 9).

The historian Timothy Snyder has been a beacon of hope in dark times. He distinguishes between five forms of freedom, viewed as the connective tissue between freedom as principle and freedom as practice: *sovereignty*, the learned capacity to make choices; *unpredictability*, the power to mix ‘chosen virtues with the world outside to make something new’; *mobility*, ‘the capacity to move through space and time following values’; *factuality*, ‘the grip on the world that allows us to change it’, and *solidarity*, the recognition that freedom is a collective phenomenon. This suggests that we need to ‘de-occupy’ our minds from the idea that I am the one who supervises and you are the one who studies, say.

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Addressing Generative AI transformations in higher education through critical thinking: Insights from Bildung and bell hooks' education as practice of freedom

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Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is a machine learning framework that generates digital content by using large data sets. Models like ChatGPT are increasingly used in higher education (HE) bringing both benefits and disruptions. Despite optimistic discourses, several critiques arise: low content quality, false objectivity (Farrelly and Baker, 2023) and perpetuation of racism and discrimination (Gašević et al., 2023). As GenAI use in education is still emerging, and regulations are often lacking, more research is needed to understand its impact on teaching and learning in HE.

In times of transformation, Selwyn (2024) emphasizes the need to critically reflect on the different discourses surrounding AI in education. Technological transformations in education create many dilemmas. Schaffar and Beck (2022) point to the need to reflect on university's central role in society and to the liberating role of scientific informed knowledge for both individuals and democratic communities.

To this point, we aim to bridge central thoughts from the Continental tradition of Bildung with bell hooks' theory of education as practice of freedom, as a theoretical and reflective tool that addresses the GenAI transformations in HE. Considering the ongoing influence of Bildung in HE, particularly in Finland and other Nordic countries, and the contemporary misuses and multiple meanings, this concept is sometimes framed as an empty vessel (Horlacher, 2016). We revisit some of Bildung's original theoretical ideas and give them a novel interpretation through the intersections of race, feminism and class manifested in the scholarship of bell hooks.

The concept of Bildung and bell hooks' education as practice of freedom share numerous parallels such as the importance of HE in fostering critical thinking, self-reflection, and innovative problem-solving (hooks, 2009, 2014; Horlacher, 2016). They emphasize the development of judgement as a central aim of education and advocate for community-building by radically questioning current conditions. Interpreting Bildung through the lens of education as practice of freedom may guide HE institutions in making use of GenAI and offer a critical perspective on reimagining HE's role in times of change.

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

A revolt in the seminar room. Or: When philosophy of education migrates to the AI lab

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I here critically explore the art of teaching philosophy of education in the wake of generative AI. As the transformative powers of artificial intelligence are coming to philosophy (Clay & Ontiveros 2023; Liu 2023), I ask: What may be the potential powers and pitfalls of engaging with philosophical studies of education in the times of large language models? Should we expect a significant improvement and refinement of creative and critical thinking, and thus a progress? Or should we rather expect a decline in thought-provoking, explorative, nuanced and authentic engagements, and thereby a weakening of the philosophical studies of education?

In exploring these questions, I engage a Peircean critical reading of the increasing research literature on teaching with generative AI. Focus is on how the research literature conceptualizes the transformative powers of artificial intelligence against what it means to philosophize in the seminar room.

I start by explaining how Peirce's theory of the extended and creative mind moves beyond any dualisms of human-machine or inside-outside distinctions (Aydin 2015; Giannakos et al 2024). Next, I systematically read the current discourse on AI in education (Bond 2024; Chiu 2023; Ogunleye 2024; Peters 2024) to reveal onto-epistemic notions of the human-machine relationship against imaginaries of the art of philosophizing in the wake of generative AI.

I close by discussing the deep challenges of engaging with philosophical studies of education in the times of large language models. On the one hand, to teach philosophy of education today is to invite communal explorations of foundational educational issues, such as the ideas of freedom, democracy, equality and justice, while considering the impact and implications of advanced technologies on these areas of inquiry (Coeckelbergh 2022). On the other hand, to teach philosophy of education is also about adopting a style and mode of teaching that opens for deep engagements by the means of putting philosophy into action, to invite the students to explore actively, pushing boundaries of thought, and refine their understanding. In short, to teach philosophically in times of generative AI is to philosophize *with* and *about* the relationship of philosophy of education to artificial intelligence. However, we are still left with some deep onto-epistemic and ethical challenges. And not least numerous questions about what will happen to the art of philosophizing in the new era.

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

### The Right to Education in Sweden and Finland – A Right to What?

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Homeschooling, which can be defined as “the practice of families choosing to wholly or partly educate their children in settings other than schools” (Myers, 2020, p. 212), is profoundly restricted in Sweden, but to different degrees permitted in all other Nordic countries (Eurydice, 2018). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the very meaning of ‘the right to education’ have come to stand for different things in the different countries, with potential consequences for the relationship between families, schools and the state across the different nations. National configurations of the relation between families, schools, and the state have consequences for individual citizens in each Nordic state.

In this paper we argue that there is a need for clarifying the meaning of education in relation to homeschooling in a Nordic context, that can bring about a more nuanced and precise language to talk about the right to education. We use different philosophical perspectives on education, as well as educational policy on homeschooling in Sweden and Finland to discuss different understandings of the right to education in the Nordics.

Essential for developing a more nuanced and precise language to talk about the right to education is the insight that the right to education can be approached in different ways and is relevant from the perspective of various fields such as law, ethics, and history, as well as political science and sociology among others.

From a pedagogical and philosophy of education perspective, the question of how education should be understood becomes central in the talk about the right to education (see e.g. Dewey’s ‘education as growth’, Peters’ ‘education as initiation’, Illich’s ‘deschooling’, Curren’s ‘initiation into practices that express human flourishing’ and Masschelein’s & Simons’ ‘defence of the school’). Despite this, there has been little discussion of the notion of education underpinning this right. Therefore, a more considerable attention needs to be given not just to the implementation of the right, but also to its conceptualization (McCowan, 2010 & 2012). How can we understand the right to education in relation to pedagogical relations, upbringing, *Bildung*, schooling and learning goals?

On the one hand, education is often considered synonymous with schooling, and it is easy to miss both the complexity of a student’s school experience and a broader understanding of how the concept of education can be understood (McCowan, 2012). In most parts of the world, schools are seen as natural, self-evident and inevitable (Pasterphou, 2014) and in Sweden, public schooling under a national curriculum is compulsory for all children.

On the other hand, education is also often understood as reaching some specified learning goals. In the Finnish context, the obligation to learn means that instead of participating in the teaching organized through official schools, a person can acquire knowledge equivalent to the basic education by, for example, studying at home. This is referred to as “hemundervisning” (“home teaching”) i.e. homeschooling). However, the focus is on learning outcomes and knowledge goals rather than on the pedagogical process itself.

## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

### The educational work of abolition

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In this paper, I will discuss how different practices of abolition can be understood as educational and can inform educational work. The empirical background to this theoretical paper is the increase of viewing the school through a lens of crime in recent years in Sweden. Framing the school in this way is informed by carceral logics and this paper starts from the position that recognizes the problems these logics pose for education. The method I use in this paper is a stereoscopic view of abolition and educational theory. More specifically, I discuss abolitionist pedagogy and abolitionist transformative justice praxis. I view abolitionist practices together with discussions in contemporary educational theory that theorize education through notions of emancipation, subjectification, and becoming. Ultimately, I offer ideas about how abolitionist practices can help us to imagine educational work beyond carceral logics in schools. This paper offers both theoretical and practical implications.

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

### The Social and the Political in Education: Why Philosopher Folk are Key to Mouffe's Agnostic Pluralism

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This paper examines Chantal Mouffe's distinction between the "social" and the "political" as a framework for analyzing education's dual role in contemporary society. Traditionally, education operates within the social sphere, reinforcing established norms and practices. However, it also possesses a political dimension, acting as a space for contestation, reform, and social change. This research aims to investigate how education can balance these dual roles to foster a pluralistic democratic ethos. By examining how education both supports established norms and opens a space for challenging hegemonic ideas, this study engages with Mouffe's theory of agnostic pluralism, underscoring the need to cultivate "philosopher folk" in educational settings- a reinterpretation of Plato's philosopher king. Such individuals are prepared to question, empathize, and engage critically with diverse perspectives, fostering a democratic consciousness. Such qualities enable students to confront and appreciate conflicting values, an important skill in today's increasingly diverse and polarized societies. Methodologically, this research employs a qualitative approach, combining reflective narrative analysis with textual analysis. The reflective narrative draws from personal educational experiences within an international context and is complemented by an analysis of school rituals and structures, which reveal implicit values upheld by traditional practices. Additionally, textual analysis is applied to curriculum changes and policy shifts, particularly focusing on instances where content has been altered or omitted, potentially indicating ideological biases. This dual approach allows for a nuanced exploration of how education can serve both to reinforce prevailing societal norms and to act as a vehicle for critical inquiry, democratic renewal, and social justice. While Mouffe emphasizes transforming antagonism into agonism within the political sphere, this study examines how antagonism and agonism manifest in the educational realm. In Mouffe's concept of agonism, there is an emphasis on a shared foundation, which she refers to as a "conflictual consensus"—a consensus on core ethico-political values such as liberty and equality for all, with dissent emerging over their specific interpretations. She argues that a clear distinction must be made between those who reject these values entirely and those who, while accepting them, contest their interpretations. In the educational realm, we must engage with the former, not to dismiss them as "enemies" but rather to challenge their antagonistic perspectives. This study will demonstrate that, if left unchallenged, these antagonistic perspectives represent a significant obstacle to the realization of a truly pluralistic society and cannot be permitted to coexist uncritically within an agonistic framework. By highlighting the political dimensions of education and the cultivation of "philosopher folk", this study resonates with Nordic educational values, advocating for a pluralistic and inclusive framework that promotes critical engagement with diversity and supports the development of a just democratic society.

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

How to get beyond the “I”? On the difficult introduction of transcendence in the purpose of education.

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The purpose of education and of schools is an everlasting source of debates. These debates have however been relocated in recent years under the impact from the measurement industry, ranking systems, and by the introduction of a vocabulary and a frame of understanding that focuses on the “outcome” of education in terms of “learning goals” and so forth. Several educational theorists have opposed this development, claiming in different versions that the ultimate concern in education has to do with the authenticity of the “self”.

Benner’s (Fichtean) principle “Aufforderung zur freien Selbsttätigkeit” (Benner, 2015, p. 82) is a prominent example, showing that the concern for the Self is at centre and that this Self ought to be free in terms of “free” actions, which here is understood as the opposite of a heteronomy in the motivational structure of the action. Benner’s principle demonstrates the dilemma that we encounter: The freedom of the Self presupposes that something transcends that very Self, in Benner labelled as an “Aufforderung”.

Biesta’s crusade against “learnification” and his attempt to rehabilitate “teaching” in terms of an “existential education” demonstrates a parallel dilemma. “Being taught by” introduces a dimension of transcendence, something that goes beyond the student or pupil. However: “... we may have lost our “appetite” ... for transcendence” (Biesta, 2022, p. 59). Teaching transcends the students manoeuvring with him- or herself (that is: transcends “learning”). The very concern is again centred on the freedom of the student, and freedom understood as a Self that owns itself, as self-possession, in opposition to being object for others or object for oneself.

A different version of this dilemma is Grondin’s plaidoyer to reintroduce metaphysical reflections in what education is all about. This is important because our understanding of education today is under a nominalistic and utilitarian metaphysical regime that has become so dominant that it appears self-evident. Simultaneously it denies that the world and the human life has any inherent meaning. This nominalistic metaphysics is opposed to what Grondin sees as the metaphysics of education. “ ... la fin de l’éducation ... est métaphysique en ce qu’elle reconnaît une orientation et une transcendance à la vie elle-même et ... en ce qu’elle dépasse l’enseignement précis qui sera livre ...” (Grondin, 2022, p. 12). The dilemma here becomes a tragic knot in that the more “useful” an education is, the less meaningful it appears to be for the singular “I”.

The paper wishes to present those three versions of what is – and this is the paper’s thesis – the very same dilemma.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Norwegian Teenagers and Conceptions of Meaning

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Research topic/aim. We know quite a bit about Norwegian teenagers (13-16 years old). For example, we know that more than 70% of them spend more than 3 hours per day eyeballing a screen, and that a little less than 70% think they will get to lead a happy and fulfilling life. We know that more than 50% spend less than a half hour per day doing homework, and that a little less than 60% partake in organized free time activities. However, even if the figures related above (all from *Ungdata* 2024) are suggestive/indicative, we do not know much about what our youth perceive as motivating, engaging, valuable and meaningful. The research outlined in this abstract is intended to fill this knowledge-gap. The research question, consequently, is as follows: How do Norwegian teenagers experience and conceptualize the meaning(s) of their own lifeworld?

Theoretical framework. Meaning is fruitfully conceptualized along two dimensions: as *hetero-telic* and as *autotelic* (Zapffe 1996 413ff; Zapffe & Tønnesen 1983, 44). As regards the first, meaning is tied to achieving a goal that lies outside the actions deemed necessary to reach it. Meaning is thus tied to finding the best means to achieving a predetermined end (jogging to get fit). In Autotelic meaning, on the hand, there is no distinction between action and goal. It is the doing of the action that is meaningful and valuable (rock climbing). The research projected in this abstract aims to explore the lifeworld of teenagers utilizing, amongst others, these distinctions: hetero-telic and autotelic meaning, types of goals and conceptions of value.

Methodology/research design. The research projected is part of a bigger research plan. Overall, the projected research is case based and has embedded units of analysis (Yin 2014, 49ff). The case is teenagers' experiences/conceptions of their lifeworld/meaning, and one of the embedded units is what teenagers say, i.e. how they conceptualize in this regard. To harvest data for the unit, qualitative interviews (both individual and focus groups) are projected (Kvale & Brinkman 2014).

Expected results/findings. The research will harvest and analyze data pertaining to how teenagers conceptualize their own situation, both as teenagers, soon-to-be adults and as late members of gen. Z – and hence *anxious* (cf. Haidt, 2024). As indicated above, there is not done a lot of research pertaining to how this cohort conceptualizes meaning, so the results/findings will fill a knowledge gap.

Relevance to Nordic educational research. If/when successful, the research will contribute empirical in-depth knowledge as regards members of gen. Z. An ambition is to compare the situation in Norway with that in other Nordic countries, but that is not projected at present.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Teachers as Researchers: Embodied Professionalism in Cultural Inquiry

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Research Topic/Aim

Education is a fundamental pillar of individual, societal, and global development (Biesta, 2019), and high-quality teaching has been identified as the most significant school-level factor influencing pupil achievement (Hattie, 2023). To enhance teaching quality, policy increasingly expects teachers to critically engage with research findings and tailor their approaches to meet the needs articulated by praxis. This article aims to explore teachers' intersubjective becoming as "teachers-as-researchers" within a research-adjacent science circle. It examines the experiences of four first teachers and a PhD student through systematic mapping of scientific articles, collaborative writing, and focus group discussions. The study focuses on the dynamics of closeness and otherness and how these shape an understanding of the "missing pieces" that could enhance education and schooling.

Theoretical Framework

Drawing inspiration from the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1968), this study employs an embodied political philosophy to analyze the intersection of research findings with teachers' lived encounters. Epistemological perspectives, vehiculed by sign contrasts curated by academia, intersect with teachers' situated knowledge, technical expertise, and critical reflection, the latter all aspects which have been identified as essential resources for making professional judgments and exercising discrimination in practice (Winch et al., 2015).

Methodology/Research Design

The research utilizes a case study approach, grounded in systematic mapping of scientific articles, collaborative writing processes, and focus group discussions. The lived experiences of four first teachers and one PhD student serve as the empirical basis for investigating the interplay between high-level research perspectives and teachers' contextualized practices.

Expected Results/Findings

The study is expected to explore how teachers adapt to and interpret high-altitude research perspectives through processes of lived adaptation. This includes concepts such as the intangible touch, as a reversible agency shaped by the other's agency, and visible seeing, highlighting the interdependency of being seen and seeing. These findings aim to illuminate the experiential interdependencies and disconnections among cultural elements within professional teaching practice.

Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing how professional development initiatives, such as research circles and action research, can bridge the gap between abstract research findings and practical, situated teaching practices. It highlights the importance of integrating embodied and intersubjective approaches to foster meaningful and context-sensitive professional growth, resonating with the Nordic emphasis on collaborative and reflective education.

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The purpose of this paper is to clarify what practical wisdom would be as an aim of education, starting with *Aristotle's* concepts of *phronesis* (i.e., practical wisdom) and *praxis* (i.e., morally virtuous action). First, the relationship between *phronesis* and *praxis* is considered in the light of Aristotle's writings, commencing with his view on the three fundamental dispositions of knowledge. Then, how the concept of *praxis* has developed and changed over history is described through the texts of some prominent theoreticians. The reformulation of the concept of *praxis* has been particularly influenced by the Marxist theory. Even before the revolutionary work of *Karl Marx* and *Friedrich Engels*, the concept of *praxis* was given new perspectives by *August Cieszkowski* and *Moses Hess*. After Marx, *Paolo Freire* is acknowledged as one of the most influential philosophers and educators using the idea of *praxis* as reflection and action upon the world to transform it, in the pursuit of social change and liberation.

These modern formulations of the concept of *praxis* represent human-centred thinking, based on the Enlightenment project. Now, as the anthropocentric world is in the middle of an ecological crisis, humans must find a new way of acting morally right in society, with greater respect for nature; in other words, we must reformulate *praxis* for our time. Hence, a new non-anthropocentric interpretation of *praxis* is introduced. This proposal is based on a deep-ecological and post-humanist, or a "more-than-human" perspective and the concept of planetary well-being. On this basis, it is postulated that humans can only live well on this planet if the rest of nature is living well. Based on the above, a reformulated version of *praxis* is presented through the double purpose of education: "living well in a world worth living in for all". This proposal emphasizes that "for all" in this case refers not only to human beings, but other entities worthy of moral consideration, including other organisms, as well as processes and systems that sustain the conditions for life on this planet. (Kemmis 2024; Huttunen & Heikkinen 2024.)

We do not consider posthumanism as an idea or an epoch separate from humanism. Rather, we see it as an extension of humanism (Hietalahti 2023), providing a basis for education for planetary well-being (Kortetmäki et al. 2022). Instead of the motto of classical humanism "man is the measure of all things" ("homo mensura"), a new maxim for education for planetary well-being is proposed: *Responsibility for planetary well-being is the new measure of humanity* (Aaltonen et al. 2023). It is worth pointing out that this theorem does not undermine human dignity, rather the opposite. By following this principle, human beings could paradoxically demonstrate their greatness by admitting their smallness in front of nature, or rather *within* nature. The form of wise action, guided by this motto, is called *planetary praxis*, and the associated wisdom as *planetary phronesis*.

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

The Bildung of emotions

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A salient way that emotions are present in education today is as dimensions of *social and emotional skills* or competencies. The OECD, through its Education 2030 framework, has placed “soft skills” such as self-regulation, self-control, and perseverance high on the educational agenda. Such competencies have found their way into the Norwegian curriculum and educational debates in the Scandinavian countries. However, from the more holistic perspective of Bildung the competence approach entails a too narrow understanding of emotions and their role in education. The aim of this paper is to sketch an alternative understanding of the competence approach to emotions.

As competencies, emotions are present both as a means for learning and as important learning goals. The limits of this approach may, somewhat crudely, be summarized as follows: Firstly, it is based on a misconceived dichotomy between reason and emotions where emotions are expected to be controlled by reason – for example in terms of self-regulation. Secondly, emotions are perceived in instrumental terms, as means – to efficient learning, to motivation, or more generally to a “prosperous life”.

It is evident that emotions contribute to our lives and development in more profound ways than the competence framework acknowledges. They should, therefore, play a more fundamental role in education. To elaborate on this, I turn to Charles Taylor philosophy. His point is that emotions are not only means or objects to be controlled or regulated, but expressions of subjectivity. Emotions connect us to the world, to others, and to ourselves. Emotions are shaped by their medium of expression, f.ex the language available. An educational task, therefore, is to help students develop their medium for articulation of emotions, and so to enhance their sensibility and their emotionally mediated relation to self and world.

As such, Taylor’s expressive understanding of emotions offers a valuable alternative to the prevailing competence approach, illuminating the crucial link between Bildung and emotions.

«Our emotions make it possible for us to have a sense of what the good life is for a subjects; and this sense involves in turn our making qualitative discriminations between our desires and goals whereby we see some as higher and others as lower, some as good and others as discreditable, still others as evil, some as truly vital and others as trivial, and so on. This kind of discrimination is an essential part of the articulations of our emotions. » (Taylor, Philosophical papers 1, p. 65).

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Pedagogical Attunement: The classroom as Resource or as Resonance?

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Are we witnessing a growing sense of meaninglessness and alienation in education? According to Hertmunt Rosa, there are two modes of relation and engagement with the world: the world as resource (something to be individually exploited and utilized) and the world as resonance (a shared place for meaning and connection). Within educational policy and research, the notion of classroom management can help to illustrate the former. Broadly speaking, classroom management is about teachers making their classrooms 'run smoothly' by keeping the students focused, engaged, and on track in their individual learning processes. Within management discourse, students are primarily seen as human resources, teaching as the production of predefined learning outcomes, and pedagogical relations as something that needs to be managed more effectively by the teacher (Biesta). At the same time, there seems to be a sense of exhaustion and alienation in many empirical classrooms that is fueled by a language of economy, efficiency, and optimal output.

Against this background, the purpose of the paper is to offer a sensory-phenomenological language about what matters *educationally* in classroom management research that responds to Rosa's call for a mode of engagement with the world that emphasizes connection over completion, community over individualism, thoughtfulness over production.

To this end, the paper unfolds as a philosophical argument in two parts. In the first part, I distinguish some aspects of classroom management in previous research, relating these aspects to Adriana Cavarero's image of *homo economicus* and the educational relations it implies. In the second part, I introduce Cavarero's image of the 'inclined mother' as a counter discourse to the 'economic man'. Drawing on the work of Rosa and Rita Felski, I suggest that the concepts of *resonance* and *attunement* can help educational theorists to rethink the notion of classroom management by attending to the inclined gestures and attuned relations that constitutes the microcosmos of the embodied and resonance-oriented classroom.

By way of conclusion, I sum up my argument, returning to the main contributions of the paper. In a time of increasing pessimism and lack of hope in the future, not least among young people in the Nordic countries, there is an urgent need to find alternative ways of conceptualising what matters in educational encounters. The paper offers new concepts for analysing the pedagogical geometry and teacherly gestures that the suggested shift from resource to resonance implies for classroom management research.

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## Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

### Educational Homeliness: Rethinking the Reproductive Work of Education Between Durability and Impermanence

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In contemporary educational theory, the Arendtian definition of education as the time and space that a society interposes between the private domain of home and world (1958), is being thoroughly explored (e.g. Biesta, 2022; Masschelein & Simons, 2013; Vlieghe & Zamojski, 2019). These proposals are giving back to education, it seems, a much-needed articulation of its role and purpose in a time when, sadly, this no longer is self-evident. However, whilst these philosophies are paying considerable attention to notions of 'world' and 'worldliness', the notions of 'home' and 'homeliness' seem to go unnoticed. A negligence that has consequences for how the work that teachers and pupils are doing in schools and classrooms on an everyday basis is seen and valued.

Drawing on the notion of home in Hannah Arendt's thinking, the paper begins in her Jewish writings (2007) where home is defined as 'the familiarity of daily life' (p. 264). It then turns to *The Human Condition* (1998) to elaborate on the distinction between home and world where home is related to the quality of durability whereas world, by contrast, relates to the condition of life which is unpredictable and impermanent. The distinction between home and world in Arendt builds on Freud's distinction between 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich', indicating that there is a relatedness between things that should be hidden (private) and things that should be shown (public). The paper brings this relatedness between the visible and the invisible to bear on an exploration of *educational homeliness* – a concept invented to shed light on the reproductive and often unnoticed or devalued work in education. It is suggested that there is a case to be made for the semi-visible life in schools, that is, for the small deeds and gestures that are often already there also often neglected and devalued.

One reason for the neglect of the notion of home, Rita Felski (2000) points out, is the cultivating of an anti-home vocabulary in modernity. Turning in the end of the paper to Felski's simultaneous critique and defence of the notion of home, it is suggested that educational homeliness as a temporary 'home-making' (Felski) can shed light on how the embodied practices and rituals of everyday school life can become layered with meaning and value. This, as a way of making a case for the reproductive work of education – a work that is often of an embodied and sensuous kind.

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Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

At a threshold, unconcerned with hope (for a future)

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This paper intends to question pedagogical relations who are sustained by a shared hope.

Using Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* [5] as the ground for this presentation, I think about the entanglement between the ways in which Rousseau manages Emile's expectations, and how contemporary educational discussions make use of expectations in pedagogical relations. While there are differences between the intentions in the cases used as example [e. g. 1, 2, 4, 6] and Rousseau's, by a literary approach, I foreground an undercurrent of belief that traverses them. Namely, a belief in that what is not deemed desirable *will be*, eventually, overcome by the student.

In this regard, I argue that keeping such hope in the future may entail that a pre-ascribed kind of relation between student and teacher is sustained and dependent on it, which does not put in question a hierarchy between what teaches and what learns.

To propose an other contemplation, I rehearse a reading of a paragraph of Maurice Blanchot [3] to imagine a hope that is not concerned with the future. While I will not provide a clear answer or solution, I see that Blanchot helps to question a logic that clings pedagogical relations to a predefined order, assisting in imagining relations aside from such premises.

I would like to stress, however, I am not building an argument for opposing, denouncing or critiquing such hopeful educational contributions. Rather, I would like to see what could it mean for pedagogical relations when hope is not dependent on overcoming a state deemed as undesirable. Such contribution is what I would like to discuss before a Nordic educational research that is concerned with democratic values, namely, of not having to subsume under power.

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# Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Supply and demand: Children's perspectives on possibilities for leisure activities in their neighborhood

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Supply and demand: Children's perspectives on possibilities for leisure activities in their neighborhood

Research topic

Leisure is important for children's wellbeing, identity and sense of being a part of a community. Leisure activities are especially important for children in the middle years (10-12 years old) whose enlistment in organized educational care is rapidly decreasing at this age. One plausible reason for the decrease is children's development in independence and responsibility, causing a desire to be left alone and to take their own decisions of what to do in their leisure time.

In this study, we investigate children's own experiences of their leisure. A specific focus in the study is children's perspectives on what activities the surrounding environment in their neighborhood is providing.

Participants in the study are children from different municipalities and different socioeconomic neighborhoods in Sweden, providing data including a wide range of different experiences.

Aim

The aim of the paper is to explore how older children (10-12 years old) experience their leisure in relation to the supply of activities in their own neighborhoods.

Research design

Participants are children enlisted in youth clubs or leisure clubs in Sweden. This paper is based on group interviews in 8 different settings. The interviews concerned the children's leisure, leisure activities and their experiences of the youth club. Transcriptions from the interviews are thematically analyzed.

Expected findings

Initial analysis shows that children generally are satisfied with the supply of leisure activities the neighborhood is providing and that organized arenas like youth clubs or leisure clubs can be an important part of providing meaningful leisure activities. Though, the participants ask about more leisure activities in the neighborhood, such as playgrounds and other activities integrated in the physical environment, that is more adjusted to this specific age group, being older children.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The importance of meaningful leisure för children is not a local matter. Hence, this paper and its contribution is relevant and important for all Nordic countries since they share many similarities in prerequisites for society to provide leisure activities for children. Knowledge of children's perspectives are important in relation to understanding how leisure venues such as youth clubs or leisure clubs can meet the leisure needs of the age group.

## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Principals perceptions regarding educational quality in the Swedish School-age Educare: Internal and future quality assurance

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### 1. Research topic/aim

The Swedish School-age Educare (SAEC) has not been an exception to the latter decades systemic, transnational and large-scale reform changes mandating local quality assurance in Swedish schools (Adolfsson, 2024). Its implementation in practice is challenging due to the SAECs' pedagogical tradition being separated from the compulsory school, as well as hardships in defining and evaluating educational quality in regard to socio-pedagogic contents (Ackesjö, 2022). Principals have earlier been shown to constitute an important actor in shaping the outcomes of quality systems and their implementation within the SAEC (Andersson, 2023). The aim of the present study is to explore principals perceptions in relation to the concept of educational quality in the Swedish SAEC, and through this exploration contribute to the understanding of the concept of educational quality in relation to quality assurance in the SAEC.

### 2. Theoretical framework

The analysis is guided by quality assurance concepts (or paradigms) derived from Cheng (2003) in relation to the principal's perceptions. Two specific waves/concepts regarding quality assurance are mainly applied within the analysis: a) Internal quality assurance, and b) future quality assurance.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The study was executed within a larger research project as a qualitative interview study. Interviews were conducted with 10 principals in 4 different Swedish municipalities. The study followed an abductive analytic scheme and was largely inspired by strategies from constructive grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014).

### 4. Expected results/findings

The main findings in regard to principals perceptions in relation to the concept of educational quality, and in relation to quality assurance, in the SAEC can be conceived in terms of:

- a) Internal quality assurance as a complement to school-related content.
- b) Future quality assurance as a complement to school education through SAEC-related content.

Internal quality assurance is mainly perceived as evaluative in relation to the school-related system of local quality assurance, while future quality assurance is perceived as definable, while not evaluative in relation to local quality assurance.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Following transnational reform-trends related to quality assurance in education, questions regarding evaluation and teaching within School-age Educare are of concern to educational settings outside of the studied context.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

“And that’s what’s been challenging, he fulfills the goals in school but it’s been more the social that’s been difficult”: parents’ stories of social support in SAEC and school for children with disabilities

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### Research topic

Inclusive education is a right for Swedish pupils in after-school and school settings. Inclusion refers to an education that is socially, physically and educationally accessible to all pupils. For example, inclusion can mean that pupils without and with special educational needs and disabilities participate in school-age educare (SAEC) and schools together, enjoying a sense of community and learning new skills together. In relation to this, pupils may need different forms of support. Offering social support promotes inclusion. It helps pupils feel more included and accepted by their peers, which can improve their self-esteem and well-being (e.g. Armstrong, 2015; Woodgate et al., 2019).

### Aim

This study examines how parents describe the support their children receive in social situations in SAEC centres and schools and how it enables or hinders the child’s well-being and how this relates to the requirements of the SAEC and the school.

### Research design

The study is based on interviews with parents of children with intellectual disabilities, ADHD and/or ASD aged 6 to 14 years. In total, 22 interviews with 25 parents were conducted. The theoretical starting point is the perspective of disabled children’s childhood studies, which seeks to understand how age and disability interact and shape the conditions for children’s lives (Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014). The perspective is used to problematize the parents’ stories about the social support the children need and receive in SAEC and school.

### Expected findings

The preliminary analysis shows that according to the parents, children does not receive support or sufficient support in social situations. SAEC appears to be particularly challenging when support is lacking as the demands on social skills are central. SAEC appears as both an enabler of social inclusion due to its social focus but at the same time as a barrier due to the lack of support.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In all Nordic countries, there is a strong emphasis on the right of all pupils, regardless of their needs, to an education in mainstream schools. Inclusion is seen as an important part of democratic education. Understanding Swedish parents’ experiences of social support in after-school programs/SAEC and schools is therefore knowledge that has relevance in the Nordic context.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

"They're just playing" - Developing free play in teaching situations in Swedish School-Age-Educare Centers

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Play has long been a central aspect of School-Age-Educare Centres (SAECs) activities. The importance of play is projected in steering documents and research. Teaching in SAEC takes place primarily through play. It is problematic for staff in SAEC to relate teaching in play and to stage and complete the SAEC's teaching mission because there is a lack of didactic tools/methods adapted for SAEC. Play is sometimes taken for granted and therefore, becomes unreflective. An example is free play, and expressions such as "They (students) are just playing" occur, which may indicate that there are neither learning nor teaching aspects involved. The Swedish National Agency for Education emphasizes the importance of connecting play theory with play practice and observing what the children do when they play and how SAEC influences children's play.

Action-oriented research was carried out in 2023/24 to generate knowledge about SAEC's play, specifically "free play". This study thus answers several challenges and issues that staff faces in connection with its mission. The aim of the study was to contribute knowledge about the development of a scientifically anchored approach to (free) play in SAEC.

Play-responsive didactics were used as the theoretical framework (Pramling & Wallerstedt, 2019). It integrates play as a central element in teaching and learning, particularly in early childhood education. The core idea is to make learning more dynamic, interactive, and responsive to children's spontaneous play activities, interests, and needs. Play-responsive didactics emphasize flexibility, allowing educators to adapt and respond to the play that emerges naturally among children.

The study was carried out through an action research design, a collaborative, reflective process where educators actively engage in examining their own teaching practices and making improvements based on what they observe and learn. The starting point was the issues and development areas that staff identified in their own practice. Data collection methods used were group interviews, reflection interviews (RI), field notes, and meeting minutes. The empirical data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

The results show how staff could see patterns in student groups and understand individual students. The action research enabled continuous improvement and adjustment of play situations and methods based on insights that emerged. With observations and conversations, staff guided the students' development of and through play in a constructive way. By using "guided play," they were able to develop free play from both students' and teachers' perspectives. Staff gave the students more space in the free play to direct and take responsibility. Students' learning in free play was made visible. To get permission for such a development, staff's awareness of what was going on before, during, and after play was required, and they were able to anchor the curriculum mainly in reflection meetings about the interventions. Staff received support in the curriculum and received confirmation of the curriculum's writings in the development work. For Nordic educational research the study is of importance because it draws attention to a research area, play responsive didactics in SAEC.



## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

### Engaging the World - Conversations in Pedagogical Practice

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### Engaging the World - Conversations in Pedagogical Practice

#### 1. Research topic

This paper presentation originates from the project “The Conversation in Leisure Pedagogy - Conversations into the World”, based at Research Program for Everyday Life and Leisure Pedagogy, VIA UC, Denmark, and explores perspectives on conversation in leisure pedagogy in afterschool program. The project uses the following research questions: What does conversation mean for the child in leisure pedagogy? How can the social teacher work with conversation in the after-school program? Viewed from a societal perspective, the ability to engage in conversation is relevant within a democratic context. Acting as democratic citizens often involves being respectfully disagreeable with those who hold different views (Koch, 2009). In this light, conversation becomes not only a path for personal development but also a skill essential for participating in democratic processes as a citizen in society.

#### Theoretical framework:

The main theoretical focus is primarily from Georg Herbert Mead who argues that people need others to see themselves from the outside, thereby developing the self and personality (Mead, 2017). Also, the project takes a societal perspective, the ability to engage in or sustain a conversation is relevant within a democratic framework, as acting as democratic citizens often involves being civilly disagreeable with those who hold opposing views (Koch, 2009).

#### Methodology:

Through action research with social teachers, the project has contributed to developing the social teachers’ understanding and approach to working with conversation (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2017). The project has been divided into three phases. Phase 1 was an open and exploratory investigation of conversation in the after-school program (SFO). Phase 2 centered on action research, where methods for working with conversation were jointly developed by social teachers and researchers. Phase 3 involves further analysis and dissemination of the project. Two after-school programs (SFOs) are participating.

#### Expected conclusions:

Phase 3 is currently underway, and preliminary results indicate that while social teachers naturally use conversation in their daily work, it is not necessarily employed in a structured, intentional, or deeply considered manner unless it involves more formal meetings and discussions where management or parents are involved. Also, examples will be provided from the social teachers’ experiments with different types of conversations, such as “conversations in the dark”.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research:

Based on the above, the paper presentation aim is to contribute to understanding and discuss the use of conversation in leisure pedagogy. Furthermore, it is interesting to discuss how a so-called leisure pedagogical paradox occurs in SFO, as the coercion or external influences on the child are fewer or more hidden during the conversations in SFO.

## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Are we making sense (or nonsense)? Quality assurance in School-age Educare

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### 1. Research topic/aim

The global education reform movement has enforced a decentralized reform environment that promotes evaluation and external monitoring towards student achievements in local educational practices (Sahlberg, 2016). Prior studies on evaluation in school-age educare (SAEC) practice have revealed a wide array of logics and institutional factors shaping these processes within the Swedish context (Ackesjö, 2022, Lager, 2024). The present study adds to this line of research through a managerial perspective by exploring principals and deputy principals' sensemaking of assuring quality of teaching within the Swedish SAEC. The study also contributes a complementary perspective to prior research by highlighting how institutional logics does not necessarily translate to the logics and conditions of the local organization.

### 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical point of departure of the study is grounded in Alvesson & Jonsson (2022) conceptualization of how the path between external pressures of legitimacy and conformism and internal organizational logics can be paved with lack of meaning, friction and illogics. The lack of (or inconsistent) shared meanings and mutual sense of logic within and between organizations is here understood as *organizational dischronization*, where institutional logics might be transformed to organizational illogics.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The study was carried out as a qualitative interview study with a selected sample of 10 principals and deputy principals responsible for managing the Swedish SAEC. The present study is part of a larger research project on the Swedish SAECs' potential and possibilities in contributing to students goal fulfillment.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The results show that certain measures of quality assurance in SAEC make sense to the school leaders in relation to structural, processual and service oriented aspects of quality in the educational program. Perceptions of illogics and nonsensemaking does however appear in relation to quality as results or outcomes of SAEC-teaching, often following hardships related to measurability and evaluative methods in practice, as well as an expressed lack of personal knowledge concerning what SAEC-teaching actually entails. The fragmented and lack of shared meaning expressed here illustrates the organizational dischronization between external pressures and local organizational logic.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The international reform movement and succeeding national policy initiatives towards quality monitoring and evaluation similar to the research object of the present study is present in other nordic countries and might therefore be of interest to research being performed in these contexts.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

### Equity in Learning Environments in After-School Programmes: A Review of Research

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Although equity in education is crucial, there is currently little research in the context of after-school programmes. These programmes vary in terms of content and scope and are instrumental in establishing a secure environment where children can learn and develop. The purpose of this study is to summarise existing knowledge on how equity is implemented in learning environments in after-school programmes in different countries. It also aims to identify gaps, thus providing a basis for new research. The theoretical basis is the theory of justice (Rawls, 1999), which offers a framework for understanding fairness and social justice in institutional settings. The study combines an integrative review methodology (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005) with a systematic review methodology (Gough et al., 2017). Their synergy is effective for complex topics that intertwine empirical evidence, theoretical findings and policy implications. Preliminary results show that the concept of equity is not universally understood. It can be interpreted in different ways and from different perspectives, such as biological, socio-cultural, philosophical, political or pedagogical. At the same time, there is a tendency to use terms such as 'compensation', 'schooling' and 'lack of freedom' when recording inequalities in the work of after-school centres. Equity also poses challenges, such as funding constraints, staffing limitations and structural inequalities. Several dilemmas and paradoxes are encountered in the preliminary results that may be perceived as limitations to the existing practice of ensuring equity in learning environments in after-school programmes. There is, for example, a political paradox, where the intention of Swedish policy makers was to improve the quality of education but the reform resulted in the opposite: schools and after-school programmes lost qualified teachers who were replaced by individuals without proper education. This has had a negative impact on the opportunities for children to be in an equal learning environment. There is also the dilemma of professional identity, where qualified after-school teachers with a degree in subject teaching must consider two professional identities and maintain a balance between socially oriented after-school programmes and a school focussed on goals and results. Finally, there is the paradox of the perception of equity as a positive concept and the obvious inequity in the practice of after-school programmes. New research could aim to resolve these tensions and explore what might be considered an 'equal outcome' in after-school programmes, to be an objective category that can be measured while being independent of or minimising the factors of inequality. This study is relevant not only to Nordic educational research but may be considered to represent the state of the art. It provides an overview of current research into the implementation of equity in learning environments in international after-school programmes.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Pedagogical possibilities and constraints in the physical learning environment of Swedish School-age educare centres

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The field of 'Extended Education' is increasing globally due to that many countries acknowledge the need for supervision, care and educational support for children, in addition to the regular education system. Swedish School-age Educare [SAE] is an optional part of the school system, regulated by the Education Act (SFS 2010:800) and curriculum (SNAE, 2022). SAE includes 4,380 facilities, a majority of them municipally operated, but 16.0% are privately run, serving 480,000 children, aged 6–12 (Skolverket, 2022). In the last decades, the focus of SAE has shifted from social-pedagogical to educational-scientific, emphasizing teaching, academic skills, and integration within schools. Studies have highlighted unequal conditions and varied educational opportunities in the SAE spaces (Grewell & Boström, 2020; Lager, 2020), but there is limited research in the area. This is the overall study of a consolidation thesis, which aims to understand, illuminate and contextualize the physical learning environment of four SAE centres, in order to understand its significance for teaching and pedagogical practice. The aim is framed by two research questions:

- 1) What possibilities and constraints in the physical learning environment can be identified from the perspective of pupils and staff?
- 2) How can these possibilities and constraints be understood based on structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), childhood sociology (Corsaro, 2018) and the theory of psychological ownership (Pierce & Brown, 2020)?

The results show that physical resources such as premises and interiors, in combination with organizational, social and psychological aspects, have a major impact on how teaching and pedagogical practice are shaped. The integration of theories has provided a deeper understanding of how the learning environment affects social relations, the individual's sense of control, participation, and identity development.

The relevance of this study is that it can contribute with children's and staffs' perspectives to the research area, as well as raising important areas for future research. The study will be of relevance architects, researchers, politicians, officials, teachers and parents.

Keywords: childrens sociology, extended education, quality, theory of psychological ownership, theory of structuration

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Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

Prime: Transforming Popular Culture to Fit the Context of School-age Educare

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In 2023, the sports drink Prime became a popular culture phenomenon. This study explores the impact of popular culture trends in the context of school-age educare (SAEC) through the role that Prime has in pupils and staff practices in two SAEC centers. The aim of the study is to examine how popular culture influences children's social lives within SAEC by examining how popular culture and discourses surrounding childhood and children's use of popular culture are expressed in the social practices of the SAEC center. The study is based on ethnographic fieldwork on two different SAEC centers situated in different regions in Sweden. The fieldwork was carried out during the fall of 2023, with two months of observation per center. The analysis is based on ethnography (Emerson et al., 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), where early on during the fieldwork, the sports drink was discovered as a rich point (Agar, 2006). The study uses a Foucauldian concept of power to describe how different discourses and relations of power are present in social interactions as rationalities of power, which are acted upon (Foucault, 2002; Lynch, 2011).

The analysis shows how Prime is used as a cultural discursive text (Fiske, 1989) within the institution. Aspects of the cultural meaning making of Prime, such as discourses on money, age and social media become rationalities of power (Foucault, 2002) within the social interactions of children. The staff in the SAEC center show an awareness of these cultural uses of the Prime drink, however they treat it as a non-issue, even though popular culture that invoke similar power rationalities, such as trading cards, are banned. Instead, their main issue is connected to Prime's identity as a sports drink. By using the bottles for water, the pupils transform Prime from a commodity to a cultural text, while at the same time resisting readings of the product as within institutional and societal discourses on health. At the same time, by resisting this reading, the students place themselves as subjects of these discourses by following the rules (Foucault, 2002; Lynch, 2011). Lastly, the study illuminates how Prime becomes a locus of power struggles in the interactions between pupils belonging to different peer groups, usually separated by age and the structure of the school, that come together in the context of School-age educare.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

To prepare teachers for professional work in Swedish school-age educare (SAEC). Interpretations and realisations of education in the teacher education programme for primary school, specialising in SAEC

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In recent decades, Swedish teacher education (TE) has undergone several reforms (e.g. Prop. 2009/10:89) stressing the importance of TE for school governance (Sjöberg, 2010). The relationship between TE and schools, as well as the relation between political decision-making and practice is, however, complex (Hallsén, 2013). To investigate this complexity, curriculum theory is often utilised. In this project curriculum processes are, in accordance with Lindensjö and Lindgren (2018), understood as occurring at different levels or arenas, e.g. the arena of formulation (political decision-making) and the arena of implementation (implementation in practice). The outcome in practice is also influenced by how political decisions are reformulated by actors involved in practices along the way, i.e. the arena of transformation. The present project investigates this transformation arena, specifically how TE is interpreted and translated into pedagogical practice of future SAEC teachers.

Research on SAEC TE is quite limited (Falkner & Ludvigsson, 2016). Berglund et al. (2019) have studied teacher students' competence development in SAEC TE by focus group interviews, and Ackesjö et al. (2016/2019) have conducted longitudinal studies of students from SAEC TE at one Swedish university. This project will complement these studies by examining SAEC TE at a national level, and by focusing the pedagogic practice of such TE.

A pilot study at a single university has been conducted and programme directors from twelve universities have been interviewed. In addition, educational plans from thirteen universities have been analysed. The data has been processed using thematic content analysis (Terry, et al., 2017). Next step is to conduct case studies at three to four universities, including interviews, and analyses of educational documents.

The project will contribute to knowledge about how SAEC TE is interpreted and realised, and about SAEC teachers' unique teaching assignment. Such knowledge is relevant to policymakers, teacher educators and SAEC teachers.

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## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

A Sustainable Dual-Role Work Environment? – a comparative study on teacher assistants' experiences of split shifts between classroom support and school-age educare

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### Research topic/aim

Teaching assistants (TA) are a growing occupational group in Swedish school-age educare SAEC. However, research highlighting this professional group's experiences is limited. This study aims to illuminate TAs' work environmental situation encountered in their dual role.

### Theoretical framework

As a way of gaining a comparative perspective on TAs' dual roles, the themes identified in the analysis have subsequently analytically been anchored in Karasek and Theorell's (1990) three-dimensional model as a way of identifying work environmental risks to employees' well-being and stress levels. The model focuses on the relationship between high and low levels of "job demand", "the individual's control over their work", and "social support". The model instructs that work with high demands in combination with low control and support should be demarcated as a "high-strain job" which in turn is associated with increased risk of health problems.

### Methodology/research design

The study composes deep interviews with eight TAs working in integrated school and SAEC. Analytically, the study builds on a thematic analysis composing 500+ codes and five key themes.

### Findings

Following five key themes are identified: 1) Work on-call and critical last resort dependency on services of TAs in e.g. secluding challenging pupils; 2) Threats and violence as an occupational health and safety concern relating to care for pupils with regular displays of self-regulation challenges, e.g. aggressive or violent behavior; 3) Intense psychological demands entailing risks for burnout due to emotional exhaustion following high demands, working alone, and lack of resilience and support; 4) Limited opportunities in developing professional skills and competencies; 5) Organizational challenges entailing how precarious working conditions and discrepancies in responsibilities and collegiality between the two school-domains contribute in TAs becoming a transient profession.

The analysis shows on the one hand that the work environment experienced by TAs is indicative of the profession being a high-strain job. On the other hand, the analysis illustrates that their role in the SAEC entails many aspects of social support that make their job more barrable, such as elaborated collaboration with colleagues in SAEC, access to a more holistic perspective on pupils' development and learning, and opportunities for closer contact with caregivers. In parallel however, there is a risk that the responsibility for collaboration, can be placed on one professional group. Furthermore, it appears that structures for cooperation between schools and SAEC centres are often lacking and that it is often conducted under stress and "done on the fly". Their dual role also means that the TA commonly gain good insights in pupils' daily activities and particular events which facilitates the development of relational competences that may support pupils' participation during their time in the SAEC centre.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study contributes to knowledge about TAs' work environment and prospects to handle their dual role. In many Nordic countries TAs are an important professional group in SAECs and schools. Limited research about this group's dual role makes it important to gain knowledge about their experiences.



# **Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education**

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

### Parental ideals in early childhood education and care: a sociomaterial approach

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### Parental ideals in early childhood education and care: a sociomaterial approach

When individuals become parents, they engage with institutions such as maternity and child healthcare, and subsequently, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). These institutions not only provide services and support but also shape the experiences and ideals of 'good parenting' (Gillies, 2005). This study investigates how ideals of 'good parenting' are constituted within the everyday practices of Finnish ECEC. Using sociomateriality as a theoretical lens, the study explores how collective ideas of good parenthood are actualised in daily situations within ECEC centres.

The education system is widely perceived as middle-class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Stefansen & Skogen, 2010) and can inadvertently exclude or disadvantage parents from diverse backgrounds (Norheim & Moser, 2020). Based on ethnographic fieldwork, including parent interviews in a Finnish ECEC centre, this study contributes to the discussion by examining situations where parenting norms and ideals are challenged by parents in various ways. The findings reveal that ideals of good parenting are formed through a combination of the physical environment, such as the ECEC facilities where children and parents interact; material aspects, including children's clothes and other belongings; technology, such as digital tools and platforms used for communication between educators and parents; ECEC practices, encompassing institutional policies regarding attendance and parental involvement; and educators' professional practices, which involve the language and approaches used by educators. These elements collectively contribute to the construction of parental ideals. Parents challenge these ideals by confronting them or distancing themselves from cooperation.

The study highlights how the values, norms, and cultural capital within the ECEC institution are highly middle-classed. It simultaneously overlooks social inequalities, cultural diversity, and complex social contexts, making the ideal more attainable for some parents than others. This research contributes to understanding the relationship between parents and ECEC institutions, offering insights into how social sustainability can be fostered for children and diverse families.

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## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

### Multilingual parents' involvement in Icelandic compulsory education

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The increasing number of multilingual students in Icelandic compulsory schools necessitates a revision of educational policies, teaching strategies, and home-school collaboration to benefit all students. This study investigates the collaboration between multilingual families and teachers, using answers from a standardized survey systems, Skólapúlsinn's, quantitative questionnaire. The study examines whether parental involvement varies based on the language parents chose to answer the questionnaire, and if there are significant differences in parents answers based on their residence in either the capital area or rural regions in Iceland.

Parental involvement is paramount in shaping children's academic achievement and emotional adjustment throughout their school years, often exerting greater influence than other factors such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Banks, 2020; Desforjes & Abouchaar, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Smith et al., 2020). The research project *Language policies and practices of diverse immigrant families in Iceland and their implications for education* (LPP) provides a basis for this study which utilizes Bronfenbrenner's theory of the Ecology of human development and Epstein's framework of school, family and community partnerships.

We used jamovi software to analyze the data (jamovi.org). Through multiple linear regression we examined questions regarding parental involvement in compulsory schools, in 2023 and 2024 (N=8602). 90.34 % answered in Icelandic, 4.15% in English and 5.51% in Polish. Factorial analysis of two factors, Teacher initiation of Parental Involvement and Parental influence on Students Education showed statistically relevant differences.

The findings indicate that parents answering languages connect to differences in the home-school relationships. Parents who answered in English reported higher levels of involvement, compared to those who answered in Icelandic or in Polish. The difference is especially evident in the factor made up of questions regarding teachers' initiation of collaboration. Additionally, the study found minimal differences in parental involvement between urban and rural areas, challenging the assumption that smaller communities foster better home-school relationships.

The results highlight a need for tailored communication strategies and support systems to enhance parental involvement across different linguistic and cultural groups and to support teachers in their endeavors to reach all parents. By addressing these disparities, educators and policymakers can better support the academic and social well-being of multilingual students. The study's insights are valuable for teachers, families, community leaders, and policymakers aiming to improve social and educational outcomes for multilingual students and their families.

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## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

How educational background in families links to the dimensions of science capital: a study of the Finnish population

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### Research topic

In this study, we examine a model of different science-related instruments and how educational characteristics are linked to the model in the perception of science. The present study explores two major aims: first, to examine a three-factor science-related model. Second, to explore how participants' educational level is associated with the science-related factor model.

### Theoretical framework

The present research is theoretically drawn from Bourdieu's research and concept of capital which is also extended to science (Archer et al., 2015). Previously colleagues have highlighted that science capital can be understood rather an ensemble that covers a range of different components such as science content knowledge and skills or attitudes to science than a singular dimension (Dewitt et al., 2016).

### Methodology/research design

The study participants (N =1583) represent adult 18–75-year-old people who live in mainland Finland and who were recruited to study based on random sampling and answered the science capital-designed questionnaire. To answer targeted research aims, we utilised selected measurements included in the survey: actively open-minded thinking, trust in science and scientists and epistemic beliefs (Haran et al., 2013; Nadelson et al., (2014; Schraw et al., 2002). In addition, respondents' educational background characteristics were included in the analysis. Analysis was conducted with the Mplus Plus program and selected measurements were analysed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

### Expected results/findings

Our preliminary results show that the factor model fits acceptably after modification. In addition, our results indicate that educational level plays a role in the examined factors for the science-related model. Results indicated that higher educational levels are linked to the perception of science where knowledge is understood more complexly, belief in an individual's ability to learn and where actively open-minded thinking, and trust in science and scientists increases. The revealed results and perceptions of science in terms of examined measurement will be discussed.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In democratic welfare states like Nordic countries education and science are seen as key factors for creating a better future and solving complex challenges that societies confront nowadays. However, science should not only be seen as a matter for scientists but more broadly as part of everyday life and the civics of the citizens. In addition, different dimensions of capital can be traced in diverse families. It is important to examine citizens' perceptions of science in situations where fake news and disinformation are challenging societies at many levels.

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

### Trusting parents: the tale of two schools

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In Sweden, school personnel are given a strong curricular mandate to “cooperate with the pupils’ parents to develop school content and work together”. Despite the envisioned democratic and performative advantages of this mission, there is no approved universal practice for successful cooperation between school and home. Research also points to various factors hindering cooperative efforts and “schools struggle to promote an effective dialogue between teachers and parents around the educational support needs of the student” (Gerdes et al., 2022). Communicative and cooperative engagement is particularly difficult for many parents with immigrant backgrounds who are made vulnerable by majority cultural norms and resources.

This presentation reports on a project that aims to understand and develop two schools’ strategic initiatives to strengthen their cooperation with parents and thereby improve conditions for pupils’ development and learning. One school’s model centres around the educational contribution of a family support worker (FSW) while the other school has developed a network of trust-building NET-meetings with a parent-set agenda as well as ambassadors who give parents a voice.

#### *Theoretical framework*

Georg Simmel (1950) defines trust as “a hypothesis certain enough to serve as a basis for practical conduct” (p. 318). The notion of hypothesis clarifies that without comprehensive knowledge about a person we cannot *rationally* justify our actions in relation to the person. He describes trust as personal confidence or faith in another person that resolves the problem of partial knowledge by bridging the gap between available and unavailable knowledge. Simmel (1950) also teaches us that confidence given to others in a group is a morally potent force almost compelling recipients to live up to the trust invested in them.

#### *Methodology/Research design*

The project’s research design is practice-based with a commitment to depart from problems that schools are facing and develop practice to manage them. To capture the voices of both parents and teachers and explore respondent-relevant issues, a sequence of questionnaires, teacher written reflections, group and individual interviews build on each other successively to form a progressive and integrated research design.

#### *Expected findings*

Both school’s cooperative models provide neutral ground, “outside-yet-inside” environments enabling parents to engage with school personnel, make parents visible in the school community and create conditions for parents to support their children with their schooling. Hope and trust among parents in the school as an institution is seen as mediated by the confidence of school personnel in parents as parents of the school’s pupils and as individuals, by open-ended dialogic engagement with parents and by parent networks.

#### *Relevance to Nordic educational research*

This presentation will help clarify Swedish conceptualizations of the educational turn to parents and promote greater understanding of its relevance internationally. Second, while the perspectives of parents are frequently absent in this research field, this study is committed to profiling the voices of parents on family – school issues. Third, while trust is rarely *researched* as a phenomenon in the field, this study aims to investigate the nature of trust and how it can be developed between schools and parents.

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

Possibility of encouraging civic engagement among school-age children and youth with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds: a comparative study of collaboration between schools and local communities in Sweden and Japan

Chihiro Yojo

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### Research topic / aim

The purpose of this study is to examine the Swedish and Japanese perspectives on how to encourage civic engagement among children and youth with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds in schools and local communities. This presentation will focus on the case of Japan.

In Sweden, youth engagement is emphasized, in the context of their living conditions, their power to shape their lives, and their power of influence in society. In Japan, the Basic Act on Children's Policy, which aims to reflect children's opinions on policies concerning them, became effective in 2023. There has been an effort to change the perception of children and youth to someone who can proactively affect decision-making.

### Theoretical framework

The level and ways of civic engagement are different depending on the background and groups which one belongs to (Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 2021). Especially, young people from low socio-economic status tend to have limited access to knowledge and opportunities to start engagement (*ibid.*). Children and youth learn more about citizenship and democracy through their participation in their daily lives (Biesta, 2011). It is necessary to analyze not only the practice of citizenship education in schools but also local practices that support children in their lives.

### Methodology/ research design

This study examines the issue of cooperation between schools and local communities in Sweden and Japan. Using data from individual semi-structured interview with a schoolteacher who was a key member in the establishment of a community school and four staff members of NPO which support children and youths. Data collection took place in a disadvantaged socio-economic area in a city which has approximately 400,000 population, in Osaka. Interviews are analyzed with KJ method (Scupin 1997), and the system mapping exercises was applied to visualize the relationship between schools and the local community.

### Expected results / findings

The expected findings of this study, focusing on a Japanese case, will describe the relationship between schools and local communities in disadvantaged socio-economic areas and their practice in fostering civic engagement. From a comparative perspective with Sweden, it will suggest the possibilities and limitations of practices in Japanese schools and communities. For example, in this case, although the children's voices were heard by staff members of the NPO, this was limited to matters related to their daily lives and did not extend to changing their living environment or the decision-making processes of the organization itself.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Democratic participation is fundamental to the development of a democratic society. This study will contribute to the discussion of practice to encourage civic engagement among children and youth with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds through daily practice in schools and communities.

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## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

Home and preschool collaboration in Estonia and Sweden - challenges and new opportunities after the pandemic

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The importance of parental collaboration in Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) is emphasized in both policy documents and research. The question posed in this study is whether, and if so, in what way, the forms of collaboration between home and preschool have changed after the pandemic. The aim is to develop knowledge about the significance of the restrictions during the pandemic for the collaboration and communication between preschool teachers and parents in two different contexts, Estonia and Sweden. This study is based on interactionist perspectives and draws on neo-ecological system theory – ideas Navarro and Tudge (2023) developed based on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. Qualitative, in-depth interviews with 14 preschool teachers were conducted: seven in Estonia and seven in Sweden. The interview was transcribed verbatim, and a conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was conducted. All participants were informed in detail about the study and the conditions for their participation before entering the study.

Preliminary results indicate teachers were given an opportunity to develop professionally and elaborate new ways to collaborate with families. Estonian and Swedish preschools have developed digital collaboration forms, and digital development conversations will continue to be offered. However, collective forms of collaboration, such as family gatherings, are challenged when replaced with individual forms, which may impact parents' opportunities to create networks with other parents. Reducing different forms of collaboration can also contribute to the forms offered only to suit a particular group of parents. One consequence of the restrictions was a heightened awareness among preschool staff of the need to discuss and reflect on norms, forms, and procedures when collaborating with parents in preschool. This study is relevant to Nordic educational research because collaborating with parents is a part of Swedish preschool assignments. This study also includes a Swedish context, as Swedish preschool teachers' views on collaboration after the pandemic are compared with those of Estonian preschool teachers.

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## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

„We have to do it together“: Coordinating services in Iceland

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Successful implementation of support to children with special educational needs can be dependent on variety of services, particularly in the case of children with complex needs, where collaboration and coordination of different professionals and systems, like social services, health care and educational system is of crucial importance, which can be complicated and does not necessarily happen naturally (e.g. Carière, Gascon and Déschenés, 2013). In later years attention has been drawn to the fact that in Iceland coordination between the different services and institutions that provide support to children and their families has not always been adequate and access to services problematic at times. This has created much stress for parents and hindered support to children. Recently new legislation has been passed in Iceland aimed to improve access to and coordination of services. The law is now being implemented by municipalities in Iceland. Four municipalities were selected as pioneers.

The paper presents the results of a small qualitative study intended to explore the experiences of municipal staff that play key roles in implementing the legislation.

Six members of two pilot municipalities were interviewed using semistructured interviews. Data was analysed according to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2013) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory used as framework.

First findings indicate that on the whole participants were positive and optimistic despite some problems in the beginning of implementation. The law have f.expl. led to marked improvement of collaboration of institutions, sharing of important information and more continuity of services to children. The burden of the responsibility of gaining access to and coordinating services has been moved from parents to a specially appointed coordinator easing their burden.

Relevance to Nordic educational research: The paper presents first results of a research intended to explore effectiveness and challenges regarding the implementation of new legislation intended to improve and coordinate services for the benefit of children and their families.

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

### Parental Involvement in Teenage Education Contributes to Academic Success

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#### Research Aim

This study examines the role of parental involvement in the academic success of teenagers in Iceland, focusing on family engagement patterns and their impact on student outcomes. Utilizing OECD findings from the PISA 2022 studies (OECD, 2023a & 2023b; Þorgrímsson & Sigurðardóttir, 2023), the research highlights Iceland's educational resilience in student well-being, in maintaining academic stability during disruptions, and investigates the continuing challenges for students of foreign origin.

#### Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in theories of parental involvement and educational equity, referencing work on the critical role of family-school cooperation for fostering academic success (Crozier & Symeou, 2017; Jaynes, 2011). Kristín Jónsdóttir and Amalía Björnsdóttir (2020) emphasize that home-school cooperation in Iceland is rooted in mutual respect, a principle that aligns with Iceland's National Education Policy 2030 (2022), which seeks to foster supportive and equitable learning environments.

#### Methodology

This research uses secondary data analysis of recent PISA 2022 findings, examining quantitative indicators of student well-being, and of parental engagement. It considers variables such as frequency of parental discussions about future education, family meal routines, and teacher-parent communication, drawing comparisons between Iceland, other Nordic countries and the average of OECD countries.

#### Findings

The study expects to confirm that Icelandic parental involvement positively influences student academic and well-being outcomes. Notably, regular family interactions, such as shared meals, relate with improved academic performance, while discussions about future educational goals contribute to academic socialization (Bæck, 2017). The findings are also expected to show that Iceland's focus on equity helps reduce performance gaps for immigrant students, although a subset of students still lacks adequate parental support, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This research adds to Nordic educational studies by examining Iceland's approach to equity and educational resilience in student well-being, particularly its emphasis on family engagement and support for diverse student backgrounds. Iceland's experience can offer valuable insights for other Nordic countries facing similar challenges.

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# Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Multicultural and multilingual educator professionalism in Denmark and Sweden

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#### Aim and relevance to Nordic educational research

This presentation investigates how multicultural and multilingual educator professionalism unfolds among educators in preschools and primary schools in Sweden and Denmark. In an area of increased linguistic and cultural diversity, child populations span varieties of linguistic and cultural trajectories, affiliations and language practices. We focus on how educators' reflections upon dilemmas they encounter in pedagogical practice can fuel their professional learning and discretionary power, as well as the potential for innovative pedagogical practices stemming from the teachers' reflections. By exploring how educators in Denmark and Sweden respond professionally to the demographic fact of diversity, and how they address, analyse and handle pedagogical dilemmas, we make an important contribution to Nordic educational research.

#### Theoretical framework

We combine the concept of educator professionalism with insights from research on multiculturalism and multilingualism. Educator professionalism is defined as an occupational discourse constructed among colleagues (Evetts, 2011). Along the same lines, multicultural and multilingual educator professionalism is understood as discourse produced among educators in respond to the cultural and linguistic diversity among children in educational settings. Equity pedagogy (Banks, 2004) and translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; García et al., 2017) are two key concepts that aim to understand inequity in education in terms of norms of majority and minority, normal and deviant, monolingualism and multilingualism and the processes of discrimination that may emerge when institutions and people are unaware of these norms and the structural conditions that enable them. By combining the three concepts of equity pedagogy, translanguaging and educator professionalism, we create a conceptual lens that enhance our analysis of how educators' responses to dilemmas can point towards renewed pedagogical practices.

#### Methodology

We employ a qualitative secondary analysis (QSA) (Hughes et al., 2021) to re-analyse examples from three development-oriented research projects that all worked with educators' reflexive dialogues as a method. Through QSA we aim to establish an epistemic distance to the empirical material. Accordingly, we re-organise our data in a renewed contextual order of the language in education policies that influence the local contexts of data production throughout the time span of our data production, 2008-2022. The focus of our analysis is how educators negotiate, analyse and reflect on pedagogy, dilemmas and professionalism in dialogue with each other and a researcher.

#### Findings

Our analyses show that systematically organised reflexive dialogues throughout which educators can explore, critique and experiment with different analytical and practical perspectives encourage them to think about education as not simply a technical or practical task (Biesta, 2012), but to engage in reflections about the normative and ideological discourses that may constrain or support role distributions and learning processes in the context of everyday pedagogical practices. The teachers' reflections challenge a societal deficit view on pupils and multilingual language practice, indicating a potential renewal of pedagogical practices that place multiculturalism and multilingualism at the centre of educator professionalism.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Qualifying teacher competencies by cooperation between research and upper secondary education: considerations from a Swedish and Danish case

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The topic of this paper is cooperation between research and upper secondary research aiming to contribute to the development of teacher education and school development on a sustainable base that increase well-being and include different perspectives in schools. We use two cases. The Swedish case is based on practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) and ethnographic methods (Aspers, 2011) while the Danish case is based on the notion agency (Priestley et al., 2015) and use action research (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2015). Both cases use writing as part of data followed by dialogues including perspectives from practice and research. However, the results contribute to discussions of the role of the researcher, implementation and possibilities for discussions within practice (Duch & Thøstrup, 2024; Gustavsson, 2024). In the Swedish case the researcher balance between a critical position and driving processes forwards, focus on pedagogical issues and practical matters that relates to solving daily problems or supporting more general discussions. In the Danish case the researcher balances between accepting the pressure on teachers being involved in many projects, time pressure and teaching obligations and at the same time relate to and develop new pedagogical initiatives due to the goal in the project.

The results raise methodological and theoretical discussions of relevance to Nordic educational research due to practice-based research. Furthermore, it also contributes to perspectives on development of teacher education and qualifications such as writing in different genres, differentiate and prioritise between solving practical problems and participating in pedagogical discussions.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Support By Coincidence? A Cross-National Study on Early Career Teachers Transition from Education to Profession

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Internationally, there are concerns about the fact that many student teachers do not enter the profession when they finish their education, or that many leave the profession during their first years in profession. Similarly, international research over many years shows that the transition from education to profession is challenging (e.g. Dicke et al., 2016). Reports from Norway indicate that one out of four early career teachers stop working as teachers during their first five working years (GNIST, 2016) and there is a similar trend in Germany. Therefore, it is important to investigate the available support for teacher students in their transition from teacher education to teaching profession to promote career sustainability. This study raises the following research question: *How are early career teachers supported during their first years as teachers?*

As a theoretical perspective, we use the concept of *developmental tasks* in teaching. From this perspective, early career teachers are seen to require individual and institutional support to master the career entry or induction phase (Keller-Schneider & Hericks, 2017). We collected data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews in Norwegian and German. The interview guide was developed by two German Universities (Kruse, 2009) and adapted for the Norwegian context. The study used both thematic and qualitative content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023).

From our preliminary analysis, a key finding is that early career teachers from both countries found that mandatory programmes were useful, but often valued informal exchanges more highly. It is striking that across countries and locations, those offers and situations that were not institutionalized, but rather arise by chance, are described as particularly helpful. Based on these results, we discuss the question of voluntariness in the transition face into the teacher profession.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Teachers' Assessment Literacy in a Multidisciplinary Learning in Finland - A Phenomenographic Approach on Teachers' Perceptions

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Assessment literacy is an essential part of a teacher's pedagogical competence (DeLuca et al, 2020). Assessment literacy develops over the teacher's career and both context-independent and linked to factors internal to the teacher (Looney et al., 2018). Assessment literacy should be considered particularly in the context of multidisciplinary learning, which is an area of challenge and tension for teachers (Brasken et al, 2020; Drake & Reid, 2018). Multidisciplinary learning emphasises learner-centered learning that takes into account students' interests (Mård & Hilli, 2020), supports students to take an active role in their own learning by exploring real-world phenomena (McPhail, 2018). Assessment during multidisciplinary learning requires active assessment practices and a wide range of assessments competencies from teacher to ensure that assessment in the module is linked to curriculum aims, enables student participation and is carried out in a varied and ethically sustainable way (Drake & Reid, 2018; Peltomaa & Luostarinen, 2020; Tarnanen & Kostiaainen, 2020; Brasken et al, 2020). This kind of future-competencies focused assessment is a challenging and tense area that teachers need more knowledge base to implement (Lam et al, 2013; Brasken et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study is to explore Finnish primary school teachers' perceptions of assessment literacy in the context of multidisciplinary learning. The data was collected using a phenomenographic research approach and based on semi-structured interviews (n=15). The study shows that assessment literacy is perceived as ensuring the ethics of assessment, contribution to professional development, management of assessment knowledge and implementation of varied assessment.

The findings of the study bring new perspectives to the debate on assessment literacy in the Nordic countries. The results can be used as a basis for designing assessment education and to increase the understanding of primary school teacher students of aspects of assessment literacy in their work as teachers.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Suitability Assessment in Teacher Education: Contradictions in Personal and Professional Values and Attitudes

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### Suitability Assessment in Teacher Education: Contradictions in Personal and Professional Values and Attitudes

Suitability assessment in teacher education aims to determine whether preservice teachers possess the essential prerequisites to effectively practice the teaching profession. This process ensures future teachers can uphold the values, principles, and ethical standards expected within educational settings. The assessment explores not only the competencies of preservice teachers but also their alignment with the professional values and attitudes necessary for fostering a positive learning environment. However, contradictions between personal attitudes and professional values upheld by educational institutions present challenges.

The study investigates the perceptions preservice teachers have of their professional identity in relation to suitability. Employing a qualitative approach, the research involved 14 focus group discussions with first-year preservice teachers. These discussions provided a rich data set for thematically analyzing how preservice teachers navigate the complexities of aligning their personal values with the professional expectations of the teaching field. Personal regulations were followed, and the project was granted approval by The Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research.

Preliminary findings reveal that some preservice teachers face substantial challenges when their personal attitudes and values conflict with those upheld by schools. These contradictions manifest in various ways, such as differing pedagogical approaches, beliefs about student behavior and discipline, and attitudes towards diversity and inclusion. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) will be used as the theoretical framework to discuss the tension arising when personal beliefs conflict with the inclusive education policies that schools must adhere to.

The study's implications are significant for teacher educators, who play a pivotal role in guiding preservice teachers' professional development. To address the challenges highlighted, teacher educators need to develop suitability assessment practices that evaluate technical competencies and explore the alignment of personal values with professional expectations.

Teacher educators should foster an environment promoting open dialogue about values and attitudes. Creating spaces where preservice teachers critically reflect on their personal beliefs and the challenges in reconciling these with professional expectations can lead to deeper understanding and greater self-awareness. This approach can also help preservice teachers develop the adaptability and resilience needed to manage value conflicts in their future careers.

The study is relevant to Nordic educational research as the findings underscore the importance of suitability assessments in ensuring educational equity. When preservice teachers' personal values align with professional standards, they are better equipped to provide inclusive and equitable education to all students. However, when value conflicts are not addressed, there is a risk that personal biases may negatively impact student outcomes.

Teacher educators must therefore prioritize the development of suitability assessment practices that identify and address value conflicts early in the training process. By doing so, they can assist preservice teachers in cultivating a professional identity that is committed to the ethical and inclusive principles of the teaching profession.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Thriving teachers: Sustaining professionals through a sense of fulfilment and belonging

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Many countries are facing shortages in teacher supply and equally difficult circumstances in retaining teachers (Quickfall and Wood, 2024). Whilst there is no single reason which is responsible for this crisis, we argue that a common characteristic is the emergence of the Global Education Reform Movement (Sahlberg, 2012) which sees education as a commodity and a driver for expanding national economies. In some countries, such as England, this has led to quasi-privatisation of parts of the sector, corporatisation and deprofessionalisation. Consequently, there has been a rise in teacher attrition as their professional autonomy is eroded and workloads spiral.

In this paper, we explore an alternative way of seeing the role of teachers. We argue that teachers should not to be identified as a cost/resource, but instead as the key investment we make in developing high quality education, based on fostering professionalism, growth and responsibility. This requires teachers to feel fulfilled and a sense of belonging, to create a climate where they can thrive as professionals, and support the children they work with to achieve to their potential.

Fulfilment can be defined as *satisfaction or happiness as a result of fully developing one's potential*, and has been characterised in several ways including self-fulfilment (Gewirth, 1998) professional fulfilment (Hodge and Sandford, 2024) and value fulfilment (Prentice et al., 2024). In addition to an individual sense of fulfilment, it is important for professionals to feel part of a supportive community which comes with a sense of belonging. Morieson et al (2013) argue that a sense of belonging within professional spaces is crucial as it leads to a sense of community and shared endeavour. As such, we need to create supportive, evolving contexts (Gravett and Ajjawi, 2022) in which both teachers and children feel a sense of belonging.

We argue that by focusing on the fulfilment and belonging of teachers in relation to their professional work as the advocates and experts in education, we are able to identify some core aspects of thriving educational environments which will make the work of both teachers and children sustainable; and hence in part meet the challenge of the current recruitment and retention crisis.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Boundary crossing through teacher educators' school placement practice

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#### Research topic/aim

Teacher education has often been criticised for not being relevant for school, and for not being grounded in school practice and for being too academic (Cochrane-Smith et al. 2018). However, it can be argued that teacher education has its own practice, both academic and didactic. Smeby & Messel (2017) argue that the practice in teacher education is what can be described as practice-oriented academisation. An issue that can be raised is whether teacher education practice is aligned or misaligned with school practice. This paper reports on how a Norwegian teacher education institution given teacher educators the option to have a reduced workload and to have their own school placement practice as a measure to meet this criticism. The research question that we raise in this paper is: What are teacher educators' perspectives on school placement practice?

#### Theoretical framework

A boundary can be seen as a "socio- cultural difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction" (Akkerman and Bakker 2011 p. 133). Teacher education is placed within academic-didactical practice and school being firmly entrenched in the practical-didactical sphere. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) point out that boundaries in teacher education are evident when student teachers encounter differing pedagogical values, thereby causing discontinuity. Student teachers' school placement can be viewed as one way of crossing the boundaries between teacher education and school. The question is whether teacher educators' teaching practice in schools can enable crossing boundaries between teacher education and school.

#### Methodology/research design

An anonymous open-ended online questionnaire was sent to 150 teacher educators in a Norwegian University during spring 2024. 72 faculty members responded. The questionnaire focused on teacher educators' experiences of school placement practice. The open-ended questionnaire was used for mapping purposes as its structured form enabled comparison. Responses from participants were coded openly by the three authors.

#### Expected results/findings

Preliminary findings indicate that teacher educators approached school placement practice in several ways: for classroom observation, for taking over classroom teaching, and discussing educational methodologies with classroom teachers. Furthermore, teacher educators report that the value of such school placement practice lies in updated insight in classrooms and teaching; as well as added credibility in teacher education.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Academisation of teacher education has often been criticised. This paper presents one measure for updating teacher educators' school practice, emphasizing the interplay between research-based teaching and practice, which can be relevant for other Nordic teacher education institutions.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Teachers with five years of experience: Addressing persistent challenges

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In media and in research there are many reports of emotional challenges experienced by new teachers (for example, Admiraal et al., 2023; Lindqvist et al., 2023). However, emotional challenges that persist over the first years of working as a teacher is more seldomly explored. Few studies explore how teachers that keep on teaching after the initial phase resolve the challenges they encounter. In this study the aim was to explore what emotional challenges that persisted and how they were resolved after five years of working as a teacher. As a theoretical framework the personal interpretative framework of teachers is utilized (Kelchtermans, 1993). The personal interpretative framework includes and influences how teachers generally view situations and conditions of working as a teacher, and their appraisals of situations. Their interpretation works as a lens through which they observe, give meaning to, and react to their experiences. In addition, the individual framework influences teachers' beliefs about themselves, what they should be doing, and what constitutes good work as a teacher. In the study 18 teachers participated through self-reports of their experiences during their fourth and fifth year working as a teacher. During their fourth year they responded to questions about how their year had been. During their fifth year they were also asked to give advice to themselves as new teachers. The report at the end of year four had a word count between 1318 and 276 (M: 748.5, SD: 277.48). At the end of year five the reports were between 1009 and 208 words (M: 619.7, SD: 253.95). The data was analyzed using thematic analyses. The findings show that adaptability was considered a required action to resolve persisting emotional challenges. Adaptability was defined as having made key experiences that guided future action (i.e. an ability to change to fit in new conditions.) Being adaptive was considered to be a necessity when ideals and experiences clashed. The following three sub-themes described teachers' adaptability as practicing teachers: (1) trying too hard, (2) believing in yourself and (3) managing expectations. This study is relevant to Nordic Educational Research since it addresses essential experiences that teachers describe having after experience over five years. Therefore, it could be used to better understand the full experience of being an early career teacher and the challenges that might include.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### The scientific basis of Work Integrated Learning in Teacher Education

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#### Abstract

The global demand for sustainable and classroom ready teacher graduates has spurred an increase in teacher education programs that seek new ways to tackle the challenge of integrating educational theory with hands-on teacher practice. One such approach that has gained popularity in Sweden lately is so-called work-integrated teacher education (WITE), in which student teachers work part-time during their professional training. As a first step before investigating the specific affordances and challenges of these Swedish types of WITE-programs, a semi-systematic literature review (Snyder, 2019) has been conducted with the aim to establish a synthesis of the scientific basis of the wider concept of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in connection with teacher education. More specifically, this study consists of a systematic analysis of 25 selected peer-reviewed empirical studies, focusing on the geographical location of programs studied, conceptualizations of WIL, problems addressed, theoretical framework, methodology and participants, and key findings in terms of affordances and challenges of WIL in teacher education. Theoretically, the study draws on Gibson's original definition of affordances as the opportunities offered, provided or furnished by the environment for a specific species (Gibson, 1979). In our case, the concept refers to the specific opportunities and functions furnished by the educational environment that student teachers perceive, encounter and interact with during their WIL embedded teacher education program.

Preliminary findings show that WIL has become an important concept and tool for integrating educational theory and practice in teacher education, particularly in countries like Australia and South Africa. WIL in teacher education plays a significant role in enhancing essential teaching competencies, reinforcing professional identity, and improving classroom management skills by combining theoretical knowledge with practical teaching experiences, such as well-structured and extended practicum periods and mentorships. Key themes identified include experiential learning, reflective practice, and partnership between universities and schools, all of which contribute to higher levels of classroom readiness. However, challenges such as insufficient resources, inconsistent quality of mentoring, and varying levels of institutional support impede the effectiveness of WIL in teacher education programs. These issues can result in unequal learning experiences for student teachers, leaving some ill-prepared to handle the demands of classroom teaching. Discrepancies between theoretical coursework and real-world application further exacerbate this issue, potentially leading to feelings of unpreparedness.

The study highlights the necessity of well-supported WIL frameworks that prioritize continuous mentorship, flexible training models, and collaboration among educational stakeholders. These findings can contribute to the enhancement of teacher education programs in the Nordic countries by underscoring the significance of addressing resource gaps, improving mentorship consistency, and aligning theoretical and practical training more closely to equip student teachers for increasingly diverse and challenging learning environments.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Bridging preschool and Primary School Education: Exploring Preschool Teachers' Experiences in Icelandic Primary Schools

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The study aims to explore the experiences of preschool teachers working in primary schools in Iceland. Specifically, it seeks to analyse how these teachers apply their specialized knowledge of early childhood learning within the primary school context.

Research indicates that teaching practices in preschools and primary schools in Iceland differ significantly (Gerður Óskarsdóttir, 2012; Jóhanna Einarsdóttir & Bryndís Garðarsdóttir, 2013). According to the Icelandic National Curriculum (2012), teachers play a pivotal role in all aspects of schoolwork. It is widely acknowledged that the quality of education and the success of the school system rely heavily on well-educated and motivated teachers across all levels (Dahlberg et al., 2013; Gerður G. Óskarsdóttir, 2014; Jóhanna Einarsdóttir, 2007, 2020; OECD, 2017). A teacher's professionalism is grounded in specialized vocational training, knowledge, attitudes, and work ethics (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The Icelandic Act on Education, Qualification, and Recruitment of Teachers, No. 95/2019, provides a unified teaching license across all school levels. It assumes that all teachers possess a general qualification in pedagogy and teaching, with opportunities for specialization at the preschool, primary, or secondary school levels, including subjects like art and literature. As a result, teachers may be licensed to teach at a school level for which they are not specialized.

The study employed semi-structured individual interviews with five preschool teachers, all of whom have backgrounds in preschool education and extensive experience in early childhood settings but are currently teaching the youngest children in primary school (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis to address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Permissions were obtained from school principals, and participating teachers were informed about the study, with informed consent secured prior to their involvement.

The findings indicate that preschool teachers adapt to the established teaching methods in primary schools, gradually learning the practices used there. They attempt to integrate play-based learning throughout the day but observe that children often shift towards more structured activities, such as completing assignments, once they enter primary school. Additionally, these teachers find that their holistic perspective on children's well-being and safety is challenged, as they are not involved in supervising recess or mealtimes. Despite these adjustments, the teachers believe that their preschool background offers valuable benefits when working with the youngest students in primary school.

Primary school educators can gain valuable insights from preschool teachers on how young children learn, particularly the central role of play as a learning method. Incorporating play-based and diverse teaching strategies from preschool into primary education could enhance the continuity between school levels, benefiting young learners and strengthening the educational transition.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

A systematic literature review of research on threats and violence directed to teachers

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Internationally, scholars vary in the terminology used to describe threats and violence experienced by teachers from students, such as bullying, victimisation, harassment, workplace violence, violence against teachers, upwards bullying, and contra-power harassment. To a certain extent, these differences reflect diverse conceptual frameworks, perspectives and interests of the scholars, making it challenging to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field. Among the increasing number of publications in this field, some reviews have been identified (Chirico et al., 2021; Longobardi et al., 2019; Montgomery, 2019; Reddy et al., 2018). These reviews primarily feature quantitative studies, while qualitative studies are largely absent. As far as we are aware, little is still known about the total knowledge production on teacher-directed violence.

The study seeks to address this gap by actively searching for more publications in this scattered and fragmented field and by providing an empirical overview of research from various approaches (including qualitative studies), with a particular focus on studies conducted in the Nordic countries. We aim to explore the following research questions:

Which topics dominate the scholarly work on teacher-directed violence?

How are studies from the Nordic countries represented, and what are their main topics?

This review follows research synthesis guidelines by Munn et al. (2018) to identify international evidence, confirm current practices, identify new practices, uncover conflicting results, and provide guidance for decision-making. We adapt the approach to account for the diversity in studies on teacher-directed violence, acknowledging the limitations in defining the review as strictly systematic or scoping (Suttan et al, 2019).

Data collection was conducted through, firstly, a comprehensive literature search in databases (Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, PsycINFO). Secondly, reference lists of key articles were reviewed to identify additional publications. Thirdly, we conducted direct searches in journals like *Journal of School Violence*. Finally, we screened 164 retrieved articles for research conducted in the Nordic countries, resulting in 11 relevant articles.

We expect to provide an overview of research, including such from Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Preliminary findings indicate variations in how teacher-directed violence is understood across Nordic studies, likely reflecting cultural and structural differences within their educational systems. Qualitative studies from the Nordic context often highlight teachers' personal experiences, offering deeper insights into the psychological and social dimensions of managing threats and violence.

Teacher-directed violence remains an understudied phenomenon. This paper aims to offer a review of existing literature, particularly within the Nordic context. Our findings will provide valuable insights for researchers and inform policymakers and educational institutions about the importance of developing supportive measures for teachers. By identifying trends, gaps, and variations in Nordic research, we aim to foster a more nuanced understanding of teacher-directed violence and the need for culturally adapted solutions within the educational sector.



## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Lower-secondary school teachers' professional development: Principals' roles in university-school collaboration

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One of the common findings in the studies is that school principals, as the school leaders, have a significant role in teachers' professional development and the sustainability of teachers' professional development in their schools (Gamlem & Helleve, 2022; Postholm, 2016; Sahlin, 2023). However, although teachers' perceptions of the roles of principals in teachers' professional development are significant, it is a less researched area (Sahlin, 2023). To address this gap in the literature, this qualitative study investigated the roles of school principals in teachers' professional development when schools collaborated with universities for teachers' professional development in Norway and answered the research question: *How do teachers and university-based teacher educators interpret the roles of principals for teachers' professional development in university-school collaboration?* The cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 2015) provides the theoretical framework for the study. Lower-secondary school teachers ( $n=19$ ) and university-based teacher educators ( $n=7$ ) were the participants in the study. The qualitative data was collected by using focus group interviews ( $n=4$ ) with the lower-secondary school teachers and individual interviews ( $n=7$ ) with the university-based teacher educators in the study. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the qualitative data. In the preliminary findings of the study teachers and university-based teacher educators indicate that principals should be motivated for their teachers' professional development, and they should also motivate their teachers for professional development. Another finding indicates that principals should provide teachers with clear information regarding professional development. The findings also suggest that principals should prioritize teacher's professional development when their school is in a collaborative relationship with universities. Further, the findings emphasize that principals should set clear goals regarding teachers' professional development in their schools. The Nordic countries strive to provide good education to children in the schools. Since teachers are the drivers of good education in school, the Nordic countries have been making a huge economic investment in teachers' professional development (OECD, 2019). Thus, it is essential to better understand how the actors of teachers' professional development in the school, i.e. teachers and at the universities, i.e. university-based teacher educators interpret the roles principals, as the school leaders, play in teachers' professional development when schools and universities are in a collaborative relationship.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Attitudes toward mathematics among prospective preschool teachers at the beginning of their education

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Previous research shows that many prospective and early childhood teachers have low self-confidence and negative attitudes towards mathematics (Hollingsworth & Knight McKenna, 2018; Linder & Simpson, 2018; Panero et al., 2023). These negative attitudes influence their teaching of mathematics and thus what children are offered to learn (Geist, 2015; Knaus, 2017; Linder & Simpson, 2018). Offering a sustainable and equitable mathematics education to all preschool children thus means all preschool teachers need to see mathematics as something they have the competence to teach, for which positive attitudes are important.

The aim of this study is to investigate attitudes towards mathematics among prospective preschool teachers who have just started their teacher education. The results will have relevance for preschool teacher education and give implications for what to consider when working to promote prospective preschool teachers' attitudes toward mathematics.

We use the concept of attitude and adopt a multidimensional definition (Wen & Dube, 2022) where cognitive as well as affective and behavioral components are included.

The study employs a mixed methods design. We used a short form of Tapia and Marsh's (2004) Attitudes Towards Mathematics Inventory (ATMI) questionnaire, developed and tested by Lim and Chapman (2013), and reflective written texts. 34 students participated in the study.

Preliminary results from the qualitative data show that prospective preschool teachers have negative experiences of mathematics which affect how they view mathematics and how they feel about the subject. Concerning the cognitive dimension they describe mathematics in words like "it is difficult", "something I struggle with" and "something we need to know for everyday life". About the affective dimension, the participants express no joy for the subject, however, their negative experiences seem to have motivated them to give preschool children better opportunities to learn and enjoy mathematics. We expect further analyses of the reflective texts to provide results concerning the behavioral dimension of attitudes. Also, the questionnaire remains to be analysed.

The most common method for measuring attitudes is questionnaires that are analysed quantitatively (Wen & Dube, 2022). In recent years, however, several researchers have called for more qualitative methods (e.g. Di Martino & Zan, 2011; Kaasila et al., 2012). To date, there are few studies, especially in the Nordic context, that focus on prospective early childhood teachers' attitudes toward mathematics with qualitative methods. Thus, our mixed methods approach aims to meet this call.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Integrating AI in Finnish Classrooms: Adapting the Intelligent TPACK Scale for Cultural Relevance

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Artificial intelligence (AI), especially large language model-based chatbots such as ChatGPT and Copilot, has quickly found its place within the Finnish educational contexts. This development poses demands to understand teachers' readiness to take advantage of AI in pedagogically sound ways. For this purpose, this paper presents the adaptation process of the Intelligent TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) scale for the Finnish educational context, focusing on cultural relevance and contextual appropriateness. The Intelligent TPACK framework (Celik, 2023) extends the traditional TPACK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) by integrating AI-related knowledge, highlighting how teachers can effectively and ethically utilize AI tools in their instruction. Given Finland's strong emphasis on research-based teacher education, technological integration, and cultural nuances (Valtonen et al., 2017), it is critical to ensure that educational measurement tools like the Intelligent TPACK scale reflect the unique characteristics of Finnish society and its education system.

The adaptation involves a comprehensive translation and validation process, following established cross-cultural adaptation guidelines. The process has already begun with a forward-backward translation to maintain the conceptual equivalence of the scale. Finnish educational experts were involved in the review process to ensure that the scales were linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant. Data collection will be conducted with pre-service and in-service teachers to assess the psychometric properties of the scale. This will be followed by reliability and validity procedures through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The validated items for the Finnish context will be presented during the conference. The findings will contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance teachers' AI competencies in Finland and provide a validated tool that can support future research on AI integration in Finnish education. The results have implications for Finnish teacher education programs, policymakers, and researchers aiming to assess and foster AI-related pedagogical competencies in culturally diverse settings.

Keywords: TPACK, AI integration, teacher education, scale adaptation

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Developing Personal Vision in Initial Teacher Education (ITE): 'We can see there is a future we want to achieve'

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#### Topic:

Our paper will begin by outlining the 'Vision and Voices' (V&V) project: a longitudinal study tracking the development of personal vision across a 4-year undergraduate ITE programme. This extensive period of time in ITE has enabled the teaching team to progressively thread vision-making through each year of the programme. Though productive, the vision-making journey with student teachers is challenging. The paper will go on to report on a study, as part of the V&V project, that aimed to understand how student teachers are experiencing the vision-making process. Resultant findings were then used to inform a series of digital animations developed to support the vision-making process in the future.

#### Framework:

The research draws on the concept of teacher vision, namely a personal image of what teachers hope to achieve in their classroom, school, community and society (Hammerness, 2006). As a device, personal vision can guide and motivate teachers in their negotiation of local and global challenges, and inform partnership working with stakeholders across and beyond education (Hara and Sherbine, 2018). Thus, creating a personal vision for the future, aligned with the ability to share this vision with others, is becoming an important attribute for practitioners as they engage in future-oriented discussions about the nature and purpose of their role and work (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

#### Methodology:

The study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist design, with data gathered using semi-structured, focus group interviews involving student teachers from each year of the ITE programme (n=32). The data were analysed inductively to generate themes, summarising the data, enabling the research aims to be addressed.

#### Findings:

Analysis of the data resulted in the generation of four themes. Firstly, *comprehending* i.e., grasping the 'what' and 'why' of teacher vision. Secondly, the *nature* of the vision-making process i.e., ongoing, iterative and involves recurrent focusing, reflecting and negotiating of one's vision. Thirdly, *methods* to support vision-making, with the act of vision-sharing, formally and informally, reported as invaluable. Fourthly, *challenges and expectations*, i.e., ongoing reassurance and encouragement required to ensure students develop distinct and unique visions. Findings from this study will support the vision-making process with students on our programmes, but also have potential to promote, encourage and support the process in ITE programmes beyond our own.

#### Relevance:

We understand the importance NERA places on collaboration with the international research community and believe that personal vision and findings from our research, along with the digital resources we developed, could be used by Nordic scholars and practitioners, both in and pre-service, as a means to promote NERA's aim of enhancing and strengthening the visibility of education as a discipline in Nordic societies.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### High Hopes and Hard Lessons: How Problems Are Represented in Swedish Teacher Education Reform

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In this paper, I draw on my background as an educational scientist with roots in sociology and gender studies to explore how public debate, political reforms, and policy documents shape Swedish teacher education with the aim of reforming not only the school system but also Swedish society. Historically, teacher education in Sweden has been influenced by visionary ideals, particularly with the introduction of *grundskolan* (comprehensive school) in 1962; however, the debate in the 21st century has increasingly shifted toward reforming teacher education to solve perceived acute societal issues. Concurrently, criticism of both Swedish schools and teacher education has intensified.

With a forthcoming proposal for teacher education reform set to be presented on November 29, 2024, this paper analyzes the hopes tied to reforming teacher education, exploring which societal issues it is expected to address and how. The study employs Carol Lee Bacchi's discourse-analytic framework, *What's the Problem Represented to Be*, to scrutinize how the proposal and its preparatory works frame current teacher education and articulate aspirations for a reformed version.

Building on previous research on Swedish teacher education, this study aims to shed light on the expectations linked to a reformed teacher education, critically relating these to political tensions within Swedish society and considering their potential impact on teacher education.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Eco fiction and interdisciplinary methods for sustainable teacher education

Britt Johanne Farstad, Matteo Cattaneo

University of Gävle, Sweden

### Eco fiction and interdisciplinary methods for sustainable teacher education

#### 1. Research topic/aim

The project "Eco fiction and interdisciplinary methods for sustainable teacher education" aims to explore how interdisciplinary work with speculative fiction and poetry, creative writing, science, storytelling and imagination can be developed as tools in teachers training programs in the context of crisis and climate change. It seeks to foster educators' creative engagement through narrative and interdisciplinary educational practices (Ahlberg 2021; Brudin Borg et al. 2024). Development of teaching methods to encourage collective reflection, promoting a pedagogy of hope and agency.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The research draws on *Critical Theory* (Freire 2000; 2021) and *Eco Critique* (Ahlberg 2024; Hiltner et al. 2015). Emphasize on education as a path for social transformation, the importance of upbringing, culture, curiosity and critical thinking (Huoponen 2023). *Biologos* (Cattaneo 2024), *Eco fiction* and *eco critique*, the Anthropocene, educational and multi/interdisciplinary methods (Assadourian 2017; Hernández-Serrano 2021), shared visions and a collective imagination and socioclimatic conceptions as 'imaginary concepts' (Milkoreit (2017).

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The project consists of multiple phases at the University of Gävle (EU-Green). Teacher students will be given possibilities to explore ecofiction and interdisciplinary methodology that intersects literature, science, pedagogy, and philosophy (Farstad). Research data will be collected from student feedback, focusing on how the working methods may develop their educational practice in relation to sustainability, imagination and agency (Toivonen 2022).

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The project is expected to show that narrative and creative practices can serve as powerful tools for teacher students to engage with complex issues like climate change (Stevenson & Peterson 2016). Through interdisciplinary methodologies a result might be deeper understanding of ecology, scientific, socioeconomic contexts, consciousness of sustainability, community and agency.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This project aligns to network 19, "Teaching and Teacher Education". It contributes to Nordic educational research by introducing an innovative, narrative-based approach to teaching climate change, grounded in critical theory. The focus on collective reflection and imagination through literature, storytelling and creative writing attunes with Nordic pedagogical values, making it relevant to ongoing discussions on environmental education and the development of hopeful, future-oriented learning spaces.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

L2 English teacher self-efficacy in professional development and concept change: how much is enough?

Polina Kordik

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This presentation is going to summarise the preliminary findings of a systematic review article in progress by a PhD student, the central question of which is to analyse the connection the research has been established between L2 English teacher self-efficacy beliefs (SEB), their L2 proficiency, and the possibility of conceptual change during the process of pedagogical education or training.

Research has established a link between self-efficacy of L2 language teachers and their language proficiency (Choi & Lee 2016; Hiver 2013). However, it is not clear from previous studies, which factor influences the other. The role of self-efficacy beliefs in concept change is even less clear, as SEB is generally considered to foster change, while strong SEB may create intolerance for it (Pintrich 1999, Sinatra 2005). Finally, the length of the training has proved to be significant for the robustness of change in university teacher training (Postareff et al 2007). This finding has not, however, been tested on wider audience and in the context of language teaching.

The role of SEB is unclear in concept change research. On the one hand, Language Teacher Conceptual Change (LTCC) (Kubanyiova, 2012) asserts that teachers with strong SEB appraise the input as challenging and adopt a goal to approach the education message, which leads to its systematic processing. On the other hand, the construct is 'not unproblematic' (ibid), because if 'translated into confidence in one's current knowledge' it can create intolerance for change (Pintrich 1999). Sinatra (2005) also states that 'research has yet to demonstrate whether self-efficacy operates in a positive or negative manner regarding change'.

The focal point of the planned research is to establish the role of self-efficacy beliefs in conceptual change of language teachers. Is it something that stimulates the change and helps teachers to benefit from pedagogical education? Or is it something that prevents teachers from being perceptive to training, change and restructuring of existing concepts?

The results of this research may contribute to:

The practice of teacher education by exploring the interrelation between language proficiency, SEB, and the length of training. This knowledge may help educational stakeholders in Nordic countries make informed choices on training trajectories.

The project may positively influence the retention rates of English teachers in Nordic countries and high-quality educational practices.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### A student perspective on technology comprehension in teacher education

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In the paper we examine how teacher students experience the development of a new interdisciplinary subject, technology comprehension. The subject has a dual focus, as it covers both programming and computational thinking, as well as critical technology analysis and the ability to create with technologies through design processes. In the paper we raise the following research questions: *How does the development of a new interdisciplinary subject in teacher education, "Technology Comprehension", look from a teacher student perspective?*

Our theoretical framing draws on curriculum theory and the understanding of *pedagogical content knowledge* as a dynamic knowledge process generated in practice through the capabilities of the teacher (Nilsson, 2008). In our study we integrate this framing to characterize the building of students' pedagogical content knowledge in the subject. We draw on Gundem & Hopmanns (1998) understanding of core expertise and the difference between content as determined based on external or internal criteria to examine the student's perception of what they understand as relevant themes or issues in the subject.

The research design is based on an interview study with the first students enrolled in the subject. The students have been interviewed over three semesters to follow the development in their experiences and understanding of the subject. Methodologically, the paper offers a less common perspective within studies of subject development, where the focus is on the students' perspective.

Our findings show that the students are particularly concerned with four aspects. Firstly, they are occupied with the relationship between theory and practice. The students mainly understand the subject as practical or "hands on", where acting to gain knowledge is the centrale knowledge form. Secondly, the students experience that the subject opens new didactical and pedagogical approaches, with its focus on open design processes. Thirdly, programming is perceived as a core expertise that they need to acquire to teach the subject. However, the students have different skills and ambitions regarding programming. Fourthly, the students are particularly interested in the area concerning digital empowerment, but they find that they lack didactic and pedagogical tools.

The question of how to successfully develop teachers' professional digital competencies is a common concern across the Nordic countries. Teacher education programs in the Nordic countries organize technology education in various ways, providing clear opportunities for mutual inspiration and learning across borders (Lisborg et al., 2021). This paper offers valuable insights into what students perceive as meaningful yet also challenging when technology education becomes part of teacher education.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Artificial intelligence in teacher education - Didactical transposition in First Language and Mathematics

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In this presentation we wish to address artificial intelligence and machine learning as a current and difficult content area in first language education (L1) and mathematics in teacher education. The aim of our study is to characterize transposition processes when knowledge, objects and concepts from external domains as e.g. data science and algorithmic literacy are redesigned into subject specific pedagogic domains (Chevallard, 1985). Research on artificial intelligence and AI literacy is quite scarce in a teacher education context (Sperling et al, 2024). Knowledge about artificial intelligence is being developed at universities, at tech giants and other external producers, while educational institutions such as teacher education, rarely are producers of knowledge about emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. The exploratory study we have use as an offset reflects how teacher educators choose and justify content elements in external contexts and transpose and shape content into internal subject specific, aesthetic and often ethical questions on artificial intelligence and machine learning. Our research draws on three concepts 1) de-syncretization and separation of knowledge from its original context (2) Programmability and didacticization of teaching objects 3) "Contracting" between teacher educators and students (Chevallard, 1985, Schneuwly, p 167, 2023). The primary data material consists of videotaped courses and teachers' reflection journals. The privileged point of view in the study is that of the teacher educator which allows us to gain access to complexity of the didactic transposition work of teacher educators. Our study findings suggest that knowledge on artificial intelligence and machine learning changes across domains and institutions and becomes professional content knowledge ready to be taught. But it is also associated with hesitation and doubt, when teacher students are about to work with concepts such as "prompts", "tokens" and "deep learning". How this can be done and how teacher educators can be an innovative part of the future development on content with generative digital technologies have great implicates on digitalization, artificial intelligence, and Nordic educational research in teacher education (Lund, A., & Aagaard, T. 2020, Sperling 2024).

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Additional Practice in Primary and Secondary Teacher Education

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#### Research topic

Teacher education is in some cases criticized for being too academic, and that the current connection between theory and practice is weak. Scholars suggest that there is a need to develop methods that can help bridge this perceived gap (Raaen, 2017). One step along this way could be to strengthen “the third space”, the collaboration between teacher education institutions and the schools that host student teachers for practicum placements. This to ensure boundary-crossing activities where practical and academic knowledge and skills intersect (Lejonberg, Elstad, and Hunskaar, 2017).

As a response to these challenges, scholars in the teacher education program at Nord University have established a project; Additional Practice (AP). In AP, student teachers follow a practical teacher throughout the academic year, one set day per week. The student is supposed to observe and assist the practical teacher during their everyday work.

We aim to explore the following research question: In what ways does participation in Additional Practice influence student teachers professional understanding and their ability to connect theory and practice in teacher education?

#### Theoretical Framework

The framework for understanding the complexity of practise is theoretically connected to professional development perspectives, as the development of competence, belonging, and identity. In addition, we follow the idea that education in the practice field and teaching at the teacher education institution must strive to combine and complement each other focusing on knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice and knowledge about practice (Raaen, 2017).

#### Method

This is a qualitative study in which our data consists of notes from group work and evaluations conducted by practical teachers, minutes from meetings with teachers and principals, as well as statements from the student teachers. Further, we intend to conduct qualitative interviews.

#### Expected findings

Preliminary findings suggests that both teacher students and practical teachers perceive AP as a positive and meaningful intervention. They report that AP contribute to develop professional understanding and bridging the gap between theory and practice. In addition, the student teachers express that AP make them more confident dealing with the complexity of teaching.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The development of teacher education is a key priority for all Nordic countries. Implementing interventions, such as AP, followed by research, can provide scientific knowledge that contributes to such a process.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Teachers' Views and Beliefs on Social and Cultural Sustainability: Teaching Collaboration Skills, Equality, and Local Traditions

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Sustainability education has become an integrative part of educational systems globally. Home Economics teachers view sustainability education as essential, although there are variations in how they emphasize the topic in their teaching. Studies have shed light on how they practice sustainable food (e.g., Gelinder et al., 2019, Gisslevik, et al. 2019) and textile and clothing education (Kuusisaari et al., 2024), as well as how they emphasize cultural sustainability in food education (Bohm, 2023). Although Finnish Home Economics teachers' beliefs about ICT use have been explored recently (Sundqvist, 2023), this perspective has not yet been applied to sustainability education. Van Driel et al. (2007) have pointed out that less scientific attention has been given to teachers' subject-specific beliefs than to educational beliefs in general. Thus, we examine the subject-specific beliefs of Home Economics teachers regarding sustainability education, specifically focusing on how they integrate cultural and social sustainability into their classroom practices. Our data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with Finnish Home Economics teachers working in basic education (n=13). Teachers view social and cultural sustainability as interconnected with the themes of consuming, housing, clothing, and food. Teachers emphasize that to promote social and cultural sustainability, they enhance students' critical thinking, information seeking, collaboration, and intercultural skills, as well as teach them to appreciate equality, Finnish customs and traditions. By examining Finnish teachers' views and beliefs about sustainability education, we contribute to the understanding of the multifaceted aspects of sustainability in Nordic educational research.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Implementation of Sustainable Development in Language Teaching: Language Teachers' Perspective

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Sustainability is now a significant topic across various fields, including language education and research, but its importance in language teaching has not yet been thoroughly explored. Language education offers tremendous potential for implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), as the pedagogical processes of language teaching and ESD are complementary to each other, but while researchers have recognised this potential (e.g. de la Fuente, 2021; Kwee, 2021; Maijala et al., 2024), it has yet to be exploited. Studies show that in-service and pre-service language teachers hold positive attitudes towards promoting ESD in language teaching but lack knowledge and skills related to its practical implementation (e.g. Laine et al., 2022; Maijala et al., 2023). Our study will quantitatively and qualitatively analyse questionnaire data to determine the extent to which Finnish language teachers ( $N=30$ ) apply ESD in language classes. The goal is to develop a large-scale survey on this basis of this pilot study. We expect that language instructors teach aspects of sustainability without recognising their role in sustainable development. Following prior studies, we also assume that language teachers who incorporate ESD are personally dedicated to the objectives of sustainable development (e.g. Fischer & Hänze, 2020). The extent to which various aspects of sustainable development are highlighted appears to be influenced by teachers' knowledge of teaching methods and their perception of their preparedness to teach sustainability topics (Maijala et al., 2023). The results will be relevant to Nordic educational research by increasing knowledge of ESD implementation in Finnish language education and enabling international comparisons.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Navigating Sustainability Education as a Developing Teacher Educator

Jessica Harrison

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Internationally, education systems are implementing sustainability education (SE) into second-level schools and as is often the case, initial teacher education (ITE) is seen as one mechanism to help these efforts. Previous attempts at SE inclusion in ITE have highlighted that the social dimension of sustainability requires further investigation (Borg et al., 2014). In my presentation I will detail my ongoing journey as a developing teacher educator of navigating SE challenges within ITE including the personal and systemic complexities of the social dimension of sustainability. Research has highlighted reasons behind the social dimension of sustainability being overlooked, namely it is challenging to quantify (Borg et al., 2014; Goosen & Cilliers, 2020), lack of agreed upon definition (Elander & Gustavsson, 2019; Wolff & Ehrström, 2020) and hyperfocus on the environmental dimension (Borg et al., 2014). These challenges with the social dimension add to existing challenges that teacher educators encounter with SE like policy mandates (Evans et al., 2017), personal interests, overloaded ITE curricula (Christie et al., 2015) and lack of support for teaching SE (Wolff et al., 2017). Using self-study methodology, this ongoing research will address the following: (1) How I have attempted to create conditions for SE inclusion in ITE and (2) How I have worked within the social dimension to bring focus to the personal and systemic barriers within SE. I engage with Depth Education (Machado de Oliveira, 2021) throughout this exploration to maintain critical reflexivity on my own practices as well as the conditions and context I am working within. Findings and insights from this journey with SE and Depth Education will be shared and how when combined, may offer a different kind of hope for sustaining society and the planet.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Towards scientific literacy – Student teachers' ways of using fake information sources on biodiversity loss in an online learning environment

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### Research topic

This study investigated how student teachers recognised fake content on biodiversity loss in an online learning environment and how they referred to it in their written syntheses.

### Theoretical framework

Scientific literacy is becoming increasingly important for teachers in knowledge landscape where fake content gains ground from research-based knowledge. Today, science denial is a wide phenomenon, and the proliferation of fake content on the internet significantly burdens online readers (Sinatra and Hofer 2021). However, not adequately is known about mechanisms of how fake content becomes part of ordinary knowledge. Scientific literacy (Osborne and Allchin 2024) refers to commitment to science, scientific content knowledge, and multiple-source reading skills.

We examined student teachers practising scientific literacy in an online learning environment on biodiversity loss. The world's biodiversity declines because of land- and sea-use changes, unsustainable use of wild species, human-induced climate change, pollution and invasive alien species (IPBES 2019).

### Methodology

Seventy-one first-semester primary student teachers in a Finnish university were given the task of writing a synthesis using online sources and evaluating those sources. The learning environment included relevant, irrelevant and fake texts. The analysis utilised quantification, content analysis, and discourse analysis.

### Findings

Nearly half of the participants (30) used fake content in their syntheses. Fake content was also quite poorly recognised as an unreliable source as approximately one fifth of the participants had rated the two fake sources as 3 and another fifth had rated them 4 in reliability (scale 1–5). In addition, there were even some who had rated the fake sources as 5, finding them very reliable.

We focused on the use of fake content and identified three discourses of referring to it. In the discourse of 1) fake as fact, fake content was presented as part of the synthesis in a declaratory manner without criticism or hesitation. In the discourse of 2) fake as second opinion fake content was used as another perspective to the topic alongside relevant ones. In the discourse of 3) fake as susceptible, fake content was used and presented, but the participant took some distance to it.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In line with previous research, student teachers need practice, especially in recognising the validity of sources by adequate scientific content knowledge, true commitment to science and synthesising relevant sources from multiple texts. The implications concern improving curriculum development and programme design in teacher education in Nordic countries.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### School violence prevention and management in Finnish primary school teacher education curricula

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This research is part of a doctoral dissertation, and it aims to create an image of teacher trainees' ability to manage and prevent various forms of violence in schools. We will examine the Finnish primary school teacher education curricula from all Finnish-speaking programmes (N=8) with theory-oriented content analysis. Teacher education has been previously analysed with a broader focus on safety management contents from 2012-2015 curricula (N = 5) in a similar manner (Lindfors & Somerkoski, 2016). The focus of this research is on violence management and prevention, providing a foundation for future intervention studies to be conducted as part of this dissertation. The research answers the question: "How does current teacher education prepare teacher trainees for various forms of school violence?".

We anticipate a similar outcome as in the previous study (Lindfors & Somerkoski, 2016) and the contents on violence management and prevention to be theory-oriented and fragmented. The lack of practical training leaves a gap in professional self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) when facing violence or its threat at schools.

Previous research has identified a problematic indifference toward the safety culture and its development within Finnish schools (Vallinkoski & Koirikivi, 2020). The scarcity of safety-related content in teacher education can build upon this phenomenon, despite the increased risk of being a victim of violence in some of the education positions (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2020).

According to Lunneblad (2019), the research focus on school violence has been on the Anglosphere. This research aims to address the gap in school violence research within the Nordic context. An overview of preliminary results will be included.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

The comparison of teacher education reform under the competence-based curriculum between Finland and Japan.

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The aim of this presentation is to reveal the common and different aspects of what kind of competences are needed for teachers under the competence-based curriculum between Finland and Japan. Competence-based curriculum reform has been taking place around the world since the implementation of the Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) project by OECD and it is the same situation in the both countries.

The current national core curriculum in Finland was designed between 2014 and 2015 used of the outcomes the DeSeCo (Lavonen, 2020) and the transversal competences are required children to be nurtured in the curriculum. Transversal competences have been integrated into the aims of various school subjects and they require teachers to collaborate with other teachers and to realize multidisciplinary, phenomenon- and project-based studies together in the school curriculum. In along with the curriculum reform, teacher education reform was also conducted and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) announced to start teacher education development program in 2016. This program was designed by 70 experts from various stakeholders and MEC financed 31 pilot projects to implement the development program.

The national curriculum standards in Japan were revised in 2017, and three main competencies were clarified to be nurtured to children. The feature of this curriculum is that it focuses on how to learn and enhances to include active learning (i.e., independent and interactive in-depth learning) in all school courses. Furthermore, teacher education reforms have been implemented in line with changes of the curriculum: selection of 4 flagship universities to improve preservice teacher education; in-service teacher training reform towards collaborative and individualized optimal learning for teachers. The supposed slogan of the reform is “the analogy” between children's learning and teachers' learning.

As teacher education reforms are being carried out in both countries, how are the competencies required of teachers being defined, and what approaches are being taken to nurture them? This research adopts a comparative study approach, and the subject of analysis are documents related to policy discussions and reports of the pilot projects. The expected outcome of the research is the impact of the existence or absence of network building on the progress of reform.

As reforms are being promoted in the context of similar international discussions, examining how the necessary competencies for teachers are being defined and how teacher education reforms are being promoted to acquire these competencies in countries with different cultural spheres will also lead to the clarification of a Nordic approach to reform.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Play inspired teaching and learning in early schooling

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Our research topic is play inspired teaching and learning in early schooling. The aim of the study is to explore how framed play may create possibilities for learning mathematics and literacy in lower grades of elementary school.

We draw on the theoretical understanding of framed play as defined by Brostrøm (2005). Framed play is characterized by teachers and students planning together a frame for a playful activity, like an airport or a shopping mall. Unlike in free play, where most teachers take a passive, observatory role (Ackesjö, 2017; Karlsen & Lekhal, 2019), teachers take an active, supporting, and challenging role in framed play by encouraging student agency. They provide relevant props like paper, pencils and scissors to inspire play, as well as reading, writing and mathematics.

This is a qualitative study with purposive sampling of teachers undergoing continuing education in early schooling. As part of their course, they had to plan, set out in practice, and analyze framed play in their own classes, including literacy and mathematics. The data material is based on lessons in 76 classes (age 6-9) and digital stories made by student teachers regarding these lessons. Using thematic analysis, we analyzed the material in two steps. First, the different kinds of framed play. Second, we analyzed how literacy and mathematics were included.

Our preliminary findings suggest that there is a wide range of frame play in the material, spanning from ice cream kiosk to a farm. We further see that the students use reading and writing actively as part of the play, often as their own initiative or planned by the teachers. Regarding mathematics, especially counting, sorting, prizing, and shopping are used. Within literacy, the students read and write posters, signs, lists, headings, letters, stories, and plans.

This study is of relevance to Nordic educational research because it offers student active approaches in early schooling that combines the natural urge to play with meaningful literacy and mathematical activities. Further, the evaluation of initial schooling "Classroom practices 20 years after the 6-years reform" (Bjørnstad et al, 2024) shows that children miss possibilities to play inside school and during the lessons, and that the teachers want to include more play in school. This contrasts with the planned change in Sweden, to start school one year earlier at six years, with more formal learning and less play.

Keywords: framed play, literacy, mathematics

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Pre-service Science Teachers' Perceptions of Engineering, Design, and Technology

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#### Research topic/aim

Current US science education reforms (NGSS Lead States, 2013) emphasize integration of engineering, design and technology (DET) into science teaching in schools. Research shows that teachers' perceptions of reformed instructional strategies play a role in their instructional practice (Hsu *et al.*, 2011). Knowing pre-service teachers' (PSTs) perceptions of DET can help teacher educators to either reinforce PSTs' positive perceptions or change their negative perceptions through preparations. We assessed PSTs' perceptions of engineers and familiarity with DET before and after intervention in science methods course. Research questions were: What are PSTs' initial perceptions of engineers and familiarity with DET? To what extent do PSTs' perceptions of engineers and DET change over the course of a semester of learning about DET integrated science teaching?

#### Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which states that self-referent thought arbitrates between what an individual knows and how they act, and that guides the learning process. SCT emphasizes attention to social and cognitive factors that influence individual's behavior and performance. In our study, the elements of SCT translate into how PSTs' perception of DET may influence their instructional practice.

#### Methodology

One group pre-posttest design was used. Participants were 21 PSTs in secondary science teacher education program. A six-week intervention focused on how to integrate DET into science teaching in a science methods course. PSTs completed DET survey (Yasar et al, 2006) before and after intervention. Survey has four factors: *importance of DET*, *familiarity with DET*, *stereotypical characteristics of engineers*, and *characteristics of engineering*. Data was analyzed using Wilcoxon test.

#### Conclusions/findings

Overall pre-posttest means were not statistically significantly different ( $Z = -1.689$ ,  $p = 0.091$ ). However, *familiarity with DET* factor showed a statistically significant difference ( $Z = -2.854$ ,  $p = .004$ ), with pre-test mean ( $= 2.83$ ) and post-test mean ( $= 3.30$ ). Although not statistically significantly different, there were slight changes in means for other three factors; *importance of DET* ( $= 3.62$ ,  $= 3.54$ ), *stereotypical characteristics of engineers* ( $= 2.97$ ,  $= 3.17$ ), and *characteristics of engineering* ( $= 3.40$ ,  $= 3.49$ ). Results suggest PSTs had positive perception before instruction and maintained it throughout intervention. However, intervention had positive impact on PSTs' familiarity with teaching DET in science classrooms. We suggest research on PSTs' integration of DET in science teaching.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

NERA members in teacher education may find these findings helpful in preparing teachers in engineering design integrated science teaching.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Supervision as a driving force in partnership between teacher education and schools

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The quality of supervision of teacher students' is a shared responsibility between school-university partnerships. Schools are eager to attract competent and qualified newly educated teachers, while to educate resilient and updated teachers is the main obligation for the education. Ensuring quality of supervision of teacher students is a shared interest between the school sector and the teacher education. Collaboration on common tasks might be a key in partnership collaboration between schools and teacher education. However, research shows that partnerships between universities and schools are characterized by several challenges. (Mausethagen & Hermansen, 2023). This implies that collaboration on supervision is essential.

In this paper, we present and discuss how knowledge about supervision emerges in teacher education and schools. We examine how supervision, in various forms and for different purposes, might serve as a driving force in partnerships between the school sector and teacher education. We discuss three examples of how supervision among mentor teachers can be organized to support the collective development of supervision among mentor teachers, how the supervision of students' master's theses might foster professional learning for students and teachers, and we illustrate how shared goals for improving the quality of supervision is a fruitful way of improving quality both in schools and teacher education.

The theoretical framework rests on institutional theories and learning theories. Central analytical aspects are theories of boundary crossing (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) and relational agency (Edwards, 2010). We present the empirical settings and discuss challenges and opportunities.

Preliminary findings suggest that different forms and arenas where supervision is in play, contributes to professional learning among teachers in schools, it increases the possibilities to take other professionals' perspectives and enhance the potential of mutual learning.

In all three examples, we find new practices where different ways of supervision are identified which in turn strengthened partnership among professionals in teacher education and schools. This study is relevant to Nordic educational research because it adds to body of research on partnership in education.

Keywords: School- university partnership, supervision, master students, teacher collaboration

### References:

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Edwards, 2010,  
Mausethagen & Hermansen, 2023.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Narratives of Change: Exploring Student Agency in Climate Education

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This study investigates how narrative approaches in science education can foster agency among secondary school students, particularly in the context of climate change and sustainability. Climate education often lacks adequate opportunities for students to connect scientific knowledge with the socio-emotional and action-oriented skills essential for tackling complex socio-environmental challenges. This research aims to bridge that gap by utilizing the transformative potential of narratives, emphasizing how student reflection enhances understanding and empowerment. Part of the Horizon2020 SEAS project, this study embeds a transformative dimension into scientific literacy by engaging students in creating and reflecting on micro-narratives.

This work builds on the three spheres of transformation model proposed by O'Brien and Sygna (2013), a framework that promotes learning across practical, political, and personal spheres. Encouraging students to reflect on climate change narratives helps them connect individual experiences to broader socio-scientific issues.

Data collection utilized SenseMaker® (Snowden & Boone, 2017), a digital tool adapted for the SEAS project to capture students' micro-narratives on sustainability and climate action. SenseMaker® combines narrative collection with self-signification, allowing students to assign meaning to their stories, promoting engagement and critical thinking about their experiences. Analysis of these narratives reveals patterns in how young people from diverse cultural backgrounds perceive and act on climate change.

The reflexive thematic analysis of Italian and Norwegian student narratives reveals cultural differences in agency perceptions and climate action approaches. Italian students often emphasize individual responsibility in daily practices, such as recycling and conserving resources, yet express frustration with limited societal support, especially from family. This reflects a more personal approach to climate action, where students feel constrained by limited engagement around them. In contrast, Norwegian students prioritize community initiatives and collective responsibility, often describing involvement in local environmental campaigns or systemic solutions. These differences highlight how cultural contexts influence agency, with Norwegian students more likely to see themselves as part of a community-driven movement.

Contributing to Nordic educational research, this study offers insights into how narrative-based approaches empower students to transition from knowledge to action. These findings underscore the importance of designing curriculum interventions that promote transformative learning experiences, building resilience and fostering connections between personal and collective sustainability goals. Using micro-narratives as a tool for change, educators can help students connect their lives with global climate issues, equipping them with the skills to act as informed, engaged citizens (Snowden & Boone, 2017; Tasquier, Knain, & Jornet, 2022).

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Phenomenon-based Learning and STEAM Education: Perspectives on the Practice of Phenomenon-based Learning in High School Education

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

This study investigates the application of Finland's phenomenon-based learning (PhBL) model in Japan's educational context, with a focus on fostering inquiry-based, cross-disciplinary competencies in high school education. PhBL, known for its holistic and competency-driven approach, addresses real-world phenomena across traditional subject boundaries, encouraging students to solve complex problems collaboratively. This research aims to explore how PhBL principles can be adapted and integrated within Japanese curricula to enhance critical thinking and deep learning, aligning with Japan's recent initiatives in STEAM education and inquiry-focused learning.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) theories and knowledge-building, as developed by Hakkarainen and colleagues at the University of Helsinki. These theories provide a foundation for PhBL by promoting a collaborative and inquiry-centred learning environment where students construct knowledge. The framework also incorporates cognitive science principles that support holistic educational approaches, emphasizing the need for cross-disciplinary skill development and reflective learning processes. This theoretical background will guide the examination of Finnish and Japanese educational structures to determine their alignment with these principles.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The research employs a comparative case study approach involving qualitative data collection through school visits, classroom observations, and interviews with educators targeting all 47 national university-affiliated high schools in Japan. The study also examines PhBL practices and curriculum design in Finland to identify key components that could be relevant and adaptable for Japanese classrooms. Data will be analysed to assess the extent to which PhBL elements are feasible within Japan's existing educational structures and to understand the adjustments necessary for successful implementation.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The study is expected to reveal insights into the adaptability of PhBL within Japanese high schools, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges of implementing cross-disciplinary, inquiry-based learning. Preliminary findings suggest that, while Japan's emphasis on STEAM education and digital learning environments provides a supportive base, further development in collaborative and cross-curricular teaching practices will be essential for PhBL's success. This research anticipates identifying specific curriculum elements and pedagogical strategies that can bridge the gap between PhBL's holistic approach and Japan's content-based teaching methodologies.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by examining the transferability and adaptability of Finland's PhBL model to different cultural and educational contexts. By comparing Finland's PhBL implementation with Japan's approach to inquiry-based learning, the research highlights how the Nordic emphasis on collaborative, competency-focused education can inform and enrich Japanese educational practices. Additionally, this study aligns with the broader goals of Nordic education to prepare students for complex, real-world problem-solving by offering insights into how these values might be applied internationally. The findings will be of interest to

educators and policymakers seeking to integrate PhBL principles in diverse educational environments, expanding the dialogue around competency-based learning models.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Balance between Content knowledge(CK) and Pedagogy knowledge (PK) in bilingual teacher education~ a case study of professional knowledge for CLIL teachers in Taiwan

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This study concerns about the professional knowledge of bilingual teachers, with special reference to the latest reform of bilingual teacher education in Taiwan and the glowing CLIL teaching practice in Europe.

It is widely recognized that a sound bilingual teacher education will be a core and necessary foundation for the implementation of bilingual education. However, for a non English-speaking country like Taiwan where English are not mother tongue language for most of the teachers, including English teachers and subject teachers as well, it become challenging how to conceptualize what are the professional knowledge of bilingual teachers especially in CLIL classrooms. In particular, two issues are highlighted. First, is the current bilingual teacher education based on a well-structured professionalism for bilingual education? Second, does the curriculum or programs designed for bilingual teachers equip teachers with necessary bilingual knowledge and skills?

In a context of bilingual classrooms, it is commonly argued that CLIL teachers should put more emphases on subject teaching in language of schooling while keep high awareness on students' language learning, which was argued by March (1990) as "dual focus". However, in bilingual classrooms in Taiwan, both teachers and students are supposed to process the courses mainly in English, rather than the original language of schooling -Chinese. As a result, "dual focus" become "dual challenges" when CLIL teachers have to manage, in English, both CK (content knowledge) and PK (pedagogical knowledge) at the same time and face the challenge about how to develop their PCK (pedagogical content knowledge) in their CLIL classroom. As Shulman (1987) argued that PCK, integrating CK and PK, was need for teachers to well develop curriculum implementation and teaching practices. It becomes a key issue how to conceptualize bilingual teacher education so that they could be well equipped to balance content and pedagogical knowledge in a CLIL context.

For investigating on the professional knowledge for bilingual teachers, research methods adopted in this study includes documentary analysis, semi-structural interviews, and group interviews. Bilingual teacher education programs in main universities are analyzed and key persons of these programs are interviewed.

The discussion in this study are enhanced by a comparison between the course framework for bilingual teacher education in Taiwan and the European Framework for CLIL Teacher Education (Martin, Mehisto, Wolff & Frigols, 2010). Furthermore, drawing on the idea of Thompson & Mishra (2007) idea of TPACK (technological pedagogical and content knowledge), it is argued in this research that a BPACK model (bilingual pedagogical and content knowledge) could be proposed to conceptualize professional knowledge for bilingual teachers. It is highlighted that bilingual education, rather than just language competences, is a key part for bilingual teacher education and should be included in the program of bilingual teacher education.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Strengthening Research Basis of Teacher Education for Sustainable Future: Construction of the FinTED Research Infrastructure

Anu Kröger, Mirjamaija Mikkilä-Erdmann, Reeta Lehto, Marko Lähteenmäki

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This presentation represents, how was a research-based national quality system for Finnish teacher education (TE) planned and constructed. It will describe the construction process of the national FinTED (Finnish TE and Educational Sciences Database) research infrastructure, which brings together previously scattered research materials, methods, metrics, as well as, actors in the field. The need to increase cooperation in the field of TE has been identified (e.g., Pursiainen et al. 2019). More precisely, the presentation focuses on the joint FinTED project of eight Finnish universities, its goals and the results obtained during the project. FinTED operates with funding granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland, and it cooperates with the Teacher Education Forum in Finland, especially in the quality work of TE. FinTED supports research-based development of education and TE, as well as research about TE and open science.

Finnish education system and TE have had a reputation being of high quality and respected internationally (e.g., Sahlberg 2011). However, recent PISA results have been eroding this reputation. Moreover, global issues, like ecological crisis and threats to democratic values, have been posing challenges for education in general and, thus, ultimately, for TE. In addition, attractiveness of TE has decreased (e.g., Lähteenmäki et al. 2019). Also, it has been observed that more and more young teachers leave their profession shortly after graduation (Alifrosti et al. 2022; Nissinen & Välijärvi 2011; Räsänen et al. 2020). Additionally, in the research, a systematic, national-level collection of research data related to TE has not previously existed; data have been scattered and collected by individual research groups (see Koski, Metsäpelto, Kyllönen & Poikkeus, under review).

The FinTED project was preceded by the OVET project (2017–2020), during which a common suitability testing for TE and a map of teacher competenc(i)es (the Multidimensional Adapted Process model of teaching, the MAP model) were developed. The MAP model has been fostering coherence in TE in Finland not only in selection phase but also for the initial TE, in respect to its goals, emphases and shared guidelines as well as its implemented curricula (Metsäpelto, Warinowski, Poikkeus & Mikkilä-Erdmann, 2024). Currently, the following themes have been investigated linked to FinTED: theorizing teacher's knowledge base and competencies (Metsäpelto et al. 2022); teacher's knowledge in relation to TE curricula (Metsäpelto et al. 2024); the effectiveness of the suitability test (Haataja et al. 2023; Vilppu et al. 2024); and students' learning and agency (Heikkilä 2022a; Heikkilä et al. 2022; Heikkilä et al. 2023; Vilppu et al. 2022; 2023).

Theoretical perspectives (Heikkilä & Eriksen 2024; Mikkilä-Erdmann et al. 2024) and empirical findings (Heikkilä et al. 2020; 2022; 2023) show that student teachers need critical thinking skills more than ever. Critical thinking skills can be seen as essential, future skills in supporting sustainable democracies in Nordic countries and globally. FinTED can serve this target by supporting research-based teacher education.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Community: the key to developing successful school gardens in Finland

Maria Svens, Pia Sjöblom

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This ongoing study aims to identify key factors and develop practical guidelines that facilitate the creation of school gardens for students in grades 1-6 in Finland. School gardens are highly relevant in a time of transition towards sustainability, a time of conflict on many levels in society and a time of multifaceted health issues among youth. School gardens can be vital arenas for real-life learning, both cross curricular and in different subjects, such as science. Previous studies (Walshe et.al., 2024) have shown that teachers seem to have worries considering school gardens, among others that there will be a lack of attendance of the sites during school breaks and that the gardens will be vandalized outside of school hours. Teachers active in garden projects fear the vast amount of resources spent on them will go to waste if they personally quit them. Teachers also feel they lack the time and the resources to plan sufficient teaching outside the classroom in general and in the school gardens in particular. Suggestions for addressing these worries have been published, and considered within the ongoing project Food Education for the Future wherein this study is conducted. The study consists of pre- and post-interviews with teachers during their first year in the project, where school gardens were created with them and for them. Gardens were parallelly built at three different schools in the same municipality. Eight teachers and one teaching assistant, who were engaged in the school gardens, took part in semi-structured interviews. The interviews will undergo thematic analysis.

At the time for submission of this abstract, the garden season was coming to an end. Preliminary analyses of the pre-interviews showed that Finnish teachers have similar thoughts on the topic compared to teachers in other contexts, considering preparation for and worries about the gardens. They do see the potential of the gardens when it comes to engaging their pupils and giving them skills and experiences useful in life. The suggested set of strategies to overcome the challenges they expressed seem relevant and was to a large extent actualized in the project. Community seems the key to success. The fact that the teachers have a hard time verbalizing what kind of pedagogical support they need stands out and will be discussed. Teacher feedback on the process through the post-interviews is yet to be collected.

School gardens have gained attention as arenas for cross-curricular and engaging teaching all over the Nordic countries, with Denmark and Norway as forerunners. This study may shed light on how gardens can be established in a reliable way, against the odds and potential critical voices from some teachers and schools. They are evidently providing a means for addressing ongoing societal challenges and necessary, sustainable change.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Support for learning in the framework of inclusion in Finnish lower secondary schools

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This presentation is based on a doctoral dissertation that explores support for learning in Finnish lower secondary schools in the current inclusive framework. The topic is observed from different perspectives, bringing together students', subject teachers' and special education teachers' views on support for learning. Inclusion and the three-tiered support system provide the theoretical framework for the dissertation. The views of the stakeholders are compared with the current legislation and curriculum and the scarce existing research on students' views on the support they have received. The research questions inquired what support for learning is in practice and how it could be developed.

Together 115 subject teachers, 63 special education teachers and 54 secondary school students responded to questionnaires concerning support for learning. These responses were analysed using qualitative content analysis complemented with frequencies. The findings are analysed through activity systems, a concept provided by developmental work research.

The results indicate that students, subject teachers and special education teachers have different ideas of what support for learning should be. The legislative reform concerning three-tiered support in 2010 changed the rules of the activity system of support for learning, which affected all other elements. Teachers experience unclarity and unfairness in the division of work in the current system of support for learning and the community becomes central in the creation (or a lack of creation) of new supportive practices and roles. Students would like to have more say in the support they receive and they would like to receive it from special education teachers. The three activity systems indicate that the object of support for learning is not clear and different stakeholders expect support for learning to have different outcomes.

The dissertation has a national emphasis but the theme of how support is and should be realized in schools that aim to become inclusive has relevance to Nordic and international educational research. Students' views are rarely studied and the discussion on inclusion often lists what teachers should know and do without taking their views and practical issues, such as lower secondary school's structures into account.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Professional identity among recently enrolled teacher students

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University College Copenhagen, Denmark

#### Research topic/aim

What understanding of teaching and the teacher profession do recently enrolled students bring along when entering teacher education?

Dan Lortie coined 'apprenticeship of observations' (Lortie, 1975) to mean the way teacher students are marked by years of observations of their future occupation. Later, Darling Hammond reconfirmed Lortie's point: Because of the many years of observation, teaching can appear as an easy task and there can be a lack of professional understanding of the job as a teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The presentation will focus on new teacher students' understanding of themselves as teachers. What ideas and notions of teaching do they have? How does their professional identity look?

#### Theoretical framework

When discussing teacher education, there are different types of coherence involved (Smeby & Hegen, 2014). In our survey we have been preoccupied with biographical coherence. The students do not begin their education as *tabula rasa*. They arrive with ideas, beliefs and imaginations of both their future job and about teaching. As teacher educators, we must take that into account, but we must also qualify and strengthen their preconceptions. 'Apprenticeship of observations' is still a matter of concern for teacher educators.

#### Methodological design

The presentation is based on a survey conducted among 445 new teacher students at University College Copenhagen. The students were asked to imagine their first day as a teacher and then answer what they thought would be the expectations from respectively themselves, the pupils, the parents and the school management. The questions were intentionally open to encourage the respondents' own wording of their understanding and prevent predefined answers. The answers were coded thematically in the analysis software Nvivo.

#### Expected conclusions/findings

Our study revealed that new teacher students were preoccupied with themselves as 'persons' rather than professionals (Böwadt & Cortsen, 2024). Of importance for the majority were personal features such as being open, smiling and forthcoming. Only few mentioned professional qualifications. Furthermore, their interest in the pupils primarily dealt with relations or an understanding where teaching only is possible, if you in advance have established good relations with the pupils.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Our study showed that a predominant group of the new teacher students were mainly focusing on very general and personal qualifications, when we asked about their expectations to themselves. Research shows that a strong professional identity can be helpful for new teachers. If that is true, it is important that the teacher students develop a stronger professional identity where general and personal qualifications are supplemented with professional qualifications. The continuation of this study aims to repeat the survey every year and follow the students into their job as teachers the first two years to see how their understanding of themselves as teachers will develop.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Looking for symmetric power relations in pre- and in-service teachers' co-creation project

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Numerous studies have highlighted the value of pre-service teachers' experiences and observations in the school environment during their studies. Often, a pre-service teacher's contact with a school occurs during teaching practice. However, teaching practice is highly regulated in terms of goals and content, with the practicing teacher responsible for guiding the student teacher. On the other hand, in-service teachers feel that educational research often remains far removed from the realities of everyday life in schools.

According to previous research, both pre- and in-service teachers' can learn from one another if they are provided with opportunities for collaboration. This study examines the experiences of Danish and Finnish pre-service teachers' working with local schools' teachers. In both Denmark and Finland, joint planning sessions were organized for pre- and in-service teachers', after which the teacher-student teams implemented co-teaching practices, followed by a joint evaluation of the process. Data were collected through surveys conducted before and after the co-teaching experience. The qualitative content driven analysis was conducted. Preliminary results indicate that pre-service teachers' in both Denmark and Finland felt they were treated as equals during the process—they were listened to, and their contributions to the team were valued. However, challenges also emerged, such as finding time for joint planning, and the feeling that in-service teachers' role was passive during the co-teaching sessions in some cases. Considering these findings, we can conclude that collaboration between teachers and student teachers can be highly rewarding, but it requires effective facilitation and clear role definition from the beginning of the process.

This study, planned in cooperation between Denmark and Finland, also provides valuable insights into how teacher education in both countries can support pre-service teachers' transversal skills development in a better and more versatile way.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Pedagogy as gifting: (re)conceptualising the Anglophonic

Paul Adams

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In her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) discusses how strawberry gathering signals ‘... a world full of gifts simply scattered at your feet’ (p. 23). For her, such conceptualisations necessitate togetherness; gifts, ‘...from the earth or from each other establish a particular relationship, an obligation of sorts to give, to receive, and to reciprocate’ (25). Clearly, here the marker of reciprocity and personal connection is through the removal of exchange as transaction to be replaced by gifting; that which establishes a ‘...feeling bond between two people’ (Hyde, quoted in Kimmerer, 2013: 26) that increases with their passage through and by sharing.

In this presentation, I shall challenge the idea of pedagogy as ‘the methods and practices of teaching’ (after Adams, 2022) a seemingly thoroughly Anglophonic position based on an individualising reduction of pedagogy to teaching as meaningful and accountable teacher activities. While such a position may not elide a place for beliefs and ideologies, these do not eschew overweening neoliberal posturing as to the place, form, function, and ends of and for education that give succour to continued segregation and oppression.

The counter I offer draws on indigenous methodologies. I seek to position pedagogy as gifting: connected, reciprocal actions based in and acting on the world, done with and for others. I show how re-thinking the basis for pedagogy from methods to such methodology connected to ontological, epistemological and axiological deliberation through shifts in language, tenor and intent offers significant scope for enacting pedagogy in ways connected to community belief systems that seek to reframe the world and our place therein. Located, as I am, in a colonised land which both retreats from and returns to the sanctity of the colonial mind-set, I propose this (re)focus as an attempt to resist, amend and subvert hegemonic positioning, and thus challenge mainstream thinking by more than the allure of ‘the exotic’.

The position I propose resonates with Northern/Arctic pedagogies that require more than simple rearticulation of teaching activities. The political and cultural often frame such regions as ‘rural’ and ‘remote’, defined more by their ‘absences’ than their ‘presence’. Hence, pedagogy, if it is to challenge such dominant forces must convey more than educational uplift: it must rupture and forge anew.

#### Keywords

Pedagogy; Gifting; Indigenous Knowledge

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Teachers' understanding of a sustainable profession

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The Nordic countries are all too familiar with the paradox of teacher shortage (*Teacher Shortage in the Nordic Countries*, NLS, 2023). It endures despite various national efforts to strengthen the profession. In a Swedish context, they involve for example, teacher education reforms, wage-increasing efforts, efforts to better the work environment and increase students' results (i.a. in Lindqvist et al., 2022). Consequently, it is essential to address what teachers themselves describe as a meaningful teaching practice and, hence, identify sustainable rationales. My doctoral project aims to contribute to the research field on the teacher profession and how teachers understand their roles with a backdrop of global and local diversity, change, and uncertainty.

The main aim of the study is to explore a sustainable teacher profession through the narrative of practitioners. Using a theoretic framework based on a phenomenological perspective (Cohen, et al., 2018) the study collects data through semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers, both individually and in focus groups, to explore their voices, experiences and views on a sustainable profession.

The study draws on teachers' own life worlds rather than through national reforms or profession development programs. Therefore, by providing a well-founded description of a sustainable teacher profession, the implications could offer significant benefits for teacher education, teacher educators, and experienced teachers. It may also contribute to the professional development of participating individuals as they explore core values within the teacher profession.

In conclusion, this project is relevant to the field of education, and more specifically, to teacher research in exploring the conditions for a sustainable teacher profession. It sets the stage for further research on teacher professional development and future challenges addressing teacher shortages in the Nordic community.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Sustainable teacher education – internal relations in school practices

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Inclusion in schools remains a topic of significant debate across research, practice, and education. Despite ongoing efforts to make education more inclusive, many children continue to be segregated into special schools. Current initiatives aim to reorganize the school and its support systems to address this issue, which can be described as a 'Gordian Knot' in inclusive education. Countries reduce special schools and create hybrid models blending general and special education to enhance participation for more children in mainstream schools. This shift entails a rethinking of schools, applied pedagogy, support systems, including the roles of teachers, school psychologists, municipal organizations, and administrative procedures as well as rethinking the boundaries between general and special education so that pedagogical approaches are not defined solely by institutional affiliation.

Meanwhile, there is an increase in newly qualified teachers who experience a "practice shock". This can be linked to increasingly complex school problems and constrained teaching conditions, as well as to the structure of teacher education, which may not sufficiently address the continuously developing practices and conditions in school. Within research, practice, and education, significant emphasis is placed on various methods to support students' social and academic development and professionals' collaboration to support it. These methods often change with trends, so teacher education must not only introduce students to special education or collaboration methods but also enable them to analyze the school practices and issues these methods aim to address. This suggests a need for teacher education that focuses on understanding schools' structural conditions and how school problems and support systems evolve within a changing landscape of conditions.

The presentation outlines the development of a new special education course at Teacher Education at UCL in Denmark, created in collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and educators. In this course, students gain insights into school practices and surrounding institutional structures including Educational Psychological Services (EPS), special education institutions, and child psychiatry. The approach emphasizes that future teachers need to develop an understanding of the school's structural conditions and those of its support systems, as well as how they are internally related. The course framework is based on Borring's research (2024) on interprofessional collaboration between schools and EPS. It incorporates Axel's concept of 'conflictual cooperation' (2020) and Ollman's 'internal relations of social practices' (2015) to understand how teachers' work is shaped by diverse parties at local, municipal, and national levels. The findings contribute to an understanding of how conditions for working with inclusion evolve through the efforts of multiple stakeholders engaged in school development across intersecting organizational layers. This approach aims to empower future teachers to engage in, analyze, and transform the practices they encounter in schools, thereby creating a more sustainable teacher education.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Challenging “Over-Objectification”: Balancing Adaptation and Autonomy in Pedagogical Practice

Niels Tange

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In a 2024 Ph.D. dissertation (Tange, 2024), Tange investigates how primary school teachers experience the tension between student adaptation and emancipation within their pedagogical practice. The study is grounded in a philosophical-pedagogical analysis of ideas from Rousseau, Kierkegaard, and Biesta, defining pedagogy's role as dual: it must both adapt the student through processes of qualification, socialization, and cultivation, while also supporting the student's freedom or autonomy in an existential sense. This is termed in the dissertation as pedagogy's dual purpose (see Tange, in prep.).

Based on this framework, the dissertation explores teachers' experiences of this tension in their pedagogical practice. Analyses of the empirical data suggest that pedagogical practice can be understood as a continuous interplay between the teacher's objectifying and subjectifying actions (Tange, 2023). Objectifying actions refer to instances where the teacher assumes a subject role in teaching, steering, framing, and acting in ways that render the student a receptive object of the teacher's actions. Conversely, subjectifying actions involve the teacher stepping back and temporarily assigning the subject role to the student, allowing the student to engage with the content independently. The relationship between subjectifying and objectifying actions is conceptualized as an ongoing interplay, termed *the pedagogical double movement*.

Furthermore, the study suggests a current trend of over-objectification in schools, meaning that pedagogical practice is predominantly characterized by the teacher's control over the student, who thus becomes largely objectified in the educational process. This over-objectification is assessed as problematic for students' development of freedom and democratic agency.

In an ongoing study by Iskov and Tange in cooperation with researchers from Canada and New Zealand, which examines students' experiences of agency and autonomy within professional education programs through interviews, analysis indicates that the trend of over-objectification is also prevalent in teacher education.

In a parallel ongoing study by Tange, conducted with teachers and instructors in teacher education through theoretically sensitized and empirically informed research circles, the focus is on understanding and implementing teaching that challenges overobjectification and both objectifies and subjectifies, thereby supporting both students' competency and their autonomy and subjectivity. In this paperpresentation, findings from this study both on a cultural, structural and didactical level will be presented and discussed - thereby challenging the tendency to overobjectification in school and education.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Beliefs of Student Teachers and Teachers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Cyprus about Teaching in Inclusive Schools

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#### Research topic and Theoretical framework

Teachers develop their beliefs about school and teaching throughout their own educational biographies. These beliefs, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, significantly influence how they structure and reflect on their teaching practices (Pajares, 1992; Fives & Buehl, 2012). Given the substantial differences in European education systems, particularly concerning the implementation of inclusion (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020), this study explores the beliefs of student teachers and teachers from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Cyprus (N = 26) regarding the teaching profession in inclusive schools.

#### Methodology

Participants' beliefs were captured using concept maps (Mandl & Fischer, 2000). In an international workshop they were asked to write down terms they associated with being a teacher in an inclusive school on sticky notes. They then organised their structure into an individually meaningful structure and connected the terms with arrows and labelled the connections to provide further details about the relationships. The concept maps were analysed and compared with qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023).

#### Findings

Across the participating countries, terms related to "addressing diversity" and "teacher personality" featured prominently in the concept maps. In Germany, Denmark, and Cyprus, additional terms emerged, which could be subsumed under "school and teaching framework conditions". To examine the structures of the concept maps alongside their content, two maps that differed significantly in terms of both content and structure will be compared.

#### Discussion

The findings are discussed within the context of Nordic and European education systems. Attention is given to how varying educational systems and cultural backgrounds might shape teachers' beliefs about inclusive education.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Embeddedness of Bildung, competence, digitalization, and sustainable development in teacher education policy in Norway

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### 1. Research topic/aim

The aim of the article is to examine the embeddedness of conceptions of Bildung competence in teacher education policy in Norway, as a country that applies these two concepts in its curriculum policy. In addition, Norway has embraced integration of digital skills and sustainable development in its education policy as a result of 'digital transition' and 'green transition' policy focus in the European context. The article addresses also how the idea of digitalization of society and sustainable development are integrated in the applicable teacher education policy. The main research question is: 1) What conceptions of, and to what extent, Bildung, competence, digitalization and sustainable development are embedded in teacher education policy in Norway?

### 2. Theoretical framework

Future-oriented visions of education are part of what Oomen et al. (2022) call 'acts of futuring'. These include the social processes and practices that allow particular imagined futures to be promoted and in turn, to be socially performed. Acts and techniques of futuring is defined as 'the identification, creation and dissemination of images of the future shaping the possibility space for action, thus enacting relationships between past, present and future' (Oomen et al., pp. 253-254). Thus, the conceptions of Bildung and competence, as well as embeddedness of digitalization and sustainable development in teacher education policy, are viewed as markers of images of the future that become socially performative by stakeholders involved in implementing the teacher education programmes.

### 3. Methodology/research design

The article is based on qualitative methodology, and adopts constructionism as an epistemological perspective, which in turn, relies on the view that reality in the social arenas is socially constructed (Crotty, 1998). Further, it applies reading and document analysis to engage in an in-depth analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the data material related to the research question. Three documents are included in the analysis.

### 4. Expected results/findings

The main finding was that the all four concepts of interest of the study – Bildung, competence, digitalization and sustainable development – are embedded in all three policy documents selected for the study. Another finding was that there is a close alignment across the policy documents, especially between the legal framework (NMER, 2016) and the national guidelines for primary and lower secondary teacher education programmes for years 5-10. Yet, another finding was that 'competence' is by far the most used concept, indicating a discourse of outcome-oriented policy in teacher education that is also observed in curriculum policy (Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020).

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper is relevant for NERA 2025 and for the education field, since it contributes to consolidating the knowledge base on how influential concepts in the European context are integrated in teacher education policy in a Nordic context.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Commercialisation of teaching

Anna Hogan

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

This paper investigates the phenomenon of teacher influencers on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, exploring how their online presence impacts educational practices and reflects broader trends in the commercialisation of teaching. By sharing resources, tips, and endorsements, teacher influencers create 'communities of practice' that provide informal support for educators while simultaneously promoting consumer culture within education (Carpenter et al., 2023). This study critically examines how commercial curriculum resources, marketed as solutions to teacher workload and time poverty, influence professional autonomy and the commodification of teaching.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The research is grounded in the theory of social acceleration (Rosa, 2003; 2013), which contextualises the time pressures experienced by modern professionals within broader societal trends of increasing pace and complexity of life. The intersection of commercialisation and teacher workload is critically examined through frameworks addressing time poverty and work intensification (Thompson & Hogan, 2024).

#### 3. Methodology/research design

The study uses a qualitative approach, drawing on an exploratory case study of an Instagram teacher influencer, named Olivia [pseudonym]. Data were collected through an in-depth interview, supplemented by a thematic analysis of the influencer's social media content. The analysis focuses on expressions of time poverty and how this influencer 'invested', 'managed', 'experienced' and was 'overwhelmed' by time.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

Findings reveal that teacher influencers face significant time poverty, balancing teaching duties with the demands of maintaining a social media presence. While teacher influencers foster resource-sharing, their practices are deeply tied to consumer culture. Commodification prioritises trendy, marketable materials that may not align with educational best practices or curricular standards. This focus can marginalise vital but less "sellable" aspects of education, such as critical thinking and culturally responsive pedagogy, potentially undermining educational quality and equity. To address these challenges, educators, schools, and policymakers must establish guidelines that balance the benefits of teacher-created resources with the need to uphold high educational standards.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The Nordic context, with its strong emphasis on equitable and well-resourced education systems, provides a valuable framework for critically examining the global implications of commercialisation in schooling. While Nordic countries are often seen as exemplars of educational equity, the growing influence of consumer culture in education poses challenges that transcend national boundaries. This study contributes to Nordic educational research by highlighting how the commercialisation of teaching - manifested through teacher influencers and the commodification of curriculum resources - raises pressing concerns about the professional autonomy of teachers, their work, and their workload.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Categorizing Narratives through “narrativity” for Climate Change Education

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This study explores a new theoretical framework for designing climate change education (CCE) activities or materials that leverage narratives to balance pure logico-scientific ways of thinking (Bruner, 1985) in order to foster agency, sensemaking, and engagement among students (Authors, 2024). While narratives have been widely recognized as valuable tools in science communication and education, their varying definitions and applications have led to ambiguity in how they support climate change education. By introducing the concept of “narrativity” to categorize narratives, this study proposes an operative approach that equips educators with a clear structure for selecting and developing CCE activities or materials. This framework aligns with Jerome Bruner's theory of two modes of thought (Bruner, 1985), aiming to integrate scientific and socio-cultural perspectives within climate-related learning.

In the first phase of this project, we mapped a landscape of narrative types prevalent in climate change discourse, from historical accounts and scientific scenarios to future-oriented storytelling. Drawing on theories from linguistics scholars, we identified essential features such as temporality, causality, and events to establish a three-layer narrativity model. This model not only aids in differentiating narrative forms but also highlights the unique contributions of each type to enhancing students' comprehension of climate change as a dynamic, complex process (Ryan, 2005).

Our findings suggest that narratives with high degrees of “narrativity” — involving mental dimension of characters or an author's view — could be employed, for example, to foster perspective taking, sensemaking and/or emotional connection, useful to acquire a personal sense of meaning and the motivation for agency. In contrast, narrative forms with a lower degree of narrativity, such as qualitative climate projections, can convey crucial scientific data while fostering a Bayesian way of reasoning in relation to the representation of time, and help students explore and map the range of possible futures and the role of human agency in achieving them. However, they may require complementary narrative elements to foster emotional engagement and relevance. This study's operative tool can serve as a practical guide for educators, facilitating the integration of narratives that address climate change's multifaceted challenges while fostering critical thinking and future-oriented skills among students.

By providing a structured framework for narrative selection and development, this research supports a more effective and theoretically grounded approach to narrative for climate change education, equipping young learners with the tools to navigate and respond to the urgent socio-scientific challenges of our time. The study contributes to Nordic educational research by offering insights into how narrative-based strategies can empower students to approach climate change as informed, proactive citizens (Hulme, 2009).

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### The Professional Agency of the School-Based Subject Teacher Educators at Finnish Teacher Training Schools

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Our paper examines how subject teachers at Finnish university teacher training schools experience their professional agency in two distinct roles: as teachers and as teacher educators. In Finland, subject teachers in teacher training schools act as school-based teacher educators (SBSTEs), with responsibilities that include both teaching their specific subject and actively participating in teacher education. Teacher training schools play a central role in providing a practical training environment for student teachers. Subject teachers in these schools balance their work and loyalty across multiple stakeholders, including students, student teachers, colleagues, and both school and university partners.

The research use subject-centered sociocultural approach to explore professional agency, viewing it as emerging through the interaction between the sociocultural conditions of the workplace and the individuals' professional identities, competencies, and work histories (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Roumbanis et al., 2021). We aim to determine whether SBSTEs experience their agency differently when acting in the roles of teacher and teacher educator.

Our research relies on cross-sectional data collected from Finnish SBSTEs between January and August 2021 (N=118). The dataset includes eight practice schools offering subject teacher training with a wide range of subjects. We analyzed mean-level differences in competencies and the sense of professional agency between the teacher and teacher educator roles by using paired samples t-tests. Three composite variables represented competencies (content knowledge, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge, and contextual knowledge) in both roles. To represent professional agency, we compared four composite variables (influencing at work, being heard at work, commitment, and professional development) in the roles of teacher and teacher educator.

The results show a significant difference in agency experiences between the roles of teacher and teacher educator: SBSTEs feel less empowered to influence and be heard in the role of teacher educator compared to the role of teacher. Sociocultural factors in the workplace may explain differences between professional roles, as these roles often develop based on the expectations and traditions associated with them. Professional competencies, tasks, and power relations in different roles also influence how professional agency manifests

Across Europe, there is an ongoing effort to establish permanent networks of teacher training schools and to strengthen collaboration between schools and universities (e.g., Andreasen, 2023; Zeichner, 2021). This study provides new insights into the relationship between professional agencies and collaboration, offering valuable guidance for the international development of practice school networks and teacher education systems.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Education for the future and new didactic models

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This year (2024) it is more than 45 years since Bjarne Bjørndal and Sigmund Lieberg launched the didactic relational thinking model (DRT) in their book *Nye veier i didaktikken* (1978). This model has permeated Norwegian pedagogical education. But does it hold true when the learning process is linked to unforeseen events and future education? This presentation shows that DRT can fall short in such contexts. An alternative is introduced, exemplified by a section of the Teaching Principles for the Unforeseen (DU). A 5-step principle model is introduced. The model is based on the main findings of Torgersen (2015; 2018) and is published in short form in *Times Higher Education* (Torgersen, 2023). The model in its entirety is elaborated in a later publication (Sæverot & Torgersen, 2023/24, p.63). The model is an answer to one of the core questions in pedagogy of the unforeseen: Is it possible to learn and practice something that is not yet known?

The context is DU training in the school, education and childcare sector in general, and also in emergency preparedness training. Such a model, with a specific focus on the actual teaching methodology, could support both teachers and trainers in their own pedagogical practice where the unexpected is a topic. Furthermore, the model could form the basis for the development of scenarios for exercises and teaching programs, and contribute to the exchange of experience and active learning processes related to DU teaching, as well as systematic evaluation of actual learning outcomes.

The theme of "the unforeseen" is not only necessary as a basis for the total defense concept, but also in general education, for the good of society. The new curriculum for primary and secondary school (LK20) emphasizes that children and young people should "...be able to acquire and apply knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in known and unknown contexts and situations.". Key competencies for this will be judgment, critical reflection, improvisation, interaction and concurrent learning in unforeseen contexts.

To achieve this, a pedagogical practice that plays on the nature of the unexpected is needed (Torgersen, 2023). Both topics and resources should be included in the educational institutions' strategic competence plans for employees, and in the central and local curricula, to a much greater extent than is currently the case. Indirect pedagogy and "extruction" would be possible practical didactic approaches.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Opportunities for Learning within Work-Integrated Teacher Education

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#### Research topic

Top of FormAddressing the gap between theory and practice has been a central focus of teacher education research (e.g., Korthagen, 2007; McGarr et al., 2017). Work-integrated learning (WIL) has gained popularity internationally, offering a framework that bridges academic theory with practical experience (e.g., McRae & Johnston, 2016). This shift reflects a “practice turn” in higher education, where hands-on experiences enhance student work-readiness and integrate off-campus and on-campus learning (Raelin, 2007; Caspersen & Smeby, 2021). However, challenges persist as students often struggle to translate academic knowledge into teaching practice (Nilsson, 2008). Studies have shown that a restructuring of teacher education affects students' learning opportunities (Jederud et al., 2022, Jederud, 2024). This study explores how WIL student teachers—who spend three days a week working in schools and two days in university coursework—perceive their opportunities for learning as they transition between these contexts.

#### Theoretical framework

Drawing on Akkerman and Bakker's (2011) boundary-crossing theory, the study investigates four learning potentials: identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation. Boundary-crossing emphasizes the value of connecting university and workplace experiences, as differences between these contexts can foster professional growth (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Wenger's (1998) concept of “broker” suggests that WIL students can bridge communities of practice by transferring knowledge between their work and university settings.

#### Methodology

Twelve WIL student teachers participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences in crossing boundaries between work and university. The participants, who had been in WIL teacher education for three to four years, provided insights into their perceptions of learning opportunities and challenges between the contexts. Interviews were recorded, are being transcribed, and will be analyzed through an abductive approach, allowing a dynamic interaction between data and theory. Themes will be identified based on recurring patterns, with representative quotes illustrating common perspectives.

#### Results

WIL teacher education offers a double-edged sword for professional development. On one hand, boundary-crossing allows WIL students to develop reflective practices and gain valuable experience. On the other hand, balancing roles as both teachers and students can be challenging. Results so far show that WIL students working three days a week sometimes feel more aligned with their professional roles than with their academic ones, which affects their expectations of university studies. Acting as “brokers,” these students frequently transition between work and university, trying to synthesize learning from both. However, this dual identity can create tensions, as some WIL students seek more practically relevant coursework than traditional academic programs offer. In conclusion, while WIL facilitates professional learning, it also requires careful coordination to help students manage their dual roles effectively.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

Trying to understand how the organisation of teacher education is perceived to affect student teachers opportunities for learning provides the possibility of deriving important lessons about how to engage with policy and implementation by organising teacher education that promotes more productive learning of preservice teachers.

Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Language(s) in school - a case study from multilingual Kenya

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In this paper we present an empirical study on Kenyan preservice teachers' rationalizations for the use of different languages in school. Kenyan teachers juggle at least three different languages; English (which is the language of instruction (LoI) from grade 4), Swahili (the national language) and indigenous languages in the area.

In our study, we interviewed 12 preservice teachers in a rural area and analysed their responses through a thematic analysis. Their responses indicate that they are very aware of English as the LoI and refer to the school rules and curriculum to justify this. Schools practiced certain days for English and other days the learners were allowed to speak Swahili. Mother tongue however was forbidden and punishable at a number of schools. The preservice teachers further responded that they could use Swahili to elaborate when the learners do not understand, but their mother tongue was rarely used due to arguments of including everyone and school rules. In some cases, they would use mother tongue if the topic was related to traditional culture or as tongue twisters.

Our discussion of these results makes use of Goodlad's model of his hierarchical curriculum theory to investigate the signalised value of the different languages in relation to the different curriculum domains. We find that there are severe gaps in and between the domains and discuss possible causes for these gaps. Further, we suggest an adjusted model to visualise the rationalizations of the preservice teachers. We conclude our paper by pointing to some potential consequences for these gaps, with special emphasis on the position and status of the indigenous languages in education, and the need for teacher education to address issues of language of instruction (LoI) more critically.

As the study is part of a larger comparative study of preservice teachers in Kenya and Zanzibar, and bilingual preservice teachers in Norway, there is a relevance to Nordic Educational research related to language of instruction when it is not the mother tongue of the preservice teacher.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Transforming Teacher Education: From 'Feel-Good' ESD to Action-Oriented Sustainability

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#### Introduction

Teacher education is pivotal in preparing future educators for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). While ESD is often perceived as a policy term, we employ ESD as a pragmatic concept where development signifies the pursuit of more just, environmentally friendly, and ethical ways of living.

This presentation builds on previous research in which the authors analyzed the curriculum of a five-year integrated teacher education program, focusing on its ESD profile. The findings revealed that although ESD was integrated throughout the program, there was a greater emphasis on education *about* sustainable development rather than education *for* sustainable development. The individualistic and rather passive perspectives on ESD can contribute to what Jickling and Wals (2013) describe as “feel-good ESD,” where no substantial change occurs. The aim of this presentation is to discuss how a teacher education program can foster more systemic, holistic, and collective understandings, as well as an action-oriented approach to ESD.

#### Theoretical Framework

The Norwegian Qualification Framework in higher education is based on The European Qualifications Framework that emphasize individual competencies and measurable learning outcomes. This links to a competitive view on education, and views students as customers, who complete customer-satisfaction evaluations. This is what Blum (2023) refers to as neoliberal values in education. In contrast, ESD values collective responsibility and holistic approaches to knowledge, where ethics, aesthetics, and attitudes are interwoven with actionable knowledge and skills (Evans et al., 2017). Preparing student teachers to implement ESD requires them to analyze the current educational system and society to instigate change. To bridge the present (what is) and the future (what we wish), we apply Giroux's concept of teachers as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 2018). This concept encapsulates teachers' courage to act for a more just world (socially, environmentally, and economically).

#### Methodology/Research Design

The authors' previous study findings form the basis for a theoretical discussion, analyzing the ESD profile of a five-year integrated teacher education program.

#### Findings

The analysis of the formal curriculum revealed that the learning outcomes primarily focus on concepts and perspectives rather than promoting action competence. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the individualistic design of the learning outcome descriptions, driven by the Qualifications Framework, contrasts with the program's vision of ESD as collective action. The presentation will discuss whether the emphasis on individual learning and measurable outcomes hinders the teacher education in engaging with the complex socio-political dimensions of sustainable development.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Bridging theory and practice: A multimodal analysis of aesthetic learning through Triarama in early childhood teacher education

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This study explores the potential of multimodal aesthetic learning methods, specifically triarama (three-dimensional dioramas), in bridging the gap between theory and practice in early childhood teacher education. The research examines a one-day teaching session involving 63 first-year early childhood education students at a Norwegian university, focusing on their multimodal interpretation and transformation of scenes from Margareth Olin's documentary film "Barndom" (Olin, 2017).

The theoretical framework integrates UNESCO's distinction between "learning *through* art/culture" and "learning *in* art/culture" (UNESCO, 2016) with Kress and van Leeuwen's social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). This synthesis emphasizes how meaning-making occurs through the interplay of multiple modes (visual, spatial, and material) in aesthetic learning processes. Building on Scandinavian research traditions in aesthetic learning methods, the study examines how various semiotic resources contribute to knowledge construction and professional understanding in early childhood education.

Employing a qualitative research design, the study involved 15 student groups creating triaramas, analyzing their modal choices in representing selected film scenes. Data collection methods included observations of the multimodal transformation process, documentation of the finished triaramas, and student interviews focusing on their semiotic decision-making. The methodology followed a "think-pair-share" approach, incorporating individual reflection, group work, and collective presentation through a café-style sharing session.

Preliminary findings reveal three main categories of impact:

1. Multimodal Meaning-Making: Students demonstrated complex understanding through their conscious use of different modes (spatial arrangement, color, texture, and form) in their representations.
2. Modal Transformation: The process of transforming audiovisual film content into three-dimensional representations fostered deep reflection on professional practice.
3. Semiotic Innovation: Students developed new ways of expressing pedagogical concepts through creative combinations of available modes and materials.

This research contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing how multimodal aesthetic approaches can enhance professional learning in early childhood teacher education. It demonstrates how conscious engagement with different modes of representation can create inclusive learning environments while supporting the implementation of national guidelines for early childhood teacher education. The study's findings have implications for developing innovative pedagogical practices that integrate aesthetic learning methods in teacher education programs across the Nordic countries.

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## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Finland and Norway, perspectives on autonomy in teacher education for equity and diversity

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This presentation aims to highlight preliminary findings of two countries, Finland and Norway. Equity and Diversity in Teacher Educator Development (ED-TED) is an Erasmus+ funded project where seven European countries collaborate to establish a professional network and communities of higher education teacher educators. The aim is to develop competences to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) throughout teacher education programmes.

Our theoretical framework will be based on a review of research on autonomy in teacher education and for teacher educators. We will also consider literature on autonomy and teachers to identify trends related to teacher education, since there is broader research on autonomy and teachers (e.g. Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007; Salokangas & Wermke, 2020).

A wide-ranging understanding of policy frameworks and objectives regarding teaching for equity and diversity in teacher education was obtained through the legislative acts by all partners in the ED-TED project. This document analysis at the national (macro) and institutional (meso) levels was, in a second stage, enriched with understandings of what happens 'on the ground' (micro-level) via focus group interviews with a sample of programme leaders and student teachers in each country. The data gathering was used to construct an understanding of DEI issues in teacher education in both countries.

Our discussion on the trajectory of autonomy from macro to micro level in Norway and Finland is based on trends we find in the mapping exercise. These show the possibility to discuss paradoxes that look similar but arise at different levels in this trajectory. The preliminary findings in the Finnish and Norwegian contexts show different structures of national regulations. At the same time, they reveal that student teachers in both contexts share similar experiences regarding DEI. A question about the need for more (central) regulation of teacher educators' possibilities for the development of competencies to address issues of DEI throughout teacher education programmes is an interesting discussion in both contexts.

At the core of establishing a European Education Area by 2025 lies the need to improve social cohesion. To this end, "giving more support to teachers" becomes a central objective of the European Education Area, as well as ensuring that "Member States take action to support the teacher educator profession" (European Commission, 2013, p. 6) in recognition of their central role at every stage of the teacher's career. These quotes from key European policy documents underscore the growing awareness at policy levels of teacher education's crucial role in developing more equitable education systems. In this presentation, we bring forward a focus on two Nordic countries, Finland and Norway, in which we support teacher educator professional development by clarifying the landscape.

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# Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

Newly qualified science teachers: Generic and subject specific needs for support

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Research topic/aim

The present research is from a longitudinal project (2023-2027) examining the experiences of Newly Qualified Science Teachers (NQST) participating in a nationwide induction initiative. The need for mentoring and induction is highlighted in international research including research emphasizing needs for NQST, e.g. related to managing teaching laboratories and inquiry-based learning processes (Luft et al., 2015). McIntyre and Jones (2014) state unique potentials in mentoring processes where external mentors and NQST meet in a third space outside the school - an approach which is further examined in our study focusing on the NQST's development of professional identity as a key to understand processes in the first years of practice (Rushton & Reiss, 2021).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical approach to professional identity is a dialogic conceptualisation conceiving teacher identity as both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Hence, we are interested in the social processes that form professional identity (Haslam, 2017), but in an integrated approach examining also the individual facets of the NQST's evolving professional identity.

Methodology/research design

The research design is a sequential mixed method design with two main phases. In the developmental phase (2023-2024) we have examined the experiences of NQST including the challenges they highlight, and subsequently iteratively developed and tried out induction activities including dialogic meetings in a third space. Data includes interviews with the NQST. In the experimental phase (2024-2027) three cohorts of NQST are followed over time with data from repeated surveys and interviews.

Expected results/findings

Findings from the developmental phase with challenges as perceived by the NQST are thematized under the three headlines of: 1) Structure and framing: Generic challenges with classroom management and specific challenges form the science laboratories, 2) Professional identity: Tensions when the ideal of inquiry based science teaching meets the reality of the everyday pressure as a novice teacher, and 3) Science culture at the schools: Tensions due to different values and understanding of science teaching at their schools. The NQST highlight positively the mentoring in the third space, the confidential room away from the school and the dialogue with other NQST.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The research-focus on NQST contributes with new perspectives to the strong network in the Nordic countries discussing mentoring and induction.

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## Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

“We both grew, because we reflected on practical matters together” Preschool-based mentors’ experience of paid internship in preschool teacher education

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In 2019, the Icelandic government established a five-year campaign to increase the number of teachers in pre- and primary schools. One part of that campaign was a paid internship at the graduate year of teacher education program. The internship involves a half-time job in pre-or primary school, during one school year. The aim of the internship is to increase student teachers’ competences to face the challenges of the teacher profession when they graduate, with increased likelihood of successful career. The aim of this study is to explore preschool-based mentors’ experience of paid internship, since their role is crucial in the process.

Scholars have pointed out that extensive and well-organised internship is one of the most important factors regarding quality of teacher education. Relation to the field is important for the student teacher to try out pedagogical approaches from the program. At the same time, close collaboration between universities and teachers in the field is important for the student teacher's education (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Former studies show how important the mentor’s role is for the teacher student’s internship. The mentor should support the student to transfer theory into practice (Nolan & Molla, 2018). Recent study on students’ experiences show that they had positive experience from paid internship and one main factor in their successful process was support and guidance from preschool-based mentors (Sigurdardottir & Mork, 2024).

Data was gathered through seven semi-structured focus group interviews with twelve preschool-based mentors. The mentors were asked about their role in the internship, dialog with the students, collaboration with the university and benefits related to the paid internship.

The preliminary findings show that the mentors found the paid internship successful for the graduate students. Furthermore, they felt that it also was beneficial for themselves as professionals, since they had time for professional reflections together with the students, as part of their role. Their experienced that the students grew as professionals during the internship and became more confident in their work.

The findings are important to develop the internship further with a focus on collaboration between university and preschool-based mentors. Furthermore, they can be useful for teacher education in a wider context, since lack of preschool teachers seems to be a common problem in all Nordic countries.

## Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

### Mentoring at the start of a career in Austria: Perspectives on mentoring during the induction phase

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Since the introduction of the new teacher training programme, all new entrants to the profession in Austria have also been accompanied by teacher trainers. In addition to the accompanying courses at university colleges of teacher education, mentors and their support services are increasingly becoming the focus of teacher education research (Dammerer, Wiesner & Windl, 2020).

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Mentoring is understood as a reciprocal relationship with qualification and learning effects for mentees and mentors in the induction phase provided for this purpose. The quality of the mentorship depends on both the training of the mentors and their support of the beginning teachers. The provision of sufficient time resources for individual support is particularly important as an essential core criterion of the mentoring process (Prenzel et al., 2020). However, there are still no reliable findings on these factors for Austria, especially as the legal framework for the induction phase has changed again in the last two years.

Accordingly, this article is dedicated to the following research question:

What role do mentors play as 'teachers of teachers' or 'teacher educators' when starting a career and how is the mentoring process currently organised in Austria?

#### 3. Methodology/research design

Using scales on the form of mentoring, the possibilities and content of the collaboration and the style of mentoring, 785 young professionals with different initial constellations were surveyed. It was a quantitative questionnaire.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

Initial results show that there is still space for improvement in induction, both in terms of the type of mentoring and the opportunities for collaboration (mentor-mentee). With regard to the topics of mentoring and the time windows available for supporting the mentees, there are also implications for the training, qualification and professionalisation of mentors and, subsequently, for the optimisation of the mentoring process.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Nordic countries have a great deal of experience in mentoring in the context of teacher training. In Austria, formal mentoring has only existed since 2019, so a comparison and exchange could be of interest to all countries.

Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

Selecting and Qualifying Mentors in Teacher Education: Insights from the Austrian Induction Program

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### 1. Research topic/aim

According to Behr (2017), no teacher training institution can provide a "fully prepared" teacher. Instead, the profession is characterized by an ongoing journey of learning and development (p. 25). The first phase of initial training is followed by entering the teaching profession marking the second phase. This is followed by a third phase, encompassing continuous training and professional development, which extends throughout a teacher's career (Behr, 2017). With Austria's "Pedagogical Education NEW" (BMBWF) initiative and particularly with the establishment of a mandatory induction phase during the first year of service, more attention is being given to the second phase.

In Austria, all beginning teachers who have completed initial training and acquired foundational professional competence are required to undergo an introductory phase. Throughout this period, beginning teachers are accompanied by mentors who provide encouragement and assistance.

Mentoring in teacher education is generally seen as a strategy for individual and institutional support (Fischer & van Anel, 2002), enhancing well-being, and facilitating the induction of newcomers to the profession (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009).

Entering the school environment requires beginning teachers to shift their perspective from learners to teachers. Mentors play an important role in facilitating this transition by integrating theoretical knowledge with practical experience.

The following research question is explored: *How can both the selection and qualification of mentors be supported and ensured?*

### 2. Theoretical framework

Effective professionalization of mentors is essential for the success and sustainability of mentoring programs (Graesser, Bowers & Hacker, 1997; Jucovy, 2001; Miller, 2007). Austrian universities and colleges of teacher education offer extensive training for mentors, including options up to a master's level. Furthermore, the University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria provides professional development opportunities for mentors, along with networking meetings to keep them informed of the latest developments, facilitate ongoing professionalization and encourage knowledge exchange.

### 3. Methodology/research design

By means of literature research, the prerequisites and key content for mentors' learning and development were examined. This research is based on a study of curricula for mentor training in Austria.

### 4. Expected results/findings

Effective mentoring requires specific competencies, training, and professional experience. To undertake mentors training, teachers must meet specific requirements concerning employment status and years of service.

For mentors' development six core areas were identified: Mentors should have

- (1) professional and life experience,
- (2) familiarity with institutional culture and values of the institution,

(3) openness to learn and self-reflect,

(4) willingness to share knowledge and provide feedback,

(5) commitment and resources such as time (MacLennan, 1995, p. 5)

(6) a positive attitude towards sharing expertise, along with a willingness to support others in their development (Wiesner & Dammerer, 2020, pp. 250-296).

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

This paper examines the prerequisites and core content of mentor training curricula in Austria, comparing them with similar practices in Nordic teacher education. While Austria introduced mandatory mentoring for career starters in 2019, Nordic countries have a much longer-standing tradition in this regard.

Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

Glow, tensions and in-between spaces: a foundation in sustainable mentoring

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The project this paper discusses had as an overall aim to investigate mentor students learning through their written assignments. In three different research articles we have discussed glow, tensions and the necessity of dwelling with what lies in the in-between spaces of dominant discourses as *acts* (Arendt, 1958). In this presentation, we explore the tensions between the results in these three articles through the following research question: *How can three different analysis of mentor students written assignments contribute to more sustainable education of mentors?*

We build our theoretical foundation on Arendt (1958, p. 181) and the concept of *act* as to start up something and to take responsibility. A contradiction to act is according to Arendt, *re-act* as totalitarianism where the human doesn't act independently (Øverenge, 2003, p. 136). Furthermore, we discuss act and re-act considering ecological perspectives and sustainability, connected to mentoring, inspired of e.g. Heikkinen (2020). When we connect sustainable mentoring to act, Arendt's (2005) perspectives of *thinking without banisters*, and the need of daring to trust in ourselves and to risk something, challenges us to discuss the results in the previous articles in the framework of what can be needed in future education of mentors.

The research design is constructed on a meta-analysis of three previous partial studies of mentor students written assignments. In the first partial study we analyzed the assignments thematically, following Bakhtin's concepts dialogue, plural voices and heteroglossia (Eik, et al., 2021) as the methodological foundation. In the second partial study, we used Antonovsky's concept Sense of Coherence (Vala, et al., 2022). And, in the third we did a discourses analysis inspired by Foucault (Moxnes, et al., accepted). In this presentation we use results from our meta-analysis of these three partial studies, to discuss how the learning outcome from these three can further implicate the education of mentors considering sustainability.

Each of the three partial studies discusses challenges in the education of mentors. We find that through this meta-analysis we get a wider perspective of this education, and the implications of the studies points clearly back to us as educators and our ability to carry out necessary changes. Considering concepts as sustainability and the challenges of hope in view of Arendt's (1958) concepts act and re-act, creates considerations for further doings of change in educations.

There is a need for more research on students' learning and theoretical reflections through their education, and how this knowledge can further develop the understanding of education in mentoring. Furthermore, there is also a need for more awareness of the knowledge base in mentoring, and how to make these knowledge bases more sustainable. To create more sustainable knowledge-bases challenges to act more than re-act in the education.

## Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

Experiences of supervision in professional development at The National School Leadership Training Programme in Sweden

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The supervision in professional development is one element of the The National School Leadership Training Programme (NSLTP) in Sweden. The field of knowledge regarding supervision in professional development is an immature knowledge area and is dominated of various research approaches as well as concept usage. All knowledge contributions to the field are therefore important. The overall aim of the project is to contribute to in-depth knowledge of supervision in professional development in the NSLTP.

The theoretical framework is based on Aristotle's forms of knowledge with an emphasis on phronesis and professional judgement.

The project contains two sub-studies, the first is based on the fact that supervision in professional development in NSLTP during the period autumn semester 2018-autumn semester 2022 was mostly carried out via Zoom due to the corona pandemic. We therefore saw it as valuable to take part in NSLTP-participants' experiences both of supervision in professional development as such and the possible significance of the room in which supervision took place. Our interest in knowledge was directed towards experiences of the supervision practice, as well as meanings of these experiences.

During the spring of 2023, a survey was therefore conducted which addressed participants who started and completed the NSLTP at one university during the period autumn semester 2018 – autumn semester 2022. A special supervision model called "the dialogical reflection model" was used at this university.

At the end of the survey, we advertised for participants for an in-depth interview study based on the survey results and received positive responses from a handful of school heads, and group interviews were conducted in the fall of 2024. The purpose of the interviews was to illuminate, analyze and discuss experiences of supervision in professional development in relation to concrete events and situations in the school head's everyday work life.

In our analysis of the survey responses, we deduce that the room seems to be of more secondary importance, while the meeting, the pace, the ritual, questions of responsibility, seriousness, cultivation of practical wisdom appear as more significant aspects. Above all, what we learn from the analysis is that the described experiences of supervision in professional development at the NSLTP can be seen as reflections of different qualities in the supervision practice.

One interpretation of the results from the survey is that such qualities can play a different role for different participants in the supervision practice, and that the different qualities gain importance based on situation and context. The forthcoming analysis of the interviews hopefully will contribute to a deeper understanding of how supervision in professional development eventually matters in or in relation to school leaders' everyday work life.

The relevance for Nordic educational research is considered high because the field of knowledge regarding supervision in professional development is an immature area and in need of more research.

## Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

### Why Be Two About It?

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In this study, we explore the experience of having two supervisors who jointly engage in collective academic supervision of master's theses students in Norwegian primary teacher education. Unlike group supervision, collective academic supervision brings students together to receive supervision on their separate projects, encouraging a dynamic exchange of perspectives between students (Thomsen & Nordentoft, 2012; Nordentoft et al., 2019; Wichmann-Hansen et al., 2015). The central premise is that increased exposure to their peers' theoretical and methodological approaches can help students refine their arguments for their approaches and choices.

Adding a second supervisor can further enrich this environment, allowing dialogue and discussion between experienced academics to model critical academic skills like analytical thinking, argumentation, and feedback exchange (Nordentoft et al., 2013). However, dual supervision also introduces relational complexity, requiring attention to foundational aspects of collaboration, such as trust, psychological safety, and task division (Wichmann-Hansen et al., 2015).

Theoretically, this study is grounded in situated learning theory (Wenger, 1998), emphasizing how students, through peer dialogue and collaboration with supervisors, are integrated into and become part of an academic community of knowledge (Nordentoft et al., 2013). Employing collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2017), we examine a year-long structured supervision process with three students and two supervisors engaged in joint supervision in the context of collective academic supervision, incorporating written logs, audio recordings, and transcriptions. Our analysis contributes new insights into the dynamics of dual supervision in collective academic supervision, highlighting both the complexities and the added value of multivocal exchange and interaction for skill development in higher education.

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Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

A Careful Approach to Becoming a Teacher: Digital observation practice in Teacher Education

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Research topic

The aim of this study is to shed light on the contribution of partnership-based digital observation practice as a way of transitioning from being a new teacher student to classroom practice in teacher education, from students' perspective. We ask: What significance can digital observation practice have for classroom practice, according to first-year students in teacher education?

Methodology/research design

The data consists of 64 student answers to three questionnaires. This qualitative study uses in vivo coding with the students' words as starting point, and the codes grew organically from the data (Strauss, 1987) to preserve proximity to the material. Then we explored any relationships between the codes to form conceptual and thematic categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, pp. 207-209).

Theoretical framework

The discussion interprets the significance of our findings considering *induction* as a supportive process based on learning and teaching through socialization and facilitated activities in the education program (Feiman-Nemser, 2010, p. 16). The organization of digital observation practice is inspired by *peer debrief* (Creswell & Creswell, 2023) and *peer group mentoring* (Heikkinen et al., 2012; Korhonen et al., 2017).

Results/findings

The first thematic category that emerged was *learning with others*, which we link to the theoretical concepts of peer debriefing and peer group mentoring. The second thematic category that emerged was the *organization of activities*, which we link to support structures inherent in the organization.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

There is still little research related to the organization of teacher education (Lillejord & Børte, 2017, s. 25). The same applies to research related to PGM in which experienced teachers and student teachers collaborate (Kiviniemi et al., 2021, p. 557), and studies may form a better understanding of the participants' experiences. This will be useful information for development work at teacher education institutions (Kiviniemi et al., 2021, p. 567).

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# Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Managing non-choosing parents in mandatory school choice systems in Sweden

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Marketisation permeates education systems in the Nordics, and this development is accompanied by the introduction of various choice and consumer-oriented policies. The idea of the citizen as someone who is willing and capable of choosing between different welfare services – including schools – is axiomatic in much of contemporary public policy (Dovemark et al. 2018). While there is a vast literature on school choice in the Nordic countries, less research has focused on how local authorities organize, manage, and construct quasi-markets and competition in relation to education.

In this paper we aim to contribute to the research on school choice and the role of local authorities in constructing competition for school allocation in Sweden. We do this by exploring the strategies and rationalities of local authorities when handling the non-choosers, e.g. those parents who, for one reason or the other, fail or refuse to make a school choice for the sake of their child. We draw on literature within school choice, policy and organizational theory that highlights the importance of the ‘organizer’ (Arora-Jonsson et al 2020) or ‘market stewards’ (Malbon & Carey 2021). In our case, we focus on the local authorities, and how they organize, manage, and construct competition, as well as their rationalities in relation to the contextual dimensions in where these ‘policy enactments’ take place (Braun et al 2011).

Within our research project on school allocation, we have mapped and identified four distinct ways in which the 290 Swedish local municipalities organize school allocation for 6-year-olds. In this paper, we use data from municipalities with two of these school allocation systems, Type 1 (n=114) and 2 (n=13) that expect parental activity through different versions of ‘mandatory’ school choice. Furthermore, we analyze qualitative interviews with civil servants in 16 of these municipalities with different policies towards the ‘non-choosers’.

Results show that non-choosers are managed in two different ways. About half of the municipalities place children of non-choosing parents in schools near their homes, for example by estimating what school they would have chosen if they had made an active choice. The other half place children after all active choosers have received their school placement. Hence, local authorities merit active and passive actors in their school choice systems rather differently, where various parts of the regulation, the right to a school near home or the right to school choice, are used to justify different policy enactments. The latter disadvantages the passive actors and hence invokes an institutionalization of parents as consumers in creating competition.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Researching Policy Transfer of Vocational Education and Training across the European Union: A Systematic Literature Review

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Various academic fields have focused on the transfer of Vocational Education and Training (VET) policies and practices and the research base on VET policy transfer is broadly scattered. Recognising this deficit, researchers have sought to organise the current research. However, VET policy transfer studies carried out in European Union (EU) member states have made no such synthesising attempts. The aim of this paper was to conduct a systematic literature review, using the method outlined by Petticrew and Roberts (2006, 284), to analyse the research methodology in this context. Theoretically, I make reference to policy transfer literature (e.g., Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Phillips and Ochs 2003) and literature on the Europeanisation of education (e.g., Alexiadou and Rambla 2023; Börzel and Panke 2013). I searched for publications on the Scopus, Academic Search Ultimate (EBSCO), and ERIC databases, identifying a total of 577 publications, and finding a total of 35 publications that met the inclusion criteria for in-depth analysis. This review argues that research on VET policy transfer in the EU has particular gaps. It outlines four key areas that require attention: the lack of methodological diversity; the data collection from specific policy transfer actors and the exclusion of others; the geographical spaces that remain unexamined; and the focus on particular VET practices at the centre of policy transfer. The results identify lacunas in the current methodological practice of research on VET policy transfer in the EU and provide recommendations for future research. The paper is of particular relevance to the Nordic context as it shows that, despite the growing education export industry, few studies examine the transfer of VET from Nordic countries to other EU countries. The paper is currently under review with the *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### International organizations and education development: rethinking the the Global Learning Crisis

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The narrative of a global learning crisis has been a dominant theme in global education discourse, often overshadowing deeper systemic issues. This paper adopts a decolonial perspective to critically examine the role of international organizations, namely, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, in constructing and perpetuating this narrative. The paper argues that what is often labeled as a learning crisis is, in fact, a manifestation of deeper societal and a cooperation for development crises. By questioning and challenging the prevailing conceptual stances on the global learning crisis, this paper aims to uncover the underlying multistakeholder cooperation for development crises that are often masked by the rhetoric of a learning crisis.

This study employs the concept of “crisis epistemology” (Whyte, 2020) to discuss how international organizations, led by countries of the Global North articulate the narrative of the “learning crisis” and the “need to immediately become solutions-oriented” seeking, in this way, to legitimise their existence and their work.

The study includes a qualitative content analysis (Shreier, 2014) of semi-structured interviews with 23 Finnish education experts working in these organizations and an analysis reports and publications from UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. The data is analyzed to identify the key themes and narratives presented by these organizations’ education experts regarding the learning crisis and their proposed solutions, with an angle from some of the experts working in these organizations’ education experts. The analysis of both data sets enables a more comprehensive discussion of a) what kind of arguments international organizations and their experts relate with the global learning crisis and how these arguments, and b) how these organizations personnel adopt, or criticize international organizations’ stances and activities.

The study is still ongoing, and the findings are preliminary, but they seem to reveal that the narrative of the learning crisis is often used to legitimize the interventions of international organizations, positioning them as essential actors in solving global education challenges. This narrative tends to overlook the historical and structural factors, such as colonialism, and global economic inequalities, as contributing factors to the so-called learning crisis. It also highlights that focusing on standardized metrics and benchmarks often marginalizes local contexts and knowledge systems, perpetuating a form of educational neo-colonialism and perpetuating cycles of dependency and marginalization. The research suggests that a decolonial approach, which centers local contexts and knowledge systems, is necessary for more equitable and effective global governance of education.

This paper contributes to the ongoing debate on the global learning crisis by critically examining the role of international organizations in shaping this narrative. It calls for a rethinking of the conceptual stances and approaches employed by these organizations, advocating for a more inclusive and context-sensitive framework for the global governance of education. The findings indicate the need for international organizations to engage more deeply with local contexts and to consider alternative perspectives and solutions that go beyond standardized metrics and benchmarks.

Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Divided Teaching Profession with a Shared Knowledge Base?

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Since the 1990s, a series of reforms have been implemented to reorganise the Swedish teaching profession. A narrative has emerged emphasising teachers' opportunities for career growth and development through reforms such as individual salary setting, the introduction of Career Step Reform (CSR), and Teachers Salary Boost (TSB). Traditionally, the teaching profession in Sweden has been characterised by a relatively flat structure with limited career paths. However, today's teachers operate partly in a hierarchical environment where individual performance is assessed as a basis for career advancement.

Previous research suggests that these reforms have caused tensions and competition within the teaching profession, leading to internal divisions (Erlandson & Karlsson, 2018). This paper aims to explore how the hierarchical structure among teachers affects a key aspect of the profession: its knowledge base, particularly in relation to teachers' access to and conditions for professional development.

The article is based on a professional theory framework, specifically Friedson's stratification theory (1985). This theory posits that professions consistently create and reinforce internal hierarchies. The stratification process occurs both within the profession and through external political influences. It is often fuelled by the desire to enhance the profession's status or to address demands for change.

The study is based on a survey conducted among all licensed teachers in Sweden, with a response rate of 12,884 educators. The main objective of the survey was to outline and understand the impacts experienced by various groups of teachers following the introduction of CSR and TSB (Player-Koro, 2024). However, this paper specifically focuses on survey questions related to teachers' access to and conditions for professional development. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis.

Preliminary results indicate that teachers in career positions have more frequent access to professional development and are more satisfied with it compared to their peers. Conversely, teachers without career roles receive different types of professional development than, for instance, the "first teachers." This highlights a divide within the teaching profession, where opportunities for career advancement and salary growth lead to disparities in how knowledge is maintained and enhanced. For the profession, these unequal conditions for sustaining its knowledge base may present challenges. Moreover, the differences in professional development content could further deepen divisions within the profession, affecting not only economic disparities but also variations in expertise.

In Sweden, the hierarchical structure for teachers appears to be here to stay, and other countries have similar reforms been introduced. However, as we point out in our article, a divided profession brings about a new professional landscape that requires a critical audit.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### An ironic 'dissensus' standard for de-standardising education

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

This paper presents research in relation to thinking about de-standardising education. It does so against a background of rising authoritarianism in education and society in Europe and beyond (Reay, 2022; Clarke & Haines Lyon, 2023) and the creeping subordination of teachers' professional identities (Clarke, 2023). We – paradoxically – argue for a standard of/ for dissensus and discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this argument as well as outline details of this *ironic* standard. A standard of dissensus, we aver, might be used to critically engage with and resist the havoc that the neoliberal policy fetish of standardisation is having in places where education is supposed to take place. As educators, it is an urgent, ethico-political task to take part in ongoing conversations about *suspending* the socio-symbolic neoliberal order, including its instrumental and mechanical logics that reduce education to training/preparation.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

We draw on a range of thinkers; Rancière's 'axiom of equality' (2010, Stengers' (2005) 'ecologies of practice', and Malabou's (2021) re-reading of the later Foucault on 'becoming ungovernable' (cf Chamayou, 2018). The theoretical reflections – linked to the thoughtful process of composing a new standard of dissensus – are related to public education contexts, including Nordic ones, that are influenced by global neoliberal policy-related standardisation, regulation and control. We link our standard of dissensus to discussions of 1. *Sense*, 2. *Idiocy*, 3. *Divergence*, 4. *Plurality*, 5. *Ungovernability*.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

Combined with our theoretical lens, we will employ the 'method of Rancière', which *contradicts* itself by being an 'anti-method' based on the presupposition of equality (this presupposition mean that methods do not make sense as there is always hovering in the background the possibility for new sense to emerge).

#### 4. Expected results/findings

We will outline the proposed standard of/ for dissensus on 'knowing' in education with the following five elements; 1. Know how the system functions, 2. Know 'education', 3. Know how to change the system, 4. Know education in relation to other governed entities, 5. Know what is sensible and what is not in education.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Our philosophical paper is relevant for Nordic educational research, providing insightful results in terms of how anti-democratic, instrumental and standardised educational policy might be confronted, resisted and suspended in education by means of a *standard of dissensus*.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Selling and buying preschools. Experiences of business transfers on the Swedish edu-market

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Facilitated by marketisation and privatisation reforms, commercial actors' participation in Nordic preschool has markedly increased. In countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland we can detect a trend where privately single-owned preschools are decreasing. Instead, there is an increased ownership consolidation in for-profit medium sized business as well as large and even the very large corporate groups spanning across nations (Carlbaum & Rönnerberg 2023; Trætteberg et al. 2023). In such market contexts preschools themselves, including location, real estate, inventories, staff, reputation, children and queues etc. become commodities in business transfers, ownership take-overs and preschool acquisitions of single-owned preschools or whole companies, sometimes with the help of so-called business brokers (professionals with expertise in facilitating the process of selling private companies).

In this paper we explore preschool acquisitions in Sweden, focusing on rationalities and conducts for business transfers and how they are experienced. We ask how preschool transfers take place and on what grounds, what strategies are used when incorporating preschools in new company structures, and how this is experienced by principals and preschool staff. In doing so, we draw on literature of privatisation, commercialisation and commodification (Hogan & Thompson, 2021), and institutional theory (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008) on the ideas and strategies that forms the practices of preschool acquisitions and the lived experiences.

The data used has been generated within two research projects, Preschool as a market and Preschool on export and import. It includes interviews with three business brokers on practices and experiences of preschool transfers and 15 large or medium sized private preschool actors on takeovers and expansion. Furthermore, the data includes visits to and interviews with principals and preschool staff at three preschools that have experienced changes in ownership. The preschools are located in the capital region of Sweden and belong to different private actors with different organisational structures.

Preliminary findings indicate that while retirement has been a previous drive towards single-owned business transfers, experiences of increased regulation is also a factor. As transfers can be surrounded by extensive business secrecy it can be a "brutal" awakening for preschool staff and parents when take-overs are officially announced, creating feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. A balancing act of institutional pressure to both change and keep one's own uniqueness is enacted through sensemaking and translations in a variety of ways. We conclude by discussing what these business transfers, even across Nordic countries, mean for how preschool is changing.

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Market-oriented reforms and the involvement of private actors in Nordic early childhood education and care vary (Trætteberg et al 2023). While research on marketization and privatization in Nordic ECEC is growing, far less research has focused on how competition is created and experienced by those involved, such as municipalities organizing local preschool quasi-markets, private actors establishing preschools, and principals and preschool staff experiences. In policy, competition is used along other key concepts such as quality and equity often with simple assumptions that competition drives quality and even equity without further explaining how such processes are established. In this paper, we aim to explore how (non)competition is constructed and created as well as experienced and lived to discuss the doings of competition and the effects of marketisation and privatization on preschool governance and practice.

A central point of departure is that competition is constructed and not naturally occurring involving several actors, all contributing in one way or the other to the creation and doing of (non)competition and its sensemaking (Arora-Jonsson et al 2020). Competition needs to be organized and managed by so-called ‘market stewards’ (Malbon & Carey 2021), but it is also lived and constructed by those being organized, the private actors, the preschools, their staff and parents. We will focus on four elements of competition: actors, relationships, scarcity and desire (Arora-Jonsson et al 2020).

We draw on data generated within the research project *Preschool as a market* and a case study of three municipalities categorized as having either a large, medium or small private preschool sector. In each municipality, we interviewed politicians and municipal officials and visited and interviewed principals and pedagogues at two independent and two municipal preschools. The preschools were selected on proximity to other preschools and with the intention to capture a variety of different private preschool actors. Additionally, we draw on interviews with municipal officials in 30 municipalities as well as 20 private providers from previous sub-studies.

The findings will highlight expressions and lived experiences of competition and non-competition in the three local preschool quasi-markets. These expressions include among others, not sharing ‘best practices’ outside the municipal organizer, constructing business opportunities through offering summer preschool places for sale and not experiencing competition, not competing for the same children when offering different preschool pedagogies. We discuss the doings of competition and the paradoxes that underly assumptions that competition naturally occurs and drives quality and equity, issues of importance across the Nordic countries with differing levels of marketization of ECEC.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Towards digital citizenship or a digital divide? An analysis of upper-secondary curricula and qualification requirements in Finland and Sweden

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### Research topic

In this presentation, we analyse how and to what extent VET curricula and qualification requirements in Finland and Sweden at upper-secondary level include preparation for digital citizenship.

### Theoretical framework

It has been argued that in a current form of digital capitalism, a *division of learning* has replaced *the division of the labour* as the core organising principle of society (Zuboff 2019). Crucial questions in this era are related to distribution of knowledge, and whether all individuals have equal opportunities to learn. Even if this might be an exaggeration, digital skills have nonetheless become a crucial part of citizenship competence. In this context, critical citizenship scholars (e.g. Isin & Ruppert, 2020) have emphasized the importance of not only a discussion on digital skills, but also to open up a discussion of the *digital citizen as a political subject* - capable of making digital rights claims - as a crucial viewpoint when defining digital citizenship.

### Methodology

There is little research on VET and digitalisation, in particular in the context of digital citizenship. Against this backdrop, this presentation is based on analysis of the curricula and qualification requirements of three different VET programmes in Sweden and Finland; (i) Vehicle and Transport (ii) Healthcare and (ii) Nature work (Naturbruk, Nature-based services). We examined (A) targeted learning outcomes and (B) 4-5 courses from the beginning of each program. Our analysis was guided by three questions: *where*, *what* and *how* digitalisation is mentioned and framed in curriculum documents. We seek to answer how and to what extent VET curriculum and qualification requirements in Finland and Sweden include preparation for digital citizenship and discuss what this implies for the 'division of learning' in society. We are also interested in how the "skills and competences discourse" - which has largely displaced a learning discourse and become a commonplace in VET - is positioned in relation to digitalisation.

### Expected results

Preliminary analyses of curriculum documents suggest that the division of labour has not been replaced by, but is intertwined with, a division of learning. Fostering digital citizenship skills (Isin & Ruppert, 2020), is not a goal of VET. Thus a "digital divide" seems to follow the pattern of an "academic-vocational divide" (Nylund, et al, 2018), reproducing the moral order, where an active citizenship is reserved for academically educated individuals.

### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This study addresses questions of relevance in all Nordic countries, and offers cross-cultural and comparative perspectives on contemporary VET curricula in two Nordic countries, with different upper-secondary education systems.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

“They’re invisible, really”, but how?: education policy and children in State care in Ireland

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Participation in decision-making, including policy that involves them or their care, is a right enshrined to children by the United Nations (1989). Ireland was the first European country to develop a national children and youth participation in decision-making framework (DCEDIY, 2015), which seemed to herald a new era of focus on children’s voices in Irish policy. This shift in culture comes after survivors came forward about their experiences in State institutions between the 1930s until the late 1990s, culminating in the Ryan Report (2009) detailing widespread abuse of children within industrial & reformatory schools and mother & baby institutions. Despite this, much doubt has been cast as to the validity of this cultural shift. Most recently, Ireland has been condemned in international court for the violation of children’s rights, most notably in the State care system (CLP, 2021). Children in Irish State care remain unseen and unwritten about, most notably in education where there is no policy or practice guidelines (Darmody et al., 2013).

As one part of a larger participatory research project, this phase investigates the seeming invisibility of children in State care within educational policy from the point of view of the children as well as the civil servants and policy makers remitted to their care. Using epistemic responsibility and injustice (Medina, 2013) as a guiding theoretical framework, this presentation will discuss the findings of interviews with policy-makers and civil servants concerning the creation of policy for children in care and their education in contrast to the lived experiences of the children and young people involved in this research. It will seek to question if and how children in State care have become invisible to policy makers and how they push to be seen. The cultural, political, historical and complex socio-economic dimensions that have resulted in this so-called invisibility from education policy are examined. As child voice and participation in decision-making takes center-stage in policy and political discussions in Europe, this research offers insights into the realities in Ireland as an early-adopter of these frameworks, the complexities of putting them into practice and the effects it has on the lives of children in State care.

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) is home to expert networks and institutions that use knowledge for governing education policy in the EU and its member states, possessing various understandings of what is valuable knowledge and how it should be used (Marques & Graf, 2024; Karseth et al., 2022; Normand, 2016). In this study, as part of a project that analyses Finland–EU higher education policymaking networks (KNETS), we examine how norms frame knowledge and its use. We ask 1) how policymakers conceptualize knowledge and 2) what kind of knowledge related norms can be identified. We draw on new institutionalism to analyse how invisible norms order policymakers' knowledge related conceptions and practices (Meyer, 2017; Scott, 2014; Herranen, 2022) and approach knowledge broadly as assimilated information, as anything policymakers themselves consider as knowledge (Fazekas & Burns, 2012). Our data comprises 45 interviews from politicians, officials, and stakeholders operating in Finland and the European Union. First, we coded our data descriptively in Atlas.ti to provide general structure, which was followed by a keyword query to retrieve textual material where knowledge was discussed (Saldana, 2013). We then analysed this data with qualitative content analysis to understand how norms and knowledge connect (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Our analysis identifies three norms. First pertains to how collectively accepted knowledge is trustworthy. Second norm relates to knowing your sources, meaning knowledge is to be evaluated for example as interest laden. Third norm relates to consensus building, that knowledge is to be formed through discussions and needs to consider multitude perspectives. Taken together, we observe that select actors and knowledge are privileged based on institutional recognition. Thus, this study contributes to discussions concerning how knowledge connects to and is used to drive education policy by showing how invisible norms frame knowledge and its use in the context of the EU and Nordic countries (Karseth et al., 2022; Normand, 2016).

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Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Risking hope: Dealing with uncertainty while teaching controversial issues

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### 1. Research Topic/Aim

This paper explores the role of teaching controversial issues within higher education and the risks associated with it. The primary aim is to investigate how educators can navigate uncertainty and conflict when addressing these topics, emphasizing the potential for fostering democratic agency among students.

### 2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is grounded in the works of Gert Biesta, particularly his idea that risk is a fundamental aspect of education (Biesta, 2013). This framework posits that embracing uncertainty in educational contexts can promote a pedagogy of hope, which encourages a belief in the future despite its unpredictability. The paper further argues that the concept of hope in education entails recognizing diverse opinions, which is essential in a functioning democracy (cf. Freire, 2021; Portin, 2016).

### 3. Methodology/Research Design

The paper adopts a theoretical and argumentative approach. It critically engages with existing literature on the teaching of controversial issues. It further develops a theoretical-conceptual framework for understanding risk and hope in education, as well as their connection to democracy.

### 4. Expected Results/Findings

The expected findings suggest that educators can transform the perceived risks of teaching controversial issues into opportunities for enriching democratic dialogue. By implementing a pedagogy of hope, teachers can create an environment that encourages open expression of diverse opinions, ultimately contributing to students' development of democratic agency despite the inherent uncertainties.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

This paper is relevant to Nordic educational research as it aligns with the region's emphasis on democratic values in education. It addresses the challenges and benefits of discussing controversial issues, where inclusivity and respect for pluralism are key pillars. By illuminating the potential of embracing risk in education, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about democracy, education, and citizenship in Nordic educational frameworks.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Selling Schooling: How Edu-Business Redefines Education

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*Edu-business is changing understandings, aims, content and methods of education on both a European and global scale. This is also the case in Finland, where various private educational enterprises are gaining a stronger role in defining what education is and should be. In this article, based on our 4-year international FuturEd-research project's results and informed by our previous conceptual work related to changes in education governance towards precision education governance including marketisation and privatisation of education, we are analysing interviews of edu-preneurs as powerful new actors in education. We ask what kind of storytelling is involved when edu-preneurs in Finland describe their services and products, and how they make sense of their industry, their work and themselves as edu-preneurs and how affective dimensions are involved.*

*This research is particularly relevant in the Nordic context because education in Nordic countries, including Finland, has traditionally been rooted in strong public values, equity, and state responsibility. The rise of edu-business challenges these foundations by introducing market-driven logics and privatization into education, potentially reshaping Nordic ideals around equal access and public governance. Understanding how edu-preneurs in Finland craft their narratives and position themselves within this shifting landscape reveals the broader implications for educational policy, practice, and values in the region.*

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Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

AI Blessed Teacher? Discourses on Artificial Intelligence and Teacher Professional Development in Sweden

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Research topic

In 2024, the Swedish Ministry of Education has introduced a course on AI in upper secondary and adult education (Komvux). In response, several universities across the country have organized professional development courses aimed at improving teachers' competence in the field of AI. This study aims to explore the hopes and fears attached to AI in political and academic discourses on the teaching profession in Sweden.

Theoretical framework

We draw on the notion of *policy assemblage* (Savage, 2019) to examine how different political imaginaries, rationalities, technologies, infrastructures, and actors collectively shape certain perspectives on AI and its role in education. By focusing on 1) policy rationalities and 2) academic discourses as expressed in the literature of newly established AI courses for teachers, as parts of the policy assemblage, we explore how they construct the kinds of teachers (cf. Hacking, 2006) in response to different *problematizations* (Foucault, 1994) of AI and education.

Methodology

Two sets of data were collected to examine and contrast two parts of the policy assemblage described above. These are (1) Swedish and international policy documents on AI in education in general and in relation to the teaching profession in particular, (2) syllabi and reading lists for courses on AI for teachers.

In analyzing the empirical sources, we focused on (a) whether AI is presented as a threat or a blessing for teachers, (b) what visions of desirable futures are embedded in different discourses on AI and the teaching profession, (c) what kinds of teachers are envisioned by different discourses. Special attention was paid to the visuals accompanying some of the selected texts, as they often carry important messages that may not be explicit in the text itself.

Findings

Preliminary findings suggest that discourses about AI produce specific kinds of teachers—those who are adaptable, digitally literate, and data-oriented. We also find that discourses about AI in education are shifting from framing it as a salvation for educational problems to framing it as a potential threat to the teaching profession. The polarized visions of AI as either a silicon savior or an iron-fisted digital dictator are also reflected in the accompanying imagery, which depicts a world in which AI is seamlessly integrated into classrooms, symbolizing hopes for efficiency, as well as fears of overly mechanistic teaching and learning and reduced human connections.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

In the Nordic countries, education has historically been rooted in values such as equity, inclusivity, and democracy - principles that prioritize humanistic, student-centered teaching. By exploring different discourses on AI and the teaching profession in Sweden, the study contributes to an understanding of how AI might affect or even challenge these values in the Nordic context.

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Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Visuals, Visuality and the Study of Education: A Systematic Literature Review

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Research topic/aim

Visuals play a crucial role in the production of knowledge and in policy making, functioning as evidence, arguments, and tools that shape the agenda and influence the way policies are interpreted and enacted. While visual methods and representations have been a focus in historical, didactic, and sociological studies of education, less is known about the role of visuals in the practices of policymaking in education. This paper addresses this gap through a systematic literature review.

Theoretical framework

Not applicable for this type of research paper (systematic literature review).

Methodology

Nearly 500 scholarly articles, intersecting visual culture and education research from the past three decades, were reviewed. Papers were sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC, using keywords related to 'visual' and 'education.' Selection criteria required that articles (a) be relevant for the review, (b) be published in journals, books, or book chapters, and (c) be written in English.

The first part of the review analyzes general trends, exploring whether there is such a thing as visual culture of education and educational science and, if so, how can it be studied. The second part focuses on the use of visuals in research on education policy, and is organized around three questions: (1) What types of visuals (photos, films, drawings, diagrams) are used, and what visual regimes do they reflect? (2) Which aspects of educational policy are explored through visuals, and what remain hidden? (3) What knowledge has the focus on visuals and visualities contributed to the study of education and education policy?

Expected results

In recent decades, there has been a surge of interest in theoretical and empirical research on the role of visual culture in society. As a result, a whole array of theoretical and analytical frameworks has been developed for studying visual imagery and for conducting visual research in education, particularly in history of education and childhood studies. In general, however, most of the existing studies are concerned with methodological issues associated with visual research in education. Moreover, as noted above, while policymaking is increasingly embedded in a visual culture, to date only a small number of studies have examined the role of the visual in shaping and communicating knowledge and in governing education.

The paper contributes to a new awareness of the role of visuals in different areas of educational governance. It shows that visuals are important yet neglected sources for bringing into focus the political, socio-cultural, and epistemological foundations of educational research, policies and practices. By bringing visuals to the forefront, the review calls for the development of new ways of researching educational policy, politics, and governance.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

The review has an international focus in discussing the role of visuals and visibility in educational research. By implication, it is of relevance to researchers from the Nordic countries who are interested in exploring the politics of knowledge production and policymaking in education, and in particular how visuals are used to shape policy problems and actions.



247 inspectorates – Swedish municipalities as guarantees of quality in private preschools?

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In Sweden, the Schools Inspectorate (SSI) uphold equivalence and quality in education. However, for private preschools, catering for about 20 per cent of all children between 1-5 years old, the municipalities (and not the SSI) are responsible for ensuring that laws and regulations are followed. In a sense, such municipal inspection (MI) is an oxymoron since the re-introduction of national school inspection in 2003 was based on the assertion that school results and performance, quality improvement and evaluation efforts at the municipal level were unsatisfactory (Rönnerberg, 2012). Inspection involves inscribed knowledge (laws, regulations etc), but is essentially an embodied practice involving people with different roles, motives, knowledge, and experiences, who read, interpret and write documents, and who meet and talk. Together they are “doing governing”, doing inspection (Grek & Lindgren, 2014). However, we know little about how this is played out in the municipal private preschool sector.

In this paper, we analyse and discuss the rationales and enactments of MI of private preschools in 30 municipalities by asking: What problems shall MIs solve and how are they organised? How are MIs conducted and experienced by different stakeholders?

To explore the rationales and enactments of MI we use the concepts of hierarchical, market and social accountability and also discern and problematize interlinkages and hybridity that may emerge between these forms (Blomqvist & Winblad 2020; Benish & Mattei, 2019).

We analyse documents and interviews with municipal managers (N=35), representatives of private preschool providers (N=20), and interest- and business associations that support municipalities and private preschool providers (N=6). We analysed data both individually and collectively to identify patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Results show that MIs serve to solve official purposes and are regarded as the most powerful policy tool to govern local preschool markets. MIs combine forms of accountability but are often enacted as social accountability based on dialogue where no party appear to have a strong incentive to attract public attention. Although municipalities have gained access to guidance and support concerning how to conduct MIs there is still great variation concerning local enactments. Such a lack of consistency may cause problems for private preschool actors and challenge the principle of equity.

Privatised ECE is a growing phenomenon in the Nordic context and issues of how and by which means private providers are to be held to account for the quality of their services are pertinent across the Nordic domain.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

‘Power, norms and gender’: the rise and fall of a secondary school subject in Sweden

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### Research topic

In the summer of 2024, a debate arose in Swedish media regarding the introduction of a new non-mandatory upper secondary school subject named Power, norms and gender. The school subject, which aims to "develop knowledge about power systems and norms about gender and sexuality and how these can affect people's life choices and room for action" (Swedish National Agency for Education 2024) became questioned. The criticism revolved around the necessity of the school subject and its content. Moreover, its theoretical assumptions were examined and described as built on an indoctrinating ideology. Just as several Swedish universities were about to start their courses after summer, aiming to qualify teachers for the new school subject, the Director General of the Swedish National Agency for Education informed in a press release that the agency was withdrawing the school subject, referring to the media debate.

This course of events raises several questions, concerning the conditions of education policy and democratic processes, understandings of knowledge and ideology, as well as the goals of education. With these questions as points of departure, this presentation aims to explore the rise and fall of the school subject Power, norms and gender.

### Theoretical and methodological frameworks

This exploration is situated within poststructural and posthumanist frameworks. Within these frameworks, several approaches offer analytical sensibilities to address the questions at hand. For example, Carol Bacchi's theory on policy, Judith Butler's take on gender and anti-gender ideology, as well as Donna Haraway's theory of material-semiotic and situated knowledges. Altogether they provide specific takes on the notions of performativity and knowledge that open up for exploring how "documents also take part in modifying and sometimes radically transforming issues" (Asdal 2015, p. 88).

The exploration will be conducted as a policy and media analysis. The empirical material consists of documents from the policy process, such as the proposed subject curriculum, remarks from the circulation for commentary and the decided subject curriculum. Moreover, the empirical material includes decisions and press releases from the withdrawing process as well as media sources discussing the school subject.

### Expected results

Preliminary, we will examine the policy process resulting in the decision to implement the specific school subject and the media debate taking place before the decision to withdraw it. Whereas the first part shows how the school subject is legitimised, what problems it produces and becomes a solution to, the second part focuses on how it is made debatable and the arguments around the withdrawal. Based on these results the presentation further intends to discuss how the current political landscape creates conditions for educational policy processes and how this affects the purpose of education.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This presentation contributes to the broader discussion on anti-gender ideology affecting educational institutions in the Nordic region and internationally. Additionally, it highlights the role of the media in the governance of education.

## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

The marketization of School Health Services in Sweden: Unfolding the experiences of municipal and private school organizers.

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There are intense policy pressures on schools to promote student health and well-being, emphasizing the importance of high-quality provision of School Health Services (SHS) (WHO 2021). Yet, the increasing prevalence of health issues among children and youth, combined with constrained education budgets, has turned SHS into an ever more challenging task. In Sweden, school organizers (public or private, in Swedish *huvudmän*) can either provide SHS themselves or outsource SHS to private companies. This paper draws attention to a largely overlooked aspect of the more general market-oriented policy trend prevalent in the Nordic domain (Lundahl 2016), namely the marketization of SHS. We draw on a research project studying how public and private organizers, schools and other stakeholders perceive and navigate this terrain. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the rationales and approaches of Swedish municipalities and private school organizers in purchasing SHS from private companies.

We use the notion of projectification (Fred & Godenhjelm 2023), which encompasses public sector reliance on “temporary organisations” (Sahlin-Andersson & Söderholm 2002) to analyse “outsourcing” and “contracts” (Hodgson et al., 2019; Blomqvist & Winblad 2022) of SHS to private companies. We analyse interviews with 65 representatives from 30 municipal educational administrations and 30 private school organizers, in varying demographic and socio-economic contexts. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and included questions on purchases of SHS, motives for and experiences of such purchases and views of the consequences of the marketization of SHS in Sweden.

The study shows that municipal and private school organizers purchased a range of SHS from private companies, including supervision, continuing professional development, medical record systems and staffing. Both municipal and private organizers were often sceptical about outsourcing SHS, as it was associated with high costs, time-consuming management and at times poor quality. However, municipal and private school organizers differed in certain respects, as the latter more frequently outsourced all of their SHS responsibilities to commercial companies. There were also notable differences between school organizers in various demographic and socio-economic contexts. While large and centrally located school organizers could control how much and when they outsourced, or even “backsourced” SHS, smaller school organizers frequently experienced what can be labelled as “involuntary outsourcing”. Taken together, these results contribute to the ongoing discussion in Nordic educational research on how neoliberal policies reshape education.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Establishing the Right to Belong for Neurodivergent Students in Finnish Universities through Policy Frameworks

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Higher education institutions in Finland are obliged to organize reasonable arrangements to support learning, including for students with neurological differences (Equality Act 1325/2014). The importance of inclusion measures has grown with the recent increase in neurodivergent students entering universities and needing accessibility measures to support their studies. The right to belong for neurodivergent students is established through inclusive and well-crafted policy frameworks.

Pesonen et al. (2020) highlight that fostering a sense of belonging in higher education hinges on ensuring accessibility and equality, which can be analyzed through a policy lens. This research focuses on how the question of accessibility for neurodivergent students is constructed by different education policy actors in Finland. Furthermore, it examines the understanding of accessibility produced in policy documents by these actors.

The policy documents analyzed in this research include the Finnish Government's education policy report commissioned by the Ministry of Education, the statements given by stakeholders in the field, and universities' accessibility and equality plans. Stakeholders participating in the policy work include student organizations, disability organizations, and universities.

The data is analyzed through interpretive policy analysis to describe and interpret the interactions among various actors involved in policy implementation. Policy documents are read with a discursive approach to understand the rhetoric of various actors. Interpretive policy analysis enables us to make visible the different conditions affecting political decision-making and to take a critical approach regarding the social justice of actions related to the policies (Häikiö & Leino 2014; Yanow 2000). This presentation provides new insights into the political discussion of inclusion of neurodivergent students in the Finnish context.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Regional distribution of teachers' political orientations

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#### Research topic

In this study, we examined the political orientations of teachers working in Finland. Our research setting is twofolded: first, we study the differences between teachers and the rest of the population on the left-right axis. Second, we study the clusters of teachers' political orientations, i.e. left-liberals, left-conservatives, right-liberals and right-wing conservatives.

#### Theoretical framework

In most countries, teachers are one of the largest segments of the public sector workforce, and their daily working conditions vary according to social developments (Parding et al., 2017). This also applies to policies that are present not only in the everyday lives of people, but also in education and issues of equality and inequality (Yates, 2022). Because of their social status, teachers have been expected to be politically neutral also in matters concerning themselves (Räsänen, 2014). However, teachers engage in political action on a daily basis as they implement their pedagogical solutions guided by normative curricula and assessment practices, and meeting their students in school environments (Gingsburg & Kamat, 2009). According to international studies, teachers' political orientation is linked to the relationships between teachers and students of low socio-economic status, choices in teaching methods and knowledge production, and teachers' behavior (Molla, 2016; Souchon et al., 2020).

#### Methodology

Our research is based on nationally representative, quantitative survey data, which examined teachers' choice of profession and related motivational factors, and the current working conditions of teachers (N=2795). The first hypothesis (H1) of our study is that there is no difference between the left-right orientation of teachers and the average population in Finland. Our second hypothesis (H2) is that the political orientations of teachers working in Finland at different levels of education do not differ.

#### Findings

The research results show a statistically significant difference between the left-right orientations of teachers and the rest of the population in Finland. In addition, the results show statistically significant differences between teachers working at different levels of education in clusters of political orientations. According to the results, teachers' political orientations are not only a phenomenon that varies by major region, but also by municipality group and gender.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

In accordance with the model of the Nordic welfare state based on social-democratic values, in Finland teachers act as one of the most important producers of universal services that should be equal and accessible to all citizens. However, education and teachers are currently challenged by various marketization and privatization policies and practices (Dovemark et al., 2018). Not only does this challenge the realization of educational equality, but also different political orientations among teachers may also be involved in the production of educational inequality (Myers, 2009). The results leave open the question of why teachers with different political orientations are placed in different areas, and what it also means from the perspective of implementing the contents of a politically colored curriculum. In further studies it would be interesting to compare the differences in the political orientations of teachers working in the Nordic countries more broadly.

## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Mapping the Finland-EU transnational higher education policy networks structure, formation and characteristics

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The EU policy context is characterised, as Hajer (2006: 43) suggests, by “multi-party, polycentric, transnational and inter-cultural networks of governance”. Education policy formation often comprises of, due to the nature of the policy sector and the lack of EU competence, working groups and expert groups which operate within the domestic and European spaces but also at their interface. These working groups can both Europeanise education policy while simultaneously constructing domestic adaption, circulating information and establishing governing frameworks (Eeva 2021). This exemplifies how the official policymaking structure intertwines with policy networks, illuminating the workings of network governance in the EU-Finland network.

In this study, as part of KNETS project, we analyse the higher education (HE) policy-making network that operates at the interface of Finnish and European policy spaces. Theoretically, we draw on the network governance theory which emphasises the role of policy networks in policymaking and administration (Rhodes, 2006; Provan & Kenis, 2008). Our aim is to understand (i) the structure of the Finland-EU transnational networks in HE policymaking, (ii) how are these networks formed, and (iii) what characteristic are connected to the networks. Drawing on public data, interviews, and by using network ethnography (Howard 2002; Ball 2008) we formed a database on Finland-EU network. Data was analysed with network ethnographic frame and thematic qualitative content analysis (Clarke & Brown 2017).

Our results show that the autonomy of Finnish universities and the EU's limited competence in educational matters impacts the structure of the Finland-EU HE policy networks. Finnish universities, due to their constitutional and legislative autonomy, play a central role in these networks. The EU's lack of formal competence in education matters positions member states also at the network's core. Additionally, Nordic corporatist policy-making tradition (Christiansen et al. 2010), which involves various stakeholders, influences network formation. Key features of the network include the interplay of formal and informal relationships, the importance of physical presence, and blurred boundaries. According to our interviewees, the official network structure is an important part in the process of forming the informal networks among the HE policy actors.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Political and institutional dynamics in the adult education system in Iceland: Big aspirations in a fragmented system

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This study arises from work on the review of the Adult Education Act No. 27/2010, conducted during the winter of 2023-2024. The review was initiated by the then Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson. During this process, it became evident that there are significant differences of opinion within adult education on the priorities and the institutional structure for its development. The goal of this study is to create a comprehensive overview of the institutional structure of adult education in Iceland and establish a foundation for the ongoing policy development of adult education in Iceland.

By analyzing the institutional structure of adult education through the lens of the system's funding and administration, this study highlights both the current strengths and weaknesses of the system. Utilizing Lima and Guimarães's (2011) analytical frameworks—the democratic-emancipatory, modernization, and human resources management models—this study critically examines how stakeholders, the state, and transnational institutions shape adult education policies. Insights from Gareth Rees (2013) on the political economy of adult learning systems further inform the understanding of neoliberal pressures that emphasize labor market alignment, potentially at the expense of broader democratic objectives as previous research revealed (Magnúsdóttir & Svavarsson, 2024).

The methodology of this study involves qualitative document analysis, focusing on Icelandic educational policy documents, legal frameworks, and annual reports from adult education institutions and administrative bodies. Data will also include meeting minutes and drafts of a Green Paper prepared for the current legal review with all the main stakeholders' input. This approach enables an in-depth examination of policy discourse and the institutional mechanisms governing adult education.

Preliminary findings indicate that Iceland's adult education system, while very ambitious, dynamic, and creative, lacks robust governmental and financial support with a predominant orientation toward short-term labor market needs. This focus aligns with a broader European trend that often prioritizes economic utility over individual and democratic development goals. Additionally, there appears to be a lack of consensus on the role and primary objectives of adult education. As we show by mapping the institutional settings this may be partially attributable to fragmented administration and a piecemeal approach within the system.

This research offers critical insights into Nordic educational research by situating Iceland within the unique tensions between Nordic welfare ideals and globalized neoliberal economic demands. By highlighting these dynamics, this study contributes to policy debates on how Iceland—and similar Nordic contexts—is needed to balance the demands of market-driven adult education policies with a commitment to inclusive and equitable educational practices.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

“Speaking youth to power”: re-storying education in an era of climate breakdown

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Much attention has been given to the importance of the youth climate movement resulting in shifts in contemporary climate politics. How educational institutions ought to respond to an era of mass youth mobilisations, policy stagnation, and climate breakdown is a topic of extended deliberation and pressing concern (Kouppanou, 2020; Karsgaard & Davidson, 2021). Some recent attention has been placed on distinctive pedagogical possibilities afforded by “youth-led documentary media” as a way of empowering and mobilizing essential youth climate perspectives (Beach & Smith, 2024). In this context, our paper offers analysis of a high-profile UN-backed youth-led climate documentary assemblage, The Youth Climate Report. This report is submitted annually to intergovernmental COP climate negotiations. Organizers refer to this process as “speaking youth to power” (Terry 2024). Through a story analysis of a sample of youth documentaries, we explore ways in which these documentarians represent climate and youth, and the implications that this has for youth empowerment, pedagogy, and representative climate politics.

Our documentary analysis is guided by scholarship in climate studies (Sauve et al, Hulme, and Callison) and youth and futurity studies (Castaneda 2002, Hall 1991). We draw on these perspectives to inform understanding of youth stories, their roles, functions and representative politics. Our political framing draws on Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and discursive powers within “regimes of truth.”

The empirical study analyzes a sample of youth documentaries (20%, n=130). These are typically 4-5 minutes in length. We apply documentary informed narrative methods (guided by Cronin (2008), Saputra et.al, (2021), Creswell 2013) to isolate prominent stories and figurations of youth and climate through an iterative, constant comparative process.

We identify eight stories of climate impacts, resources and solutions, and stories of youth bearing witness, youth heroes, youth as inheritors, and youth as vulnerability. These stories are analyzed as bound up with discursive power, interests, and truths. We reflect on capacities these narratives have to reproduce, divert, resist, and challenge the marginal status of young people and dominant sociocultural mega-trends (including neoliberalism, colonialism and patriarchy).

Our study demonstrates that in an adult, western, climate dominated world, youth representation and empowerment is a precarious act that is more complicated than channeling documentary media to contexts of UN-climate policy power. It is crucial to consider the underpinning stories of climate and youth that these media propel, enable, and disable. To rephrase Marshall McLuhan it is significant in youth-led climate advocacy to not lose “messages” in the “medium”.

Since Greta Thunberg initiated her school strike, much attention has been placed on youth climate mobilizations and associated politics of schooling especially in Nordic countries. Climate Change Education is a topic of global concern and importance, with increasing attention given to approaches fostering civic participation, justice, and advocacy. Such approaches often centre “speaking youth to power”. Our work offers a window into climate documentary media and pedagogy, politics of education, and youth (em/dis)powerment. This seems salient given that recent studies of the politics of education can overlook climate (see Mayo, 2021).



## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Scientification or political legitimization? Tracing the concepts of evidence and context in Nordic school reforms

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Transparency and accountability have become central operational principles of modern democracies worldwide, contributing to the emergence of a decision-making culture in which the public expect policymakers to base their decisions on reliable knowledge and objective evidence (Wollscheid et al. 2019). Comparative studies however indicate that the global demand for expertise and evidence-based decision-making has been reshaped and connotated differently across various national or regional contexts (Helgøy et al. 2019; Baek 2023; Karseth et al. 2022). By comparing three recent curriculum and school reforms in Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway), this study investigates the use of scientific knowledge in different national settings. A bibliometric analysis of key reform documents revealed that scientific knowledge is not overrepresented in the policy reports of the three countries. We therefore conducted interviews with experts involved in the reform commissions or groups to understand how they chose knowledge resources and on what kind of evidence they relied on. The findings indicate that ‘what works’ in education reforms is co-constructed via complex entanglements of actors, evidence and discourses, wherein deliberation is indeed context-specific. Yet, the ‘evidence’ used to enforce the view that reform ideas are obvious and common sense is tied to socially and historically significant national and international discourses. Thus, the authors advocate for careful scrutinization of the knowledge used as evidence in education reforms, as it is essential to understanding the complex context of education reforms in today’s globalised world

Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Teachers' Time: Behaviour, SMS and Blockages

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1. There is a global problem with teacher attrition (Thompson, 2021). A significant factor in that attrition is how time poor teachers feel that they are, and the effect that constantly feeling rushed has on their wellbeing. This paper examines teachers' time use in Queensland public schools.

2. The concept of 'time poverty' has a rich history in sociological thought. It emerges from Hartmunt Rosa's (2013) examination of social acceleration and Judy Wajcman's (2014) investigation into feeling pressed for time. Time poverty is the relationship between: a) the amount of work a teacher does, or perceives that they have to do; and b) the intensity of that work (Creagh et al., 2024). A significant factor in time poverty is the digital tools assumed to produce efficiencies, such as Student Management Systems (SMS), and the how these mask the ways that they add to the time poverty of teachers. This is what Rosa (2013) calls a 'blockage' that adds to the perception of time compression.

3. We designed a 'Timetracker App' to allow teachers to record their time use across randomly sampled 30-minute segments. Our aim was to explore the complexity of teachers' work and uncover how teachers manage, or triage, their time use. Participants nominated three days over a two-week period where they would be willing to record 30 minutes of their time use. There were 2,336 teachers and school leaders who recorded their time use in the app.

4. The data showed that teachers' and school leaders' experiences of the working day reflected the more "complex temporal patterning of experience" that Wajcman (2014, p. 15) characterised as time poverty. A significant factor is how student behaviour impacts teachers, particularly with regard triaging their time and the cascading effects of this for the individual teacher and the school community. A critical element is how student behaviour incidents have cascading effects on teachers work because of the system of data governance that QLD public schools must follow.

We explain how OneSchool, the SMS used in Queensland public schools, adds to the time poverty of teachers and diverts their time away from their core teaching and learning responsibilities. We argue that this intensifies, rather than solves, the time poverty of teachers. Paradoxically, in trying to streamline student behaviour reporting and intervention, the SMS creates a blockage that intensifies the feeling that there is too much to do and not enough time to do it.

5. The link between time poverty and teacher stress/attrition is a global problem. This presentation will be of interest to all education systems combating stress, burnout and attrition.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

The making of contemporary Swedish teacher education. A policy analysis on science-society interactions in teacher education reforms

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Academization of teacher education is a recurrent theme in Nordic research, for example in terms of an increased emphasis on a stronger scientific foundation (e.g., Furuhausen et. al., 2019). Other studies point to the opposite – a distancing from academic practice and a shift towards more applicable knowledge (e.g., Zapp et. al. 2018). Together, these studies highlight changing expectations on teacher education, and that have changed over time.

Over the decades, Swedish teacher education has undergone many reforms which connect to science – society interactions. In this paper, we analyze the making of contemporary teacher education as policy assemblages involving various agents, such as the state, higher education and research communities, local schools and others. The aim is to investigate how these assemblages have been shaped in Swedish teacher education reforms since the turn of the millennium. Our questions are: Which agents are involved, and what hopes and expectations are recognized as important in relation to science and societal demands?

The notion of “action net” (Czarniawska, 2004) is used to analyze the making of teacher education as specific institutional orderings, as narrated in the reforms. In our case, this involves analyzing interconnected agents within these assembled action nets, the evolution of their connections across the policy reforms, and the intentions attributed them.

We have analyzed policy texts, including government official reports and government bills, related to teacher education reforms in 2001 and 2011 and to a new government investigation on teacher education in 2024.

Preliminary findings indicate a dynamic interplay between academic values and a changing science-society contract (Elzinga, 1997), with shifting foci on scientific priorities and their significance. Documents from the early 2000s emphasize academization, whereas narratives in later documents increasingly emphasize societal and practice relevance. The policy narratives of teacher education reforms have also evolved from an emphasis on form to a greater inclusion of specific contents, including science-based professional practice of teacher students and workplace supervising, and the integration between campus-based and school-based education. Taken together, this also alters the relations between the academy and the school in the making of teacher education.

*Relevance to Nordic educational research:* Teacher education programs in Nordic countries are all embedded in a welfare state society, yet notable differences exist among them. This paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue on the dynamics of teacher education within a Nordic context.

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Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Bildung and educational governance – tensions and trends

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

Bildung is one of the central concepts in education theory and policy in Continental and Nordic Europe. While Bildung concept is routinely present in the Norwegian, Swedish and Danish curriculum frameworks for example, and a few efforts have reviewed Bildung concept in science education (Sjöström & Eilks, 2020) and digital Bildung (Gran, 2018), there has been a less emphasis on Bildung in relation to educational governance in the policy context. In this article, we rely on an ongoing systematic review of educational research on Bildung to explore the conceptions of Bildung in relation to educational governance and leadership in educational scholarship published in English over past 30 years and what implications those conceptions have for present day educational governance and leadership.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Theoretically, the paper draws on Bildung-based Didaktik to frame the discussion on Bildung more generally, but it will also build up from the conceptions and theoretical frames found in the articles included in the sample for this study (n=29) that specifically address Bildung and educational governance and leadership.

#### 3. Methodology/research design

This study is a systematic review that seeks to identify and analyse key issues related to research on Bildung from an educational research perspective. The search strategy relies on the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) framework (Page et al., 2021). “Bildung” was used as a search term in the following databases: Eric/ProQuest, Education Source/EBSCO, Web of Science, and Scopus. 29 articles, out of total 267 in final sample, are part of the present article.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

Initial screening and reading of articles show that a large number of peer-reviewed articles on Bildung come from philosophy of education journals, suggesting that Bildung has attracted the attention of philosophy-oriented education scholars dealing with theoretical problems, and less so of scholars dealing with education governance and leadership. Still, a limited number of articles have addressed the position of Bildung within educational governance, and an emerging finding shows that Bildung as an educational concept from the Enlightenment era is caught in between Bildung’s focus on individual growth for advancing humanity and modern governance’s focus on collective growth for advancing economy.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

The paper is relevant for NERA 2025 and for the education field, since it contributes to consolidating the knowledge base on Bildung and its relationship to and implications for education governance and leadership.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Policy framing of student financing in Scandinavia: Same gift, different wrapping?

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State financial support for students in higher education appears in many shapes and designs across the globe. In an international context, the Nordic countries stand out in terms of their low-tuition–high-subsidy regime, meaning that there is low or non-existent tuition fees, and a high level of public financial support for students (Garritzmman, 2016). Further, the student support schemes in the Nordic countries are universal, given to all students. While there is some existing research on the national systems for student financing in a historical-political perspective (Askim, 2022; Clausen, 2020), surprisingly little comparative research has been conducted on this topic.

As part of an ongoing research project on the Norwegian student financing scheme, we seek to explore the characteristics of this particular model in a comparative perspective based on “most-similar-systems-design” (Korsnes, 2024). We draw on policy framing (Daviter, 2007) as an analytical lens for studying national policy documents, regulations, and official websites on student financing in Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In addition to policy framing, we zoom in on the specific incentives in the systems that intend to promote quicker degree completion, and the key concepts and metaphors that are used in policy to describe such incentives.

Preliminary findings reveal that in all three countries, student financing has gradually developed from a social-economical, welfare rights-based framing, into a more instrumental individual-financial framing. In all three countries, governments have – with different measures – placed more responsibility for dropout and delays on the individual. Thus, student financing is increasingly used as a policy instrument to realise other educational reforms aimed at making students’ pathway to the labour market as rapid and smooth as possible. Yet, we also find that the specific incentives and how they are presented to students vary greatly across the countries.

By providing a critical reading of the current student aid systems and recent reforms in Scandinavia, our presentation challenges the assumptions of the Scandinavian countries as a unified region with identical student support systems. This is an important contribution to the scarce literature on student aid in the Nordic region, as well as the more general societal discussion about the present and future of our welfare systems.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Milton Friedman's Radical Transformation of Public Education and Its Effects

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While the economist Milton Friedman (1912-2006) is best known as a free-market champion who won the Nobel Prize in 1976 for his work in monetary theory, he may have had a more profound effect on education policy as an advocate for school vouchers. For 50 years, Friedman beat the drum for parental choice and educational deregulation, beginning with a book chapter entitled "The Role of Government in Education" in 1955 and ending with an essay in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled "The Promise of Vouchers" in 2005. Friedman's argument took hold to various degrees in Chile in 1981, the United States in 1990, and Sweden in 1992. Although Friedman's prescriptions met the most resistance in the United States, Supreme Court decisions in 2002, 2017, 2020, and 2022 steadily opened the way to their widespread implementation. Since 2022, 13 states, in fact, have adopted precisely what Friedman recommended: vouchers worth a minimum amount of money to be used by parents to cover the cost of an education of their choosing that meets minimum standards. This money may be deployed by parents to pay for tuition at private schools; enrollment in pods (or mini schools) with children of likeminded parents; or in an à la carte fashion for online curricula for home instruction as well as music lessons, dance classes, museum trips, and the like. All of these 13 states are decisively red (that is, Republican): Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming. But blue (that is, Democratic) states with parents lobbying for choice may follow suit. This presentation will address the evolution of Friedman's argument, how it has taken different forms in Chile, Sweden, and the United States, and what civic, fiscal, and academic effects have been observed and may be expected.

## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### School engagement in a whole school approach for Education for Sustainable Development: The influence of rationales from organizational models

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#### Research topic/aim

Whole school approaches for education for sustainable development (ESD) have for several decades been emphasized in both research (cf. Hargreaves, 2008; Scherp & Scherp, 2008; Verhelst et al., 2021) and international and national policy (e.g., UN, 2002; UNESCO, 2015; Jucker and Mathar, 2015). This paper proposes that dimensions of a 'whole school approach' may be affected by tensions within and between various organizational models that characterize the culture of different schools (cf. Pierre & Peters, 2020; Fredriksson, 2010). This is of particular interest given that ESD's connection to local school organization and governance remains somewhat unexplored. Thus, the aim of this paper is to examine how upper secondary schools with different modes of governance engage with ESD and how organizational models prominent at the schools affect the possibilities of creating a successful whole school approach in relation to ESD. We pose two research questions: 1) How is sustainable development understood, defined, and incorporated within local school organizations? 2) How is school organization regarding sustainable development influenced by organizational models prominent at the schools in terms of tensions, challenges, and possibilities?

#### Theoretical framework

Two main theoretical outlooks were put in the foreground: a whole school approach to school organization and school improvement (Scherp & Scherp, 2008; Verhelst et al., 2021) as well as four organizational models: the bureaucratic, professional, participatory, and market model (e.g., Du Gay, 2000; Freidson, 2001; Ferlie, 2017; Dahlstedt, 2009; Peters, 2001).

#### Methodology/research design

The study's empirical data consisted of semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and students at four different upper secondary schools with various forms of governance: three independent schools, where one can be regarded as non-profit, one is affiliated with a major educational corporation, and another with a smaller educational enterprise; and one municipal school. The individual school's policy documents (such as quality reports and student evaluations) were also part of our empirical data. Interviews and policy documents were processed and analyzed by the means of reflexive thematic analysis (Brown & Clarke, 2019; 2022).

#### Expected results/findings

The findings showed that none of the schools in the study had a holistic outlook on sustainable development. Furthermore, the schools' mode of governance can be connected to salient organizational models. This relationship indicates that organizational models seem to influence how ESD is understood, defined and incorporated at the four schools. Such influence may affect whether a whole school approach to ESD is pursued and adopted at the local school level. The study can contribute to new perspectives on organizational governance *vis-à-vis* school organization, school culture, and various didactic interpretations of sustainable development.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The focus and results of this study fits well with the theme of the NERA 2025 conference. Issues regarding whole school approaches to education for sustainable development can be of interest to Nordic educational researchers within various fields, such as policy research, school development, and didactics.

## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Vertical vs. horizontal knowledge organisation in Swedish upper secondary curricula: How integrated are program-common courses within programs?

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### Research topic/aim

Since the 2011 reform, all 18 Swedish national upper secondary school programs include foundation subjects (e.g., Swedish, mathematics, and social studies), program-specific common courses, and for programs with orientations, common courses within those, as well as elective specialisations. Although these program-specific subjects are intended to “define the nature of the program” and “serve as a foundation for further studies in the program” (Skolverket, 2012, p. 38), no comprehensive study has investigated how this is manifested in the curriculum. Thus, this study explores how program-specific courses function as prerequisites for courses within orientations and elective specialisations across all 18 national upper secondary programs in Sweden.

### Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework draws upon Basil Bernstein’s (1999) distinction between vertical and horizontal knowledge discourses. In a vertical discourse based on disciplinary systems, knowledge builds progressively upon previous knowledge. Conversely, knowledge is local and segmented in a horizontal discourse without necessary connections between segments. This distinction helps to understand the nature and status of subjects and programs as manifested in the curriculum.

### Methodology/research design

All 18 Swedish national upper secondary program curricula were analysed to understand how program-common courses function as prerequisites for courses within orientations and elective specialisations. The analysis involved tracking the prerequisites for all 1,079 courses to identify dependency chains, their length, and where they were found.

### Findings

The findings reveal significant differences among Sweden’s national upper secondary programs regarding the extent to which courses within orientations and elective specialisations build upon the program-common courses by stating them as prerequisites. Given that the organisational principles appear to be linked to specific programs and subjects, questions regarding status, equality, and pupils’ potential learning opportunities are raised.

### Relevance to Nordic educational research

This study provides insights into curriculum design by comprehensively exploring the hierarchical and horizontal knowledge organisation in all 18 Swedish national upper secondary school programs. The findings should be relevant to researchers, educators, and policymakers in Nordic countries.

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## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

Moral distress, speed policies, and leaving the public school to stay a teacher

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### Background

Denmark faces a serious shortage of teachers in the public schools in the coming years (Damvad Analytics, 2021), and it is already now difficult to recruit educated teachers for vacant positions, which increases the percentage of uneducated teaching staff to an alarming extent (Danmarks Lærerforening, 2019). However, there is actually no shortage of educated teachers in Denmark. The problem is that only 60% of them are working in public schools (Pihl & Lykketoft, 2021), and newly educated teachers are leaving the public schools faster than earlier (Klarskov et al., 2024). It is therefore crucial to find out why teachers are leaving public schools, and what can be done to make them want to stay (Plauborg et al., 2022).

### Research topic and design

The paper will empirically draw on three different sources: an electronic open-ended questionnaire among 405 teachers who have left Danish public schools (Pedersen et al., 2016), another among 702 high-school teachers describing in their own words their job situation and their future plans (Vaaben et al., 2024), an ethnographic research project about moral distress in schools, police and eldercare (Olesen et al., 2023; Vaaben et al., 2023). Many of the concerns presented by teachers in these three studies, revolve around increasing workload, lack of time, but also lack of temporal autonomy and *influence* on their own working-life as well as the wellbeing of their pupils. A situation where they feel forced to compromise their values, why they start searching for workarounds and coping strategies – one of them being to quit against their own will. Often in order to stay true to what they believe a good teacher is and does (Andersen et al., 2020; Pedersen et al., 2016; Sasser & Sørensen, 2016; Vaaben et al., 2023).

### Theoretical framework

We analyze the empirical data through the notion of moral distress, which is defined as a situation, where you know what is right to do, but find yourself hindered from doing so (Jameton, 1984), and we supplement with an anthropological notion of feelings as embodied thoughts, arguing that moral distress can be viewed as a bodily felt alarm, calling for action, why the lack of influence to act accordingly is a concern (Gylling et al., 2023; Olesen et al., 2023). Further, we will relate our findings on teachers' psychosocial working environment to the constructions of "time", informing the distribution of (and struggles about) resources between municipalities, schools and teachers (Birth, 2012; Vaaben, 2018; Wajcman, 2015). The construction of time as a "scarce resource" to be bought, sold and optimized through speed policies will finally be linked to the distribution of influence between different actors, but also to an ongoing discussion in Denmark about care crisis and capitalism, resulting in a depletion of care and a creation of toxic debt and deficit, circulating in the public sector (Dahl et al., 2022; Ekman, 2022; Fraser, 2023; Holten, 2024).

### Relevance

With international emphasis on increasing productivity in schools, we are convinced the presentation will seem relevant in other countries (Krejsler, 2018; Pors & Staunæs, 2011).

Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

The Many Faces of Neoliberalism - *Analyzing Neoliberalism in Education Research Regarding Finland*

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The purpose of this paper is to assess how the use of the terms 'neoliberalism' and 'neoliberal' have evolved over time and how they are used in education research pertaining Finland, inspired and partially modelled after a study made by Boas and Gans-Morse, who conducted a content analysis study that was published in 2009, detailing the use of the term 'Neoliberalism' in social science research. Using a sample size of 148 journal articles published from 1990 to 2004, Boas and Gans-Morse identify three problematic aspects of the use of the term 'Neoliberalism': the term is undefined, it is employed unevenly across ideological divides, and it is used to characterize an excessively broad variety of phenomena. Boas and Gans-Morse argue that as opposed to other essentially contested terms like democracy and populism, neoliberalism is used asymmetrically to denote mainly negative connotations, and those who use the term in research often do not define it. (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009.) The expected result of the article is that the terms have not seen greater definition and further analysis in the past decades than in the study of Boas and Gans-Morse, and aren't applied more evenly.

To study this, the article sets out to perform a content analysis on educational research articles, analyzing those that:

- A. Have been published during or after 1990;
- B. Concern Finnish education, education in Finland or Finland and education in any combination where both are present;
- C. Mention neoliberalism (in either Finnish or English) in either the title, abstract, or keywords of the analyzed article;
- D. Are written in Finnish or English.

The database of the university library of the University of Turku was chosen as the platform from which the research material was extracted from. Using multiple university library databases was considered, but ultimately the university of Turku was deemed to be representative of the general Finnish university library databases. These articles were found using the search engine of the university library, with words such as "neoliberalism", "education" and "Finnish" used in conjunction to search for articles that would match the criteria displayed above. With the aforementioned criteria, a total of 53 articles were found to match and were subsequently used as material for analysis.

Finland has had a long-standing history of studying and criticising neoliberalism as an ideology or political reform system that attempts to change the landscape of education. This paper details the state of the research pertaining to that topic over a considerable period of time and gives modern education researchers a better idea of the ways neoliberalism has been understood and conceptualized, giving future research a better starting position in future considerations. As welfare states, Finland and other Nordic countries are uniquely positioned to offer insight into neoliberalism as it exists in the Anglo-American sphere.

Boas, T. C. & Gans-Morse, J. (2009). Neoliberalism: From new liberal philosophy to anti-liberal slogan. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 44(2), 137–161.

# Network: 22. Post- approaches to Education

## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

### Expansive potential of community collaboration in urban development

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This study aims to investigate collaboration efforts taken by residents and civil servants in a real-life context in multiactor neighborhood development with implications for expansive learning opportunities. It shows how to accomplish a systemic change process by means of a formative intervention in the neighborhood development and how residents engage with collaboration. The study conducted five community workshops based on the Change Laboratory method in urban development in the City of Espoo, Finland.

The activity-theoretical methodology and research methods enabled the identification of expansive learning actions, the types of discursive manifestations of contradictions, and the transformation of the object of activity during community workshops. The framework of cultural-historical activity theory underlines the central role of mediation in learning, which means that conceptual and practical tools and signs, as well as their environment, support actions between people and practices, and are sources of change and development. The fourth-generation activity theory provides tools to form and investigate activities in the multiactor context with heterogenous actors depending on one another to enact their activities with complex contradictions and multiple objects of activity that affect lives across boundaries.

The study indicated that expansive learning actions helped the residents and civil servants to collectively solve contradictions such as dilemmas, conflicts, and double binds. This enabled the participants to envision the developmental potential of their activity and take actions to transform it. The findings revealed that the different types of contradictions may lead to a variety of solutions with expansive, potentially expansive, and non-expansive learning. The community workshop as the method provided a structure for examining the complex urban situation to facilitate collective problem-solving.

This study shows a learning process in the context of urban development by addressing the potential of contradictions as valuable resources for learning and development, and emergence of expansive learning actions in a systematically implemented collaboration between civil society and civil servants. In Nordic educational research, learning through social interactions in an informal setting that includes communities as settings of learning focusing on the participants' needs and the obstacles, they face is a valuable addition.

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## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

Multi-dividual engagements: a feminist posthumanist exploration of student participation in sexuality education

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### 1. Research topic

Research and policy emphasize the importance of student participation in sexuality education. For example, the OECD (2020, p.10) states that "learners can and should play an active role in organizing, piloting, implementing, and improving the sexuality education addressed to them." However, research show that, despite this emphasis, students are seldom involved. Accordingly, a commonly held perspective is that student participation is vital, but the queries this implies need to be further addressed. Therefore, this presentation aims to explore how student participation is enacted within sexuality education and the frictions this implies.

### 2. Theoretical framework

With a posthumanist framework, this study explores student participation as enactments within collective and transformative assemblages. The notion of assemblage addresses the ontological account of the indeterminate and contingent character of the world (Braidotti 2021). By emphasising relational becomings, this approach makes it possible to explore how student participation is enacted within material-affective dimensions and provides specific takes on subjectivity and agency.

### 3. Methodology

The empirical material for this paper is derived from a four-year practice-based research project in Sweden. Within the project, we were five researchers engaged in collaboration with teachers and students. The project strived to create collaborative engagement around the challenge of arranging sexuality education. Specific attention was also given to exploring student participation. Empirical material analysed in this paper was then constructed through workshops, interviews with teachers and students, and classroom engagements. Inspired by the affirmative critique proposed by Braidotti, an analytical approach that is both critical and creative emerges. This means going beyond mere celebration and governance and exploring how enactments of student participation are involved with tensions, stabilizations and movements.

### 4. Expected results

Involved in collaborations, we as researchers sensed the complexities of including the students in different ways. The teachers worked hard to arrange discussions, dividing the students into smaller groups, working with digital technologies such as Mentimeter and google docs, and recurrently asking the students about their thoughts and opinions. The analysis is then structured around three recurrently enacted matterings; the mattering of, discussions, questions and space. These matterings show how student participation is enacted within unpredictable processes. Simultaneously, students' interest and engagement in the area offered productive venues but also became part of reproducing stabilized formations about gender and sexuality. Thus, student participation becomes a joint effort that is certainly not easy or innocent but mingled with power formations, raising questions of who or what is afforded the capacity to take part, becoming (a)part in the enactments of participation.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Despite the recognition of the importance of student participation, research highlights a gap where students remain excluded from discussions about sexuality education. This discrepancy raises important questions about how participation can be done, which this study seeks to explore. By analysing empirical material, the study discloses the complexities and frictions enacted when working with student participation in sexuality education. This is particularly relevant in the Nordic context, where education strives for inclusive and participatory endeavors.

Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

To Be or Not to Be Driven: Material-discursive apparatuses of work experience placement and in/justice

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The paper explores the practices of acquisition and allocation of work experience placements (WEP) as a career education activity in relation to equal access for young people in grade 8 and 9 to experience the world of work. It engages diffractively with interviews with teachers, career guidance counsellors, workplace supervisors and young people and fieldnotes from classroom observations in four lower secondary schools in Sweden. Thinking with the Baradian concepts of material-discursive apparatuses and intra-action the paper explores the intra-action of human bodies, a digital platform for acquisition and allocation of WEP and two different principles and practices of allocation that the schools apply. The analysis shows that the intra-actions produce different categories of young people, employers and placements, and thus different conditions for access to WEP. For example, the material-discursive apparatus of WEP allocation as “First-come, First-served” produce young people as ‘Driven’ or ‘Not-Driven’ and placements as ‘Good’ or ‘Bad’ which affects what experiences with the world of work young people have. The paper aims at contributing to Nordic educational research by opening and expanding the question and concept of justice in career education and guidance.

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## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

### PrACTivisms as a research educational participatory methodology?

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#### 1. Research topic/aim

The philosopher of science Stengers (2000; 2018) is critical of the scientific generalizations that propositions knowledge is transferable from one practice or situation to another. This presentation will promote prACTivism as a research educational participatory methodology that complement and strengthen the pARTicipating methods elaborated by Ivinson and Renold (2016) and Renold and Ivinson (2019). The presentation asks for a methodology that problematise how knowledge is a more-than-research produced endeavor as it operates in the relation between research and society; a gap in which preschool children can also engage in producing societal knowledge.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

The presentation draws on Stengers (2023) theoretical framework and conceptualization of an Ecology of practices that marks the relational heterogeneity in which we come to make things intelligible to each other and outlines what we know or come to know, are established in a diversity of cultural, methodological, material and social practices.

#### 3. Methodological design

This conceptual paper develops three mobile methodological positionings of the methodology of PrACTivisms: *practicing* an ecology of practices, *activating* a direct democracy, and *emerging* situation ethics and values.

#### 4. Expected results/findings

The presentation aims to problematise knowledge production as merely an academic researcher endeavour by investigating how research can invite preschool aged children to activate knowledge in-situ. We have endorsed a research methodology that amplifies the *practicing* of encounters as a production of knowledge. In this sense the methodology of prACTivisms invites children into an ecology of practices where hesitation can produce new modes of knowledge that resonate with speculation and a continuous flowing change of situations. This might loosen the academic grip of an objective and general expert knowledge production (Stengers, 2023). Thus, prACTivisms infuse a more-than-early childhood educational-practice and a more-than-academic-research-practice where various practices can speculate on (its owns) aspirations, directions, and purposes through embedded and embodied encounters.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

prACTivisms infuse a more-than-early childhood educational-practice and a more-than-academic-research-practice where various practices can speculate on (its owns) aspirations, directions, and purposes through embedded and embodied encounters. We argue that Research prACTivisms may produce and activate marginalized actors and knowledge in order to produce contemporary and situated political research practices and approaches.

Key words: ecology of practices, educational practices, prACTivism, preschool, research practices

## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

### The value of animals in primary school textbooks in Finland

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A transformation towards sustainable living necessitates that Western societies reconsider the values and worldviews they attach to nonhuman animals (e.g. Rolston, 2020). So far, societal interest in nonhuman animals' role in sustainability has mainly been related to their holistic role in ecosystem functioning and the harm that the decline of nonhuman animal species could cause to humans. Lately, however, sustainability scholars have been paying increasing attention to the subjectivity and rights of individual nonhuman animals, such as their suffering due to intensive animal production. There have been calls to better include the perspective of non-human animals in environmental and sustainability education through inclusive pluralistic approaches (Kopnina & Cherniak, 2016; Lindgren & Öhman, 2019).

This research aims to describe how nonhuman animals are presented and what nature-related values and worldviews are attached to them in primary school textbooks and related educational materials in Finland. We aim at finding out whether textbooks are supportive of the in-depth cultural change that sustainability transformation requires by providing students with pluralistic, including non-anthropocentric and non-instrumental, ethical perspectives of non-human animals. We combine theoretical approaches from environmental and animal ethics, environmental management literature (especially related to ecosystem services), and environmental and sustainability education research emphasizing a pluralistic approach.

We conducted a theory-based content analysis of a total of 16 history, civics, environmental studies, religious education, and ethics textbooks, as well as related exercise books, and digital learning materials for grades 5-6 in Finland. We found that the number of explicit mentions of the value of nonhuman animals was relatively low, but one of the two studied textbook series discussed the value of nonhuman animals significantly more than the other. The two textbook series also differed substantially in terms of how much the value of animals was discussed in different subjects. Based on the preliminary results it seems that, in general, the textbooks emphasized nonhuman animals' value as provisioning people with direct benefits and livelihoods, as well as animals' intrinsic, holistic value. Anthropocentric and ecocentric worldviews were pronounced. We suggest that to increase the transformative nature of teaching, textbooks should discuss more the relational value of nonhuman animals and the social and cultural services they provide.

The results of this study are relevant to complementing Nordic educational research regarding values education and sustainability. The results can be utilized in developing learning materials that better respond to the need for profound cultural values and worldviews change in formal education related to nonhuman animals.

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## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

### Enacting eco-democracy in education: Young students and more-than-human relationships

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#### 1. Research topic

This paper is part of an ongoing research interest within educational contexts concerning the concept and phenomenon of *eco-democracy*. The interest stems from the assumption that humans and the more-than-humans, are confronted with ongoing intertwined crises, such as environmental destruction and a lack of confidence in democracy. Furthermore, ecological crises and their consequences are foremost political crises (Orr, 2024) tightly connected with injustice (Martusewicz, 2020).

While understanding education as a necessary partner for change, education needs to capture tensions arising concerning political dimensions and normativity (Fettes & Blenkinsop, 2023). However, as both ecology and democracy build on refined concepts and links between them are changeable (Peters, 2017) how they merge educationally is of interest. Consequently, the educational approach to environmental education which we propose aims to explore how nature as co-teacher could widen students' perspectives of eco-democracy.

#### 2. Theoretical framework

Our thinking is inspired by Wild Pedagogies and the formulated six touchstones as tools to support hope for the future. One of them, Nature as co-teacher, provides a focus on how the more-than-human-world could be actively included in teaching practices (Jickling et al, 2018). Furthermore, the concept of Wilderness, as wildness, and self-willed land, is important as it provides a focus on how humans and more-than-humans can live and dwell together (Morse et al., 2018). Eco-democracy presupposes an ecocentric worldview where the more-than-humans have intrinsic value and affect democratic processes, which could be enacted through four value commitments, voice, consent, self-determination, and kindness (Blenkinsop & Wilhelmsson, forthcoming).

#### 3. Methodology

The research design builds on qualitative exploratory methodology where the empirical data are co-produced in collaboration with students aged 7-12, and the more-than-human. Activities include discussions on eco-democracy and creative expressions using various materials. Follow-up interviews with teachers and students provide additional data. The produced material will be analyzed and created into eco-portraits (Blenkinsop et al., 2022). Eco-portrait offers a creative five-step analysis and interpretations within a geographical place that concerns aesthetic and ethical aspects and acknowledges more-than-human perspectives.

#### 4. Expected findings

This paper contributes by firstly, giving insights on how democracy vis-a-vis environmental crises and injustice practices could be understood through young students and more-than-human relations. Secondly, the study reveals the complexity of students' voices in environmental education, intricately connected with power relations among children, between teachers and students, and between humans and more-than-humans.

#### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

Our research has relevance for the Nordic countries with a tradition concerning democratic education. More specifically for rural northern areas, where sustainability development challenges are complex and pinpoint norms, values, and conditions for living and staying in sparsely populated areas (Kronlid & Wilhelmsson, 2024). Furthermore, our research contributes to introducing one of Wild Pedagogies touchstones as a methodological approach to environmental education.

## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

### Toward Post-Media Literacy: Reassessing UNESCO's MIL Framework in the Context of AI and Emerging Technologies

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This paper explores the theoretical foundations of post-media literacy. My point of departure is UNESCO's concept of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), as outlined in its global curricula from 2011 and 2021, which has become established as an umbrella concept in all Nordic countries during the recent decade (see e.g. Carlsson, 2019; Forsman, 2020). I examine to what extent the evolving ontology of "the medium" in the context of disruptive technologies warrants a distinction between traditional media literacy and post-media literacy. More specifically, I first analyze the definitions and contextual applications of "media" as they appear in the global MIL curricula (Wilson et al., 2011; Grizzle et al., 2021). Second, using the concept of artificial intelligence (AI) as a test case, I investigate the extent to which AI can be conceptualized as a medium in this context and how it challenges core principles traditionally associated with the foundations of MIL (Potter, 2019; Livingstone, 2004; Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993). Finally, drawing on ideas of the theoretical trajectories of "post", such as post-digital (Kolb et al., 2021), post-human (Braidotti, 2013), post-aesthetics (Matei, 2022), post-truth (Keyes, 2004) and post-literacy (McLuhan, 1962), I discuss the potential of "post-media" as a valuable conceptual framework for rethinking media literacies in response to future technological landscapes (see also McLaren & Jandric, 2020). I conclude with a discussion on how post-media literacy could turn out to be a productive entry point for educators for following the conceptual development of the cross-sectoral policy term MIL, which has been under constant debate under the recent years.

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Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

Storying about making-with in teacher educators' becoming-professional

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In teacher education we have many practices building on stories. Learning from each other's practice and research stories in teacher educators' professional learning is not only very common, but also a preferred way of learning (MacPhail et al., 2019). This study inquires the collaborative practices and processes in a workshop of teacher educators' professional learning with an aesthetic approach. The stories which emerge in this context concern more-than-human relationality. *How does collaborative making-with contribute to becoming-professional for teacher educators* is therefore the question which engages us.

In this article, we situate the stories outlined above in a new materialist and affirming critical perspective. Haraway (2016) inspires us about thinking more-than-human relationality and about decentring the human, in both telling and listening to stories. Making-with, sympoiesis, as a part of a curious practice (Despret in Haraway, 2016) is theory we think with about the more-than-human relationality in the workshops. Teacher educators' professional learning is in this study addressed as becoming-professional in order to emphasize the continuity and performativity of the process of professional learning (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1988).

This study is an inquiry of experiencing collaborative professional learning from twelve teacher educators in a Norwegian context. The empirical material for this article is based on written interviews with - and letters from teacher educators on professional learning. Two workshops' empirical material is most prominent included in the analysis. A central question we worked with in these workshops is; 'What is going on/ happening in this picture' (Hailey et al., 2015) as well as a practical assignment based on; 'Tell me something I can see'. In the workshops called 'Storying together about our practice' teacher educators explored how theme's like create, play, tell, were a part of their practice by interviewing each other. We attentively listened to the audio recordings from the workshops with an aesthetic approach.

The preliminary discussion shows how an affirmative critical perspective opens to see how passing and receiving in the more-than-human relationality can be seen in the light of curious practice. The emerging stories support this. A new story is in an early stage of emerging, and will create space for knowledge emerging through making-with in becoming-professional. With to little focus and means on possibilities for collaborative professional learning in teacher educators' practices in Nordic countries (MacPhail et al., 2019), our study opens up to see more than already is present through more-than-human relationalities.

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## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

From photo-voice to photo-walks: exploring children's participation in evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Care

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In relation to an increased focus on standardization and measurement of education, several scholars have problematized the underlying assumptions and effects of these trends (c.f Ball, 2017). In Early Childhood Education and Care in Sweden (ECEC), children are, according to the curriculum supposed to have possibility to participate in evaluations (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019). How this can be understood and performed, is a challenge, particularly in relation to the youngest children that may not have a verbal language for expression. In this paper I rise the question of how children can participate in evaluations, and how the children's diverse expressions can be(come) invitations to think-and act with. The aim of this paper is to problematize and experiment with children's participation in evaluation processes. In a broader perspective the paper is part of my compilation thesis where I explore evaluation processes in ECEC.

The paper draws on an approach of research-creation, inspired by Manning(2016) where thinking and doing are intertwined, as accentuated by the hyphen. A collaborative approach of exploring the phenomenon of children's participation in evaluations were undertaken together with children and early childhood professionals in a Swedish preschool setting. A series of affirmative iterations, as formulated by (Ceder & Carlsson, 2024), were used for problematizing and experimenting with methodologies for children's participation in evaluations. Research on photo-voice interviews (Wang & Hannes, 2020) and walking methodologies (Springgay & Truman, 2019) underpins our exploration. The empirical material for this paper is generated during preparing, engaging in, and analyzing a series of affirmative iterations experimenting with children's participation in evaluation. The material consists of field notes written by me, transcribed audio recordings and children's photographs and creative elaborations of the photographs.

In this presentation I outline some tentative results from the collaborative work of exploring the youngest children's participation in evaluations, beyond the use of 'voice'. I also discuss how the exploration created a speculative movement for future thinkings and doings. Children's expressions are in the study used as invitations to think with, and not as representations of their perspectives, intentions or 'voice'. In relation to children's participation, the paper also discusses age as a protected ground of discrimination according to the Swedish discrimination act.

Key words: Early childhood education; participation, evaluation; research-creation

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## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

Policy on procurement, the design competition and the emerging school building

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The design of school buildings is an emerging issue in educational research, and school buildings in the Nordic countries are designed in many different ways (Lehtonen & Kuuskorpi, 2022; Sigurðardóttir & Hjartarson, 2011). Within the decentralised policy setting in Norway as in the other Nordic countries, the local governments must follow national as well as international requirements for procurement. The design competition is a commonly employed method as part of policy on procurement of new school buildings. What is little explored in research is what comes in and shapes the school building in the design competition.

With this paper I will approach questions on how a new primary school in Norway emerged within a design competition. To investigate these concerns, I have analysed three entries for an open design competition for a new primary school and I have conducted group interviews with the competing design teams. My approach to the documents was a practical oriented document analysis (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2022) to better understand by what document practices and document tools the school building moves and emerges within the setting of a design competition. Employing sociomaterial perspectives, the paper focuses on how the school building was envisioned as a space for teaching and learning in the design competition.

The preliminary analysis of the findings suggests that the design of the school building emerged from a web of relationships among design experts like architects and landscape architects, central and local regulations for education and for construction, and the specific site for the new school building. The jury appeared as a powerful actor in the design practices. The classrooms in the competition entries emerged as a “boring” and standardised space which were given little attention in the proposals. By text and illustrations, the design proposals modified the school building to appeal to the jury by promoting the façade and big assembly areas and at the same time reducing the classrooms to a minor issue.

With this paper I will argue that the competition for the new school building facilitated for design practices driven by jury excitement and selling of spaces which are little in use during a school day.

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Lehtonen, S., & Kuuskorpi, M. (2022). Towards Typological and Spatial Diversities Learning from the typological solutions of the Finnish comprehensive public-school buildings. *Architectural Research in Finland*, 6(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.37457/arf.130449>

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# Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

The following article explores the pedagogical practices embedded within two different professional educational programmes in Denmark (BA of Social Education and BA of Public Administration), focusing on the tension between the two epistemic norms of impartiality and intersectionality. The norm of impartiality is understood differently across these educational programmes and rooted in different understandings of the purposes of the state (Gay, 2000). However, it is consistently influenced by intersectional elements that challenge the single-axis framework by confronting it with the reality of multiple inequalities (Crenshaw, 1989). The following study focuses on how both norms coexist and interact as a tension between particular and general individual rights and needs. We explore the two educational cultures through observations of teaching and interviews with managers, teachers and students from each programme.

The question is how the two educational institutions strive to develop the competences to navigate in the tension between these two norms. This involves analyzing the meaning of impartiality and intersectionality within each programme as well as the values and methods used to cultivate these professional qualities. Additionally, the study examines how the institutional purposes of professional work influence the tension between the concepts of impartiality and intersectionality and their broader societal transformations.

A qualitative, empirical research approach is employed to “better highlight the perspectives of participants related to the study” (Flick, 2007), aiming to investigate the social phenomena central to this project. The methodology includes a comparative analysis of the curricula and ethical guidelines of the two programmes, focusing on how they highlight different aspects of the conceptual tension while also exploring overlapping similarities (Weinstein, 2004). Observations of teaching and interviews with leaders, teachers and students provide valuable insights into the thematic similarities and differences between the educational cultures of public administration and social education.

We will present preliminary findings from our work in progress, focusing on the educational practices and the development of professional norms within these programs. The insights gained from the observations also point to the different ways in which impartiality and intersectionality can be shaped in connection with the professional identity and overall culture within each programme.

In conclusion, the article contributes to Nordic educational research by highlighting how different professional epistemic norms are taught and perceived within different educational contexts, offering insights into the broader implications for professional education and practice.

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## Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

### The Quiet Crisis: Examining Digital Alienation and Its Impact on Student Identity in the Nordic Region

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In Nordic countries where digital integration is central to education, a subtle but impactful issue has emerged: digital alienation. Characterized by a sense of detachment from meaningful human connection due to extensive digital engagement, digital alienation is shaping students' identities, social skills, and overall well-being in ways that often go unnoticed. This paper examines digital alienation as a "quiet crisis" affecting Nordic students, who may rely on digital tools for learning and social interactions yet face challenges in developing authentic interpersonal relationships. The study explores the psychological and social impacts of digital overreliance on student identity, empathy, and community belonging.

Drawing from Sherry Turkle's work on digital dependency and theories of social identity, this paper investigates how the extensive use of digital platforms can lead to a diminishing sense of self and weaken students' interpersonal bonds. With digital spaces allowing students to construct and share online identities, the paper explores how this can shift self-perception, often fostering a reliance on external validation rather than self-reflection. Theoretical analysis and existing survey data from Nordic studies on digital engagement provide a foundation for examining the ways in which digital dependence influences students' sense of belonging and overall social development.

The findings highlight that students frequently exposed to digital learning and social media may experience feelings of isolation and struggle with forming meaningful offline relationships. Educators report concerns that extensive digital interactions reduce opportunities for empathy, collaborative skills, and resilience in real-world settings. The paper suggests that addressing digital alienation in schools requires a balanced approach to digital literacy, incorporating lessons in digital wellness, boundary-setting, and offline social engagement. Through structured activities that foster empathy and real-time connection, schools can help students counteract feelings of alienation, encouraging a healthy relationship with technology that emphasizes personal and social growth.

This study contributes to the Nordic discourse on educational well-being by highlighting digital alienation as a pressing concern in tech-forward classrooms. In advocating for a model of digital literacy that also prioritizes emotional and social development, the research aligns with the Nordic commitment to fostering balanced, resilient, and socially connected students. By addressing this quiet crisis and offering strategies for a healthier integration of digital tools, the paper underscores the importance of preserving human connection and personal identity in an increasingly digitalized educational landscape.

Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

The effectiveness of mental training in school – A literature review

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Topic/Aim

The literature review aims to describe and evaluate studies regarding mental training published between 2012 and 2024. Mental training is gaining momentum in Sweden and internationally. While widely used in sports, its application in education remains underexplored. In Sweden, only one dissertation has addressed this topic within educational settings (Setterlind, 1983). This review explores the impact of mental training in education based on findings from 45 articles and eighteen dissertations. It evaluates evidence on the effectiveness of these interventions in enhancing emotional regulation, stress management, academic achievements, cognitive functioning, and social-emotional development among students from elementary to high school.

Theoretical Framework

The principles of positive psychology can be particularly relevant in the context of mental training. Positive psychology focuses on enhancing well-being and fostering positive qualities, such as resilience, optimism, and emotional intelligence, creating a supportive and effective learning environment. By integrating mental training techniques rooted in positive psychology, schools can help students develop the mental and emotional skills necessary to thrive academically and personally.

Methodological Design

The study utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically employing inductive thematic analysis to identify internal and external application themes related to mental training skills. The literature review aims to describe and evaluate published studies on mental training, offering an updated overview of the current state of research in this field. A thorough search of various databases yielded 400 studies, of which 63 focused specifically on school contexts involving primary, middle, and high school students.

Expected Conclusions/Findings

Techniques such as mindfulness, visualization, and cognitive-behavioral strategies have varying effects based on age groups and developmental stages. Younger students benefit more from structured activities, while older students are often better suited to independent mindfulness practices. Programs and digital interventions have provided practical ways to integrate these techniques into schools. However, inconsistent practice and limited teacher training can impact the effectiveness of these interventions. Support from teachers and structured guidance are essential for maximizing results.

Research findings are expected to show positive effects of mental training. While the academic and behavioral impacts may differ, some studies indicate significant improvements, while others report minimal effects. The results suggest that mental training interventions and structured support should be fully effective and tailored to the student's developmental stages and educational contexts.

Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

The findings are relevant to the Nordic context, where educational policies prioritize well-being, holistic development, and inclusivity. This review offers insights into how mental training can be integrated into curricula to enhance social-emotional learning and cognitive growth. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for further research in this area.

Keywords: mental training, school, mindfulness, techniques, strategies

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## Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

### Examining Otherness in Social Pedagogy: Challenges of Inclusion and Transformative Practices

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#### Abstract

This paper explores the intersection between Sara Ahmed's concept of otherness and social pedagogy, with a particular focus on inclusion and transformative work. Social pedagogy emphasizes the right to participation and belonging, promoting inclusive practices within educational and social systems. However, it often operates with a pre-defined understanding of normality, shaping the ways individuals are expected to adapt to societal norms. Ahmed's theory highlights how even well-intentioned inclusion efforts can perpetuate subtle exclusion by positioning those who deviate from these norms as "the other."

Through this lens, the paper discusses how social pedagogical change efforts may unintentionally reinforce existing power structures by requiring individuals, such as parents from minority backgrounds, to conform to dominant cultural practices to be accepted and not to be put in danger of losing their children. This creates a paradox where practices intended to foster participation also perpetuate racialization and marginalization. The discussion emphasizes the need for social pedagogues to critically examine the norms they advocate and recognize diverse practices and values without imposing a standard of assimilation.

This paper explores the inclusion and *otherness* within social pedagogy, investigating how the field's efforts at transformative change can inadvertently maintain existing social structures. While social pedagogy emphasizes the need for participation and community, it often operates within an established framework that dictates what is considered "normal" behaviour. This can lead to practices where individuals, particularly those from minority or marginalized backgrounds, are subtly pressured to conform to these norms. The discussion extends to the challenges faced by social pedagogues in balancing the need for change while respecting the diverse identities and practices of those they work with.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to critically examine the ways in which social pedagogy's commitment to inclusion can create *otherness*, and to propose methods for evolving these practices to foster a genuinely inclusive and diverse framework. By understanding Ahmed's insights and linking them to practical social pedagogical challenges, the paper offers a path forward for creating a more adaptive and reflexive approach to social work and education.

Ultimately, this work calls for a shift in social pedagogy and implementation of decolonial practices in social pedagogy. Integrating decolonization into social pedagogy means recognizing the historical and cultural biases embedded within conventional practices and actively working to dismantle them. This involves shifting from an approach that merely accommodates diversity to one that truly embraces and integrates varied cultural and theoretical perspectives in social pedagogy. By doing so, social pedagogy can move from focus on merely changing individuals to adapting systems that genuinely celebrate and incorporate diversity, and that can create more equal framework for participation and belonging.

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## Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

### Cultivating Hope: Unpacking Non-killing Themes and a Praxis of Peace in Contemporary Children's Literature

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This study analyzes recent children's literature for insights into the representation and construction of non-killing values and elements of peace. Intrigued by recent scholarship on the de-radicalization of peace pedagogy (Nicoson, et al, 2024), I am interested in how these works 'build peace' and their alignment with and/or challenges to existing frameworks and traditional best-practices in peace education.

Lewsader and Myers-Walls (2017) posited peace education is not a fixed curriculum, but centers on dialogue, relies on educators' values, and must be active. While scholars note the lag between practice and research in the field (Magro, 2015), critical theory encourages viewing peacebuilding as a dynamic process involving diverse actors and cautions against co-opting peace praxis for upholding the status quo (Brantmeier, 2013).

In utilizing these frameworks, this study aims to analyze children's literature as a means to empower youth in personal and political engagements with peace and nonviolence. It seeks to uncover elements of the "small hope" for coexistence, as articulated by Daoudi (2008), within picture books intended for intimate sharing rather than mainstream textbooks or official curricula.

With a sample size of approximately 20 picture books, this study is based on a concept-based textual analysis modeled after Martin, et al, (2019). A battery of questions related to peace and non-killing values forms the first stage, followed by more close/critical reading and commentary on specific passages and illustrations of particular note to the study aims.

Peace literatures often function in a context of conflict and even war, with less non-killing and anti-violence than one might imagine. Once I 'saw' this, I wanted to investigate and test to what extent this was true and other threads that may emerge. I am expecting messaging that predominantly upholds current systems and rather conventional understandings of 'peace.' I am excited for other

This study fits into the Nordic commitment to social pedagogy, encouraging transformational education that empowers students to examine and challenge existing norms. This research will help incorporate diverse narratives to foster critical dialogues around conflict, positive peace and true sustainability in our regional educational settings.

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Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

Understanding the Dynamics of School-Social Teams in Addressing School Absenteeism

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Research Topic/Aim

In recent years, the issue of problematic school absenteeism (PSA) has become central in discussions concerning schools, educational institutions, and student welfare. PSA is characterized by a complex interplay of contributing and mutually interacting factors that present substantial challenges for individuals as well as educational institutions. To counteract and address PSA, well-functioning collaboration between stakeholders, primarily between schools and social services is often emphasized. In 2023, a government grant was introduced in Sweden to promote such forms of collaboration through so-called school-social teams (SFS 2023:179, 1§). This presentation presents preliminary results from a comparative study of how school-social teams are established in three different municipalities. The aim is to analyze how the internal work of the teams are established in the intersection between different professional roles (from schools and social services), local conditions (organization) and economic state governance (government grants).

Theoretical Framework

The study employs neo-institutional theory to explain and analyze how the work within the school-social teams is conditioned, shaped, and governed by different logics that enable and constrain various courses of action. The theoretical approach is used to examine how different professionals "translate", negotiate, and make sense of PSA in relation to other actors. The neo-institutional approach places significant emphasis on how different professional roles are shaped in relation to institutional conditions and how these conditions enable different action repertoires and perceived jurisdictions for different actors (cf. Isaksson & Larsson, 2017).

Methodology/Research Design

Since the project concerns how different actors work with absenteeism and collaborate across various administrations (social services and education), sites (school-social teams and schools), and professions (special educators, social educators, social workers, teachers, etc.), a broad set of data is collected using an ethnographically inspired design, including interviews with team members and observations (with field notes) of meetings. Additionally, documents related to the teams' work have been collected.

Expected Results/Findings

Collaboration between different roles and professions can create problems and conflicts both between professions and in relation to formal goal descriptions. This can be due to competing normative systems, inconsistent goals, and differing expectations regarding responsibility, jurisdiction, processes, and outcomes (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). The study can contribute with knowledge about the composition, purpose, and working methods of the teams, as well as their potential effects for students identified with PSA.

Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

Challenges related to school absenteeism, including the organization, coordination, and implementation of efforts to improve attendance, are of vital concern in all Nordic countries. The fact that the initiative for school-social teams is national, and the problem is of global concern, opens up for more comprehensive comparative analyses of, for example, forms of collaboration, implementation, and conditions between municipalities undertaking similar initiatives.

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## Network: 23. Social Pedagogy

Hope for the future as a tool for social change: Hopefulness in children and young people - how socio-economic factors affect children's and young people's mental health and visions of the future

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Children in vulnerable situations, such as poverty, often lack optimism about their future prospects, affecting academic performance and learning paths (Wu et al., 2017). This research explores how children and youth across various life circumstances perceive their future. It examines children's mental outlook on the future related to their socio-economic background and current life situation. The theoretical framework is the critical theory of hopefulness (Freire 2014). For this research, data was collected through a questionnaire survey from a school in the capital region. 183 pupils aged 10-15 responded to the survey in the spring of 2023. Pupils aged 10-12 (n=70) responded to a survey with two open-ended questions. Pupils aged 13-15 (n=113) responded to a survey with both open ended questions and multiple-choice questions. The multiple choice questions address respondents' economic background and mental well-being. Here we present the results of the two open-ended questions and the multiple-choice questions. According to the results, the pupils were envisioning a future concerning both reflections about their future profession, about having family and children, about their wishes for their future economic situation, and altruistic thoughts about contributing to the mankind and helping other people. In some of the answers, the current being of the child and the family background was clearly reflected into the hope for the future. Some pupils living in families with economic strain expressed wishes about being in a better economic situation as adults and parents in the future, while other pupils seemed to have lost their hope for a better future. Pupils living in favorable circumstances tended to express fairly positive thoughts about their future. However, many of the children expressed worries related to climate change and the current crises in the world. This research is relevant to Nordic educational research since it addresses equity, inclusion and well-being – the core principles of Nordic education and the Nordic model (Lundahl 2016)



# Network: 24. School Development

## Network: 24. School Development

### What's in It for Us? Staff Perspectives on the Impact of Implementing Positive Behavior Support

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A social environment conducive to learning is important for students to achieve educational goals. The Swedish School Act (SFS 2010:800) stipulates that all students can access a safe and encouraging learning environment. This means that disturbances during a lesson are minimised and that the focus is directed toward the purpose of the teaching (Skolinspektionen, 2016). This type of environment is crucial for many students. It improves students with motivation, achievements, and positive results, and it gives students positive experiences of school and learning in general. The 2022 Novus survey showed that every third student experiences mess in the classroom (Fazel, 2022). Another impact of messes in classrooms and schools is that some schools are closed for that reason (Nilsson, 2023).

The aim of this study was to investigate how staff perceive and receive a positive behavior support (PBS) program and how it affects the social environment conducive to learning after two years of implementation. The study design is framed by theoretical perspectives on CR. The researcher conducted group interviews with teachers and principals (N = 14) through reflexive thematic analysis. Each interview took between 35 and 55 min to complete. Based on the purpose of the study, we conducted a reflective thematic analysis (RTA) based on the procedures Braun and Clarke described (Byrne, 2022).

The results showed that the staff perceived no visible result concerning the students' behavior after the implementation of PBS. However, the staff experienced positive results in leadership skills, teamwork, their ability to create a culture that favors a social environment conducive to learning, and how to handle students. The findings also showed that the staff had a positive view of PBS; the program gave them concrete strategies that made it easier to create expectations. Some staff were unable to participate, and additional time and resources were required. The study's results help us understand the impact of PBS in Sweden, which has not been researched thoroughly to date. This study can make an important scientific contribution to the impact of PBS in the Swedish context based on the staff's perceptions. Depending on the study's outcome, the results can make a decisive contribution to teachers' leadership and the topic of social environments conducive to learning in the classroom.

Keywords: impact, experiences, perception, positive behavior support, primary school, staff, Sweden

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## Network: 24. School Development

### A school for all is a school also for gifted and talented students: A Co-Produced Local Action Plan

Johanna Lundqvist

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The purpose of the collaborative project was to co-produce a local action plan which takes into account giftedness, talent, and inclusive education. There is no previous research on such local action plans in the Nordic countries: research is needed. It can be assumed that a local action plan on giftedness, talent, and inclusive education in a school can contribute to gifted and talented students receiving the support and stimulation that they need and have the right to. It is important for all students to thrive and be provided with opportunities to develop and acquire more knowledge in school, and this is true also for gifted and talented students. The Three-ring model of giftedness and talent development (Renzulli, 2021) and the Accessibility model (Tufvesson, 2014) constituted the theoretical framework. Giftedness refers to well-above average ability, task commitment and creativity, and a talent to a competence. Accessibility refers to a school for all and inclusive education. It has been an international agreement and a sustainability goal for many years. The project was conducted as part of the ULF agreement and constituted a one-year collaborative project between Linköping university and a school in Östergötland. The school included preschool classes, after-school educare, and grades 1 to 6. The researcher conducted dialogue seminars (N=14) with the student health team and the teachers in this school. In the dialogue seminars, the researcher, the student health team, and the teachers reflected upon theories, research, life stories, and teaching experiences on giftedness, talent, and inclusive education. The researcher documented key content from the dialogue seminars and also drafted a local action plan; the student health team and the teachers supported the researcher in that work. They revised the form and content of the draft on several occasions over a year and in this way co-produced a local action plan which takes into account giftedness, talent, and inclusive education. The result is a co-produced local action plan which takes into account giftedness, talent, and inclusive education. The plan is termed A school for all is a school also for gifted and talented students and includes several sections (e.g., Introduction; Policy documents on giftedness and talent; This is how we identify giftedness and talent; These are the ways we acknowledge gifted and talented students). The format is a digital text document. The co-produced local action plan can provide support for principals, student health teams, and teachers, or others, for instance when planning and implementing a school for all and developing local action plans in their own schools. It has relevance both for F-6 schools in Sweden and the education systems throughout the other Nordic countries.

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## Network: 24. School Development

### The Role of Teacher Leaders in a Municipal Systematic Quality Work

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### The Role of Teacher Leaders in a Municipal Systematic Quality Work

#### *Research Topic*

This study focuses on the leadership capacity of teachers within the framework of a larger follow-up research project that investigates systematic quality development work in schools in a Swedish municipality. The study aims to contribute knowledge about how teacher leaders relate to the development of the teaching conducted at their own school and how they approach a broader perspective on school development.

#### *Theoretical Framework*

The study is based on Fairman and Mackenzie's (2014) model of progression in building teacher leaders' capacity. The model describes how teacher leaders evolve from focusing on their own teaching to making a difference in the school's culture and organization.

#### *Research Design*

The study is based on group interviews with 20 teacher leaders from six compulsory schools in a Swedish municipality. These teacher leaders are responsible for the school's systematic quality work and participate in dialogues with the school management and the municipal school administration. The interviews were analyzed with a focus on how teacher leaders engage in both teaching development and school development issues, and how their work is perceived and received by colleagues. The study is part of a larger follow-up research project that investigates a municipality's systematic quality development work. The functions and competencies of teacher leaders are thus tested against the background of a larger school development model that encompasses all municipal school activities in a municipality.

#### *Expected Findings*

Preliminary results show that teacher leaders largely focus on improving their own teaching and supporting colleagues in their development. They systematically reflect on their teaching and encourage their colleagues to do the same. However, it appears that they sometimes struggle to reach the rest of the teaching staff. Some teachers engage less in the school's broader development work, either due to resistance or lack of understanding. Teacher leaders often feel that they have a special responsibility for school development processes but also see challenges in creating a collective understanding and commitment to these issues.

#### *Relevance to Nordic Educational Research*

In the Nordic countries, there is a history of school leadership based on trust in teachers' professional autonomy. School development in the Nordic countries has also been characterized to varying degrees by decentralization and goal management, making studies of teacher leadership a common Nordic concern. Understanding the role of the teaching profession in a broader school development perspective contributes to a holistic view of how different types of educational policy movements affect the internal work of schools.

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## Network: 24. School Development

### Success Factors and Challenges in a Language Development Change Process in Primary School: A Longitudinal Analysis.

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Research topic: During the academic year 2021/2022, surveys were conducted to highlight how language development work was carried out in the municipality's preschools, pedagogical care, open preschools, and schools. The results of the surveys led to the creation of a language plan and the hiring of 15 language educators<sup>[1]</sup> in primary schools and 8 language educators in preschools with the aim to: strengthen the quality of teaching and increase the equity of education regarding all children's and students' language, reading, and writing development and conduct supportive work and actively ensure that teaching is designed in accordance with the language plan<sup>[2]</sup>.

This initiative in primary schools is being followed up (Haglind & Simonsson 2024), and this presentation will highlight results from it, focusing on success factors and obstacles and challenges in relation to ongoing practice changes.

Theoretical framework: Based on a practice architecture perspective (Kemmis 2009, Kemmis et al. 2014), the schools' change processes are analyzed. The cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements highlight the complexity of sustainable practice change. Blossing's four phases of improvement work are used to illustrate the work over time (Blossing 2008).

Research design: Data collection is carried out twice a year and includes both surveys, individual submission and interviews. So far, two surveys, one individual submission and 97 interviews have been completed.

Results: The fifteen schools have progressed differently in their improvement work after two years, and it is a complex task to conduct sustainable practice change. The schools that have made progress in their work exhibit the same success factors; for example, the language educator has become an integrated part of the organization (doings), the change work is described as a collaborative effort (doings), and there is a structure and systematics in the organization's work (doings).

The schools that find it more challenging to implement sustainable practice change highlight the same obstacles and challenges: there are deficiencies at the organizational level (doings), resistance to change work (sayings), and the need to develop collaboration and cooperation (doings).

Relevance to Nordic educational research: The contribution is relevant to Nordic educational research as it highlights and discusses success factors and challenges from a longitudinal change process that follows fifteen F-1 schools over several years. Data collection so far includes 2 surveys, 14 goal images, and 97 interviews.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Språkpedagog

<sup>[2]</sup> Språkplan

## Network: 24. School Development

### Enhancing student well-being in upper secondary schools

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#### Research topic

This aim of this study was to analyse students' and teachers' experiences of positive education in upper secondary schools. We investigated the views of students and teachers on how positive education can support students' well-being, study engagement, and peer connections in upper secondary education. The course Study with Strength includes theory, practice as well as individual and group work sessions.

#### Theoretical framework

In school, students should be given the opportunity to develop socially and academically and learn life skills. Furthermore, student well-being and academic achievement are closely linked (Salmela-Aro et al., 2022). Students who experience well-being are more inclined to actively engage in learning and feel a sense of connection with their peers. However, many students experience negative emotions, including stress and anxiety (Rickard et al., 2024). Research shows that schools can support students' well-being, resilience, personal growth, and self-confidence by including programs that promote positive development (Fält-Weckman et al., 2024; Hongell-Ekholm et al., 2024; Sandholm et al., 2023; Waters, 2021).

#### Methods

The qualitative data for this study consists of individual interviews with 30 students, three focus group interviews with eleven students, interviews with three teachers as well as classroom observations of twenty-two lessons of the course Study with Strength. We explored teachers' and students' perceptions of the course, as well as students' self-reported effect of the course on their well-being and sense of peer connection. The material was coded in Nvivo and analysed through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

#### Findings

The results showed that active involvement from both teachers and students, along with a variety of learning opportunities for student participation, is crucial for the effective implementation of a similar course in a school setting. The teachers' approach influenced the classroom environment, which subsequently impacted students' learning, study engagement and peer connections. Furthermore, students reported greater self-awareness, personal growth, and enhanced stress management skills after the Study with Strength course.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The findings are relevant for the Nordic context as many students in Nordic countries experience decreased well-being and social anxiety. This study provides insights into how positive education can be implemented in schools to enhance student well-being and study engagement and reach all students in school regardless of background.

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Network: 24. School Development

*Expanding Knowledge within Research-Practice Partnerships: Collaboration in the Third Space*

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Research topic/aim

Research-practice partnerships (RPPs) have emerged as a powerful means of bridging the theory-practice gap in educational research (Coburn & Penuel, 2016, Coburn et al., 2013). Grounded in practitioners' questions, RPPs can help mitigate traditional power asymmetries in collaboration and establish a third space where collaboration can take place. When collaborating, researchers and school practitioners bring diverse forms of knowledge to the table. While practitioners are often more knowledgeable about school practice and researchers are experts in research, the distinction between these roles is not as rigid as it may seem. This study explores the interplay of different forms of knowledge in RPPs by analysing how knowledge is distributed, utilised, acknowledged, negotiated, and expanded within a specific RPP, where researchers and teachers collaborate to support school-based action research projects.

Theoretical framework

This study employs third-generation cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) to analyse collaboration between two activity systems with a partially shared object (Engeström, 2015). CHAT holds that dialectics is fundamental to all human activity. This study utilises the dialectical relationship between alterity – the distinction between practitioners and researchers – and affinity – a sense of similarity among participants grounded in shared interests, values, goals, or experiences (Tabak, 2022) – to analyse the interplay of different forms of knowledge in collaboration.

Methodology/research design

The study draws on empirical data from written reflections collected before and after the action research projects, meeting observations conducted throughout, and interviews with participating teachers and researchers carried out after the projects.

Expected results/findings

Preliminary findings indicate that participants' perceptions of the shared object significantly influence the role that different kinds of knowledge assume in collaboration. By navigating alterity – enriching collaboration through the diverse perspectives of practitioners and researchers – and affinity, enhancing commitment to the shared object, the dynamic nature of collaboration allows different forms of knowledge to come to prominence at different times. Additionally, early findings suggest that participants' diverse forms of knowledge expand during the collaborative process, further blurring the traditional division between practitioners and researchers, and contributing to development at both individual and organisational levels.

Relevance to Nordic educational research

A deeper understanding of collaboration in the third space is needed, not least in the Nordic context, where interaction between practitioners and researchers is increasing due to a growing interest in practice-based research and national educational policies that promote collaboration. This study contributes to understanding third space dynamics, thereby facilitating the addressing of complex educational challenges that require the integration of various forms of knowledge.

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## Network: 24. School Development

### The machinery of Systematic Quality Work as metaphorical translation

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#### Research topic/aim

During the past 20 years Systematic Quality Work (SQW) has been the main tool for evaluating the quality in Swedish schools in terms of attainment of the national educational goals (Håkansson & Adolfson, 2022). SQW is a legal requirement both for school principals and for the local education authorities (LEAs). However, the quality work of the LEAs has so far largely remained a knowledge gap. This study addresses this gap by analysing how LEA actors translate the idea of SQW into linguistic artifacts (Czarniawska & Jorges, 1996). The aim is to contribute theoretically to the understanding of LEAs' quality work.

#### Theoretical framework

The study draws on science and technology studies (Latour, 1999) and organization studies (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). Inspired by Latour, we conceive of SQW as a socio-material "machinery" in which meanings and objects are in the making. Ideas are understood as communicated images which can be seen as intersubjective creations that become parts of a specific community (LEA) rather than of single persons (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996).

#### Research design

The data was collected in 2020-2022 by observations of meetings (e.g., quality-dialogues), and interviews with key actors (e.g., quality managers) in five Swedish LEAs. The design was participatory, in the sense that it engaged researchers and LEA staff in a 3-year long professional network associated to the study. The analysis of the field notes from observations and the excerpts from the interviews focuses how the mental image of systematic quality work translates into a language of metaphors by the LEA actors.

#### Expected results/findings

The analysis shows a rich use of metaphors in the SQW-language used by the LEA actors. The results are underpinned by transcribed quotations from the data, in which metaphors such as wheels, screwing, rigging, train wagons, tools, etcetera are used to build a collective understanding of systematic quality work.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

The study highlights the day-to-day meaning-making of quality work on the level of local education authorities, showing how national guidelines and legislation are translated into local practice and shared language. As quality management is a widely spread practice in education around the Nordic countries (Prøitz et al., 2022), the study has relevance both in the Swedish and in a wider Nordic context.

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## Network: 24. School Development

The missing link between interprofessional team collaboration and outcomes on students – what do we know and what makes knowing difficult?

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Educational policies, policy documents, researchers', and school authorities all argue that schools need ability and expertise beyond the pedagogical to accommodate the diversity of students' backgrounds and needs (Ekornes, 2015; Meld St. 19, 2009-2010; Mellin, 2009; Porter, Epp, & Bryan, 2000). For instance, in Norway, municipal services working within and around schools are expected to engage in collaboration and coordination to ensure that students receive comprehensive and well-coordinated services, promoting effective learning and creating supportive learning environments (Meld. St. 6, 2019-2020). Consequently, collaboration across disciplines within schools, such as between teachers, school nurses, and social workers, is considered essential to address the needs of both teachers and students (Weist et al., 2012). Despite the escalating emphasis on interprofessional collaboration in educational policy in Nordic and European countries over recent decades, empirical evidence about its effect on student outcomes remains sparse (Bates et al., 2019; Mellin, 2009). In this paper we provide a scoping review of the literature concerning effective interprofessional team collaboration practices in schools', and study the mechanisms involved in making an impact on students in a project designed to do exactly that. The goal is to map current knowledge of the relationship between interprofessional collaboration and student outcomes and provide in-depth knowledge from empirical work on the facilitators and barriers on interprofessional collaboration making an impact on students' learning environment. The empirical study uses program theory (Funnell & Rogers, 2011) as an analytic framework for studying the mechanisms that were "activated", and failed to be activated, in the development work. The findings shed light on the complexities inherent in studying the effects of interprofessional collaboration on student outcomes. Our empirical study further highlighted facilitating and hindering factors for collaboration practices making an impact on students.

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## Network: 24. School Development

Lessons from a Norwegian national initiative: Insights from three years of professional development courses for vocational teachers

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Vocational teachers develop their professional competence through a range of formal and informal activities that bring about new pedagogical and vocational knowledge and skills (Andersson & Köpsén, 2018; Zhou et al., 2022). Both formal and informal activities can support teacher learning, however, vocational teachers experience varied opportunities to participate in formal continuing professional development (CPD) (Gåfvels, 2020; Lloyd & Payne, 2012). In Norway, where this study takes place, vocational teachers have expressed a need for better opportunities to update their competence in a system that offers academic credits (Aspøy et al., 2017) and since 2018, the national initiative *Yrkesfaglærerløftet* has provided this opportunity to vocational teachers.

The few studies published on the initiative often examine individual courses or those provided by a single university. Consequently, there is a need for further research that captures the breadth of teachers' experiences with the initiative. By asking *What lessons can we draw from three years of formal CPD for vocational teachers*, this paper aims to provide an overview of trends in participants' motivation, the courses offered, their perceived relevance and their contribution to teachers' learning community at school, using participant survey data.

Analytically, the paper draws on a socio-cultural lens, emphasising that for courses to be meaningful, they have to be relevant for teachers' daily work contexts. Teachers' learning is shaped by their personal needs, engagement, and experiences, as well as interactions in communities of practice with others, who can offer critical opportunities for meaningful development and collaboration (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The study uses data from participant surveys over three years, from 2021-2023, which were distributed to all course attendants. The response rate was 60 per cent (N=577). The data is mainly analysed by using descriptive statistics identifying differences in terms of teacher characteristics and study year. Different tests are used to analyse significant differences.

As discussions currently take place in the Nordic countries on how to design effective national systems for teachers' competence development that support students' learning, the findings from this study can provide valuable insights from an ongoing national initiative.

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## Network: 24. School Development

### Enablers and constraints of developing sustainability education in Finnish schools

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What makes a school fail or succeed in its mission to build a sustainable future? This study aims to promote a systemic understanding of the challenges and enablers and roles of different stakeholders in implementing sustainability education through a whole school approach in Finland. The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis 2022) is applied in the study to find the preceding factors; discursive, discursive, social and material and material arrangements which prefigure and make social practices of sustainability education possible.

This study is a part of an European research and development project, the ECF4CLIM that seeks to empower the educational communities in Finland, Portugal, Romania and Spain to act against climate change and towards sustainable development. The findings presented are specifically based on the crowdsourcing process in Finland. To enable different educational stakeholders to have their voice heard, interactive workshops applying The Method of Empathy-Based Stories (MEBS; Wallin, Koro-Ljungberg & Eskola 2019) were carried out. The focus of this paper is on the data collected in the (14) workshops facilitated in Finland. In the workshops the participants imagined based on their real-life experiences, a day in a 'nightmare school' where sustainability education was implemented in the worst possible way, and contrary a day in a 'dream school' with best practices for sustainability education. The narrative analysis (Huttunen, Heikkinen & Syrjälä 2002) of the participants' shared stories is complemented and compared with the content analysis of the post-it notes written by the participants.

The study illuminates the practice architectures that are relevant for developing the whole school approach for sustainability education related to the issues of collaboration, participatory leadership, systems thinking and infrastructure and resources. The participants regarded collective support concerted collective action, discussions, resources and supportive learning environment that should be promoted by participatory educational leadership, administration, municipalities and society as central. This support is essential for the schools to cope with their struggle with individualism, indifference, unsustainable practices of the omnipresent consumer culture that challenge the development of sustainable schools.

The study provides highly relevant understanding of the challenges and crucial factors for creating successful whole school approaches for sustainability education in Finland that is important to compare with the research from Nordic countries e.g. Sweden by Forssten Seiser et al. (2023) and Gericke (2022).

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## Network: 24. School Development

### Generative resistance as knowledge work: Teacher's Engagement with Assessment Criteria

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This conceptual paper examines the knowledge work (Nerland & Jensen, 2012) inherent in teachers' engagement with assessment criteria, and discusses how the tensions associated with such work can be generative of creative and agentic interactions with professional knowledge.

Teachers' work with assessment criteria is characterized by dilemmas and contradictions (Brown and Harris 2016), because assessment practices typically involve multiple purposes and a range of epistemic and social concerns. This paper addresses how teachers navigate such concerns by viewing teachers' engagement with assessment criteria as a form of *knowledge work*, understood as work that goes beyond routine and requires analytic effort, collaboration and explorative activities (Newell et al. 2009).

The following research questions are pursued:

How do teachers approach assessment criteria in situations where different purposes and logics intersect?

How do assessment criteria mediate teachers' knowledge work in these situations?

#### Theory

We adopt a sociomaterial stance (Fenwick and Nerland 2014) and specifically the concept of "generative resistance" (Carlsen et al., 2012) derived from organisational research, which directs attention to "practices that acknowledge doubt, friction and criticism as levers with which to question the given and enhance imagination." Hence, the concept enables us to understand resistance as an expression of knowledge work.

#### Methodology

To develop our conceptual argument, we draw upon data from three different qualitative research projects with a shared interest in 1) teacher collaborative knowledge work; 2) assessment dilemmas; and 3) teachers' strategies for solving such dilemmas. All data are collected at lower secondary schools in Norway (7 schools) through a combination of ethnographic methods, concluded in 2014, 2019 and 2023 respectively. Norway is a suited empirical site, as the assessment system relies heavily on trust in the teachers' professional assessment judgment (e.g. Fjørtoft 2020).

#### Findings

The paper illustrates three different dynamics of generative resistance: 1) *working with doubts and dilemmas* (e.g. securing productive relations between the different logics informing assessment practices). 2) *seeking out connections* (e.g. exploring connections between the local and the universal). 3) *dwelling in and re-configuring knowledge* (e.g. developing and testing ideas, defining space for action).

#### Implications

The paper provides new insight into in-service teachers' professional learning in the context of everyday work and school development. It contributes to advancing existing conceptualisations of teachers' knowledge work, by unpacking the dynamics that supports teachers' agentic and transformative engagement with professional knowledge.

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## Network: 24. School Development

“At least not if I continue teaching in this school”: Examples of the controlling force of institutional habitus

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### 1. Research Topic/Aim:

This study explores how institutional habitus and field shape teachers' collaboration and collegial relationships, focusing on their adaptability and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to understand how structured school environments influenced reactions to the crisis, examining the role of social capital and norms, and power relations in fostering or hindering collaboration.

### 2. Theoretical Framework:

The study is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus, extended to institutional habitus, which describes the predispositions and values embedded within schools that guide individual and collective actions. Field theory emphasizes the structured and hierarchical nature of schools, where social capital and cultural norms mediate power relations and collaboration. Together, these frameworks highlight the dynamic interplay between institutional structures and individual agency, providing insight into teachers' reactions to external disruptions.

### 3. Methodology/Research Design:

A qualitative, longitudinal research design was employed, using thematic analysis to examine two waves of interviews with upper-secondary teachers (N=13) and school leaders (N=6). Data were collected during the initial phases of the pandemic in 2020 and revisited in 2023, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the evolving dynamics of collaboration, collegiality, and adaptability within schools.

### 4. Expected Results/Findings:

Preliminary findings suggest that institutional habitus significantly shapes teachers' collaborative practices and their ability to adapt during crises. Schools with a flexible institutional habitus and rich social capital facilitated trust, innovation, and collaboration, enabling smoother transitions to remote learning and pandemic-related challenges. In contrast, rigid institutional structures are resistant to change, limiting adaptability. These findings underscore the dual role of field and institutional habitus in both supporting and constraining teachers' responses to unprecedented challenges.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic Educational Research:

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by offering insights into how institutional structures and cultural norms impact teacher collaboration in the unique context of the Nordic upper-secondary school system. By addressing the pandemic's disruptions, it provides timely and critical reflections on school culture, resilience, and adaptability. The research underscores the importance of fostering social capital and rethinking institutional habitus to support collaborative practices in Nordic education systems.

## Network: 24. School Development

### Student participation and school improvement collaboration

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Recent research on student and school democracy (Andersson, 2019, 2022), on student roles and positions (Fielding, 2001; Smit et al. 2020) and on teachers collective habits conditioning teachers' and students' joint school improvement (Andersson, 2024; Teledahl et al. 2024), confirm the need to create *new collective habits* to jointly improve school- and teaching practices. Since students primarily become informants and respondents rather than co-participants in school improvement initiatives, the following question arises: How is it possible to develop new collective habits and which habits are fruitful for school and teaching improvement? In this article, we explore how and in what ways a research and development project reinforces this development.

The aim of this paper is twofold, first we explore and discuss what enables and constrains (Kemmis et al., 2014) student participation in school improvement. Second, we explore how democratic practices and student participation can evolve. From a practice theoretical point of departure (Kemmis et al., 2014; Langelotz & Beach, 2024) and the concept 'collective habits' (Dewey, 1938) we analyze focus group data from an ongoing research- and development project on school improvement. The first focus group interviews and workshops were conducted in November 2024 and three more focus group meetings, over two years are planned, hence, the results presented here are limited to the first data set.

The paper is based in a collaboration between university researchers, a local education authority (LEA) in a middle-seized municipality in Sweden and all the schools in the municipality (from pre-school to adult education). The improvement initiative came from the LEA administration (top down) and is organized as a bottom up (?) collaboration by the university researchers and the local school based participants (e.g. LEA administrators, principals, teachers and students) involved.

The first analyses indicate that there are competing discourses around democracy and participation (cultural-discursive arrangements) in the collaboration practice and the school sites. It seems to raise frustration amongst all participants. The student group identified constraining arrangements pre-figuring (Schatzki, 2001) their possibilities to participate in the student council. Both students and teachers expressed how student participation mainly concerned the school yard and break activities. They could not recall any student participation in improvement work. However, forming new collective habits (for all participants involved in school improvement), to enhance collaborative inquiry, seems desirable for the participants in volatile times when democracy is challenged in various ways. This is of great concern considering proposals and discussions in Sweden to limit student (and guardian) participation in education.



## Network: 24. School Development

### Community as Classroom: Innovations in Food & Health Education Through Cross-Sector Alliances

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Traditional school environments often lack the resources and community connections necessary to deliver authentic learning experiences. This raises the question of how collaborations between public and third-sector organisations can supplement and expand upon what schools can achieve independently.

In 2018, the municipality of Kristiansand, Norway, initiated a pilot-project in collaboration with a third-sector organization, aiming to transform the local community into a cultural destination and an educational environment for children. A key aspect of this initiative was to enhance and supplement the teaching of Food & Health in elementary schools. The project based itself on the broader values of public health and life mastery, democracy and citizenship and sustainability, embedded in Norway's national curriculum.

This research aims to answer the problem statement: *How can partnerships with third-sector organizations enable schools to better align their teaching practices with the interdisciplinary and value-oriented objectives of Norway's national curriculum?* The study focuses on a supplementary learning module in Food & Health purchased by the municipality for their elementary schools. More than 1,000 sixth-grade pupils from 21 public schools have participated in this program, spending 2-4 consecutive days with a third-sector stakeholder specializing in Food and Health.

Findings suggest that the learning module offers benefits beyond what schools can offer, particularly in fostering interdisciplinary and authentic learning activities. Teachers and pupils report that they experience inspiration and motivation not only in Food & Health, but also in subjects such as science and math. This appears to be related to the module's multidisciplinary approach to instruction. Additionally, findings suggest that the pupils' hands-on experiences in a community-centered learning environment promote personal growth and social development.

The theoretical framework of the study is multidisciplinary but primarily rooted in pedagogical perspectives. Authentic learning is a central concept, emphasizing the exploration of real-world problems through practical, relevant activities (Donovan et al, 1999). Dewey's (1997) inquiry-based method and Kolb's (2014) theory of experiential learning further support this framework, highlighting the value of practice-oriented learning environments.

This study uses a qualitative approach based on municipal reports, on-site observations, and online-surveys (qualitative and quantitative) conducted with pupils and their teachers. The research aims to provide insights into the broader implications of new partnerships and alternative learning environments in elementary education.

This area of study addresses a gap in research on third-sector engagement in schools (Kolleck and Yemini, 2019), and aligns with NERA's focus on school development and educational transformation by presenting how non-traditional, community-centered learning can expand the scope of elementary education.

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## Network: 24. School Development

What is *Backstage Pedagogy*? How can we deal with the undesirable consequences of pupils' *Backstage Pedagogy*? Examples from a Swedish municipal lower secondary school.

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Due to societal changes, today's youth have grown up with internet, screens, social media and a sharing culture; "sharing is caring". The aim was to provide an account of pupils' informal social strategies when they assisted classmates with schoolwork.

The study's theoretical framework was Goffman's (1959/1990) theater metaphor, where interaction in social life is enacted either frontstage (in front of an "audience") or backstage (with no public eyes, and where frontstage performances are prepared). Pupils' informal social interaction with classmates out of the teachers' sight is considered as taking place backstage. An ethnographic research design was applied, comprising observations, audio-visual recordings and semi-structured interviews with pupils in one class when the pupils were 14 and 15 years old (Year 8 and 9). An innovative research design rendered possible to get access to what pupils say and do backstage (without the teachers/audience awareness) in order to give a good impression of themselves to the teachers and improve (or at least not lower) their grades.

Backstage pedagogy (Rönn, 2023a) turns out to be a complex system of assisting peers which pupils use to prevent teachers from seeing their weakness and giving a touched-up impression of their knowledge and skills. It is facilitated by the pupils' everyday use of media participating, also when doing schoolwork.

Some of the pupils' backstage pedagogy was to a) log into classmates' Google classroom-accounts and write original texts for peers, b) switch computers with friends behind the teachers' back where the more high-achieving one wrote original texts for the classmate, and to c) share leaked national tests (they had leaked nationwide) on the class' Snapchat-group (Rönn, 2023b). The visual learning's "Where?", "Where to?" and "How?" deviate when the assessing teacher is unaware of who has written the handed-in text. As a consequence, there might be a mismatch in teachers' feedback and aim to provide for pupils' needs.

An assessing/grading dilemma occurs at both a local and national level, and some of the pupils' backstage pedagogy can conflict with pedagogical aims (Rönn, 2023a). Suggestions for dealing with pupils' backstage pedagogy could be to repeatedly discuss with pupils the (short-term) advantages and (long-term) disadvantages with sharing cultures and schoolwork, and to emphasize the difference between information (just a click away) and knowledge (which takes time and efforts) (Rönn, 2024/2025. Forthcoming).

Because of societal changes and learners' sharing culture, this study is of interest for the Nordic countries.

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# Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Brown researcher, white schools: Racialized positionality in ethnographic research on (anti)racism

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The focus of this presentation is on how a researcher racialized as non-white (henceforth 'non-white' and 'brown') is positioned as insider/outsider by the research participants in a study on (anti)racism and problematizes the meaning of being an in/visible (brown) researcher in color-evasive (white) schools.

Our contribution is a cross-racial reflexive inquiry, mainly drawing on critical autoethnographic insights by a brown researcher, dialectically contrasted with the ones of two researchers racialized as white in the same research project on racism and antiracism in lower secondary education. The project includes short-term ethnography in 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes in six Finnish schools, and the resulting data consists of fieldnotes, participant observations and open-ended interviews with pupils and staff. The theoretical framework is critical theories on whiteness and race, decolonial studies, and research on intersectionality.

Building on three vignettes, we highlight several ways in which a researcher's racialized position as non-white and as white can impact ethnographic fieldwork in a context dominated by Nordic Exceptionalism and normative whiteness. We discuss the concepts of brownness, biraciality, and strategic racial performance (Khanna 2011) in a Nordic colour-evasive context (Annamma et al. 2016, Hübinette & Lundström 2022), and how ethnicity can become de/politicized at particular moments during ethnographic fieldwork (Baser & Toivanen 2018). Our analyse problematizes the position of insider gaining access and gatekeepers' trust, before looking intersectionally at the dynamic of being a racial outsider, the conflicts and affects that come with it, and we conclude with the onto-epistemological challenges of doing school ethnographic research and contributing to antiracist knowledge production.

In the context of Nordic education, where the illusion of colour-blindness and Nordic exceptionalism persists (Keskinen et al. 2009), hegemonic whiteness and its impacts on school ethnographies have been scarcely researched. Especially the positionality of non-white researchers in predominantly white settings is an overlooked area. This contribution crystalizes under-researched dilemmas that call for the development of new ethnographic designs which center researchers' racial positions and further reflection on the ethical, methodological and ontological implications of producing data on racism at school.

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Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Preparing for anti-racism in Norwegian teacher education: Insights from racially minoritised teachers' work in schools

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In this article, we argue that the racial justice work performed by racial minority teachers in Norwegian schools offers valuable insights for disrupting the inherent whiteness of Norwegian teacher education, which currently leaves pre-service teachers ill-prepared to address everyday situations of racism and discrimination in their future roles. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with eight racially minoritised teachers from primary to upper secondary schools, we examine the often-unrecognised interventions that teachers undertake to support racially minoritised pupils. Building on previous research demonstrating the lack of anti-racist work that intervene for pupils at the institutional level, we read racially minoritised teachers' narratives of the social and racial justice work they do in schools to uncover specifically those efforts that fall outside formal duties but still impact systemic and institutional levels. Using an action-oriented and intersectional anti-racism framework, we analyse how teachers navigate the curriculum, school policies, and interactions with colleagues and parents to challenge systemic marginalisation within the constraints of their professional roles.

Foregrounding this invisible labour, we advocate for incorporating these relational practices into structured components of teacher education to support pre-service teachers to formulate and imagine their own anti-racist, action-oriented alternatives. Our findings provide insights into the ways teachers can work against systemic racism within current institutional frames, promoting anti-racist and decolonial education, and helping teacher education fulfil its mandate to prepare teachers for professional practice in a democratic, diverse society.

## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Place-based education about the local, national minority the boat travelers

Mari Jore

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In this paper, I explore how place can be used to learn about national minorities in teacher education. My interest in this stems from experiences that it can be challenging to teach about national minorities in teacher education, as the level of knowledge in the majority population is very low. Even though the national social studies curriculum (Directorate of Education, 2020, p. 9-11) is clear about teachers' responsibility for teaching about national minorities, research shows that many teachers and pupils experience the topics as irrelevant and distant from the pupil's life-worlds (Midtbøen et al., 2014). This leads to the topics often being given a lower priority. At the same time, we know that one consequence of the assimilation and Norwegianization processes is the invisibility of histories and visible traces of the national minorities' way of life. Thus, we can assume that in many local communities, there are places, stories, and artifacts that can be a resource in teaching about national minorities. It is, therefore, important that future teachers become aware of these possibilities.

The research questions investigated in this project are: How can place-based education contribute to concretizing and actualizing learning about national minorities in teacher education? The method used is reflexivity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018), both for me as a teacher educator and for the students. The paper is based on fieldwork from an excursion about the local national minority, the boat travelers, on the 14th of October 2024. The boat travelers are a local, national minority of the Romani/tater population with an extensive history and belonging to the Norwegian coastal areas. At my place, in Lillesand, the boat travelers were a part of the local community until they were forced to become permanent residents in the 1950s and -60s.

Place-based education anchors children's learning to local cultural traditions, surrounding landscape and nature, or institutions in local society. The phenomenologically inspired research (Myrstad et al., 2018) emphasizes experience-based learning, and children's sensory access to knowledge by being at and moving around places. Even though such micro-perspectives have valuable contributions, one must not overlook the macro level, the political. Places are always shaped by their past and present; they carry with them history and power relations. It is at the intersection between the place's experiential dimension and the place's geopolitical significance that place-based education about national minorities gains relevance. How can place be used didactically to promote knowledge about national minorities that gives experience with the places and the cultures of the minorities and relevant information about the historical injustices they have been exposed to?

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

The workings of whiteness in the context of Danish early childhood education and care

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This paper presentation offers perspectives on how whiteness becomes socially organizing as it reflects itself as the norm in the space of the kindergarten.

The presentation is based on critical ethnographic-inspired fieldwork (Madison, 2020) conducted in two Danish kindergartens as part of my PhD, where I investigate the workings of whiteness in the context of ECEC. The metatheoretical framework is feminist poststructuralist (Foucault, 1980; Ahmed, 2017) and draws on critical whiteness studies (Ahmed, 2007; Frankenberg, 1993) and affect theory (Ahmed, 2014; Wetherell, 2012).

Both kindergartens where I conducted fieldwork can be described as white spaces (cf. Blaisdell, 2016), partly because bodies with white privilege were predominant and partly because the kindergarten as an institution of the Danish nation-state does not exist detached from historical, societal, and social conditions (see Gilliam & Gulløv, 2017). In other words, the kindergarten as a place is shaped by historical, societal, and social effects of normative whiteness, expressed through discursively mediated everyday practices.

Based on fieldnotes excerpts and analysis hereof, the presentation shows how whiteness shapes the social space of the kindergarten by offering fits to bodies with a Danish majority background while reproducing the idea of the racialized Other. This will be illustrated through analytical excerpts which: 1.) focus on contemporary interconnections between colonialism, whiteness, and notions of Danishness by discussing a pedagogical practice of language regulation directed towards racially minoritized children (Klarsgaard, 2024) 2.) explore how racialized differentiation is reproduced among young children when whiteness as the norm seems to orientate two white boys' bodily and affectively responses to a four-year-old girl's brown skin (Klarsgaard, in press), and 3.) critically address how my own white researcher positionality and my movements in the kindergarten as a research field is situated and discursively entangled in the same structures of power and dominance that my research critiques.

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Reactions to neo-Nazi symbols and expressions in lower secondary schools in Finland

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The aim of this study is to critically examine the reactions of the school communities to Neo-Nazi symbolism and expressions among pupils. We ask what kind of symbolism, expressions and activities referring to the neo-Nazi movement are present in the schools and among the pupils, and how do the school communities react to them.

In this ethnographic study on daily life of Finnish lower secondary schools, we apply Philomena Essed's (1991; 2001) theorisation of everyday racism. Essed (2001, 493) conceptualises "racism as a systemic phenomenon integrated in the routine of everyday life". This means that everyday racism is rooted in customs and everyday experiences and "adapts to cultural arrangements, norms, values while operating through the structures of power in society" (Essed 2001, 494). Everyday racism is characterised by the intertwining of cognitive (e.g. prejudice) and behavioural aspects, which become common and unquestioned in everyday life (Essed 1991).

The ethnographic data consists of observations (308 field days) from 7 lower secondary schools (17 classes) in the Helsinki metropolitan area and interviews with school staff (N=99) and pupils (N=200) during the school year 2019-2020 and the Spring and Fall of 2022. The data was conducted as part of two research projects, the first on the challenges of urban segregation in schools (LEE-project) and the second on racism in lower secondary education (RILSE-project).

The preliminary results of the study suggest, in line with previous studies in Nordic contexts, that symbols and expressions referring to the Neo-Nazi movement were rather common in schools, and that they were often downplayed, normalised and taken as a joke in the school communities (see Johansson et al. 2024). However, observations showed that personnel in one school began to take active measures against the neo-Nazi movement when it started to spread visibly among the pupils. Contrary to Mattsson & Johansson's (2020) study, pupils who were adopting the Neo-Nazi ideology were not isolated from others, instead efforts were made to maintain contact with them and their families.

The study contributes to the Nordic debate on how school communities deal with the neo-Nazi movement in schools and how neo-Nazi symbolism is often unchallenged in the daily life of schools as well as how the staff do not have the tools, resources or sense of urgency to address it.

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Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

The Development of Educational Dialect: Hope for the Inuit Language

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Research Topic

The territory of Nunavut was created in 1999 as the result of a land claim agreement settled with the indigenous Inuit population of the eastern arctic region of Canada. Although at the time the Inuit language was considered to be stable, it is now in a state of revitalization in many communities. As part of a literacy initiative launched in 2014, the Nunavut Department of Education led the development of standardized educational dialects for the two main dialects of Inuktitut (Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun). This was necessary in order to support the wide-scale development of student and teacher resources.

This presentation will focus on this aspect (the development and implementation of the educational dialects) from a research study that sought to understand how teachers experienced the implementation of the literacy initiative.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural discontinuity theory (Ogbu, 1982) and the cultural-ecological theory of minority school performance (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) help to explain why many Inuit students continue to be unsuccessful in the school system despite the efforts towards decolonization that have taken place. Cummins' (1986) framework for empowering minority students suggests how individual educators can create environments in which Inuit students experience academic success while remaining rooted in their culture and values. Combined, these frameworks provided a lens through which to view the current neocolonial context of the Nunavut K-12 school system.

Methodology/Research Design

Constructivist grounded theory combined with Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge and worldview) served as the methodological approach of this research study. Data were collected through a questionnaire and interviews with educators.

Findings

A theory emerged from that data that explains the behaviour of educators as they grapple with how to provide literacy instruction. From this theory and the voices of the participants, a set of promising suggestions and recommendations were derived for how to better support educators with their literacy instruction and the ongoing implementation of the literacy initiative. One of these areas is the need for increased communication about the purpose and expected use of the educational dialects.

Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

Given that language death can happen in a single generation (O'Regan, 2013), the creation of the Inuktitut educational dialects represent hope for how the K-12 school system can support the revitalization and strengthening of Inuktitut. This provides a roadmap that other Indigenous groups, particularly those in the arctic regions, can build upon in their own language revitalization efforts.

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Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

"What Color is My Skin?" Facilitating racial literacy in Swedish preschools

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1. Research topic examines the pedagogic choices and actions in situ that help construct knowledge about race and racialized understandings of identity that facilitate racial literacy: the ability to acknowledge and discuss differences of skin color in a way that de-centers phenotypically white skin color as the norm and brings positive associations to the phenotypes of black and brown.
2. Theoretical framework combines Basil Bernstein's theory of the pedagogic practice with critical race and whiteness. Racial literacy is viewed from a pedagogical perspective of the enacted curriculum and the choices educators make in their interpretation and implementation of conflicting educational and social norms. I focus on the pedagogical principles of classification (selection of knowledge) and the framing (the regulation of the social order) that govern the type of knowledge and the power relations within the broader social context.
3. During (2019 – 2020) I conducted an ethnographic survey at three different preschools on pedagogical models in preschool that promote social diversity. I contacted the preschools that were made on recommendations by colleagues in educational research. The criteria for selection included: 1) certified preschool teachers, 2) pedagogical interest in social diversity, and 3) pedagogical work with some form of intercultural or norm critical pedagogy. The preschools were located in metropolitan areas near Gothenburg, Stockholm and Malmö. Sites 1 & 3 can be described as racially and ethnically diverse low-income areas in which most children can be racialized as brown or black. Site 2 is in a high-income area where most children can be racialized as white. Data production included 20 days at each site for approximate total 238 hours of observation.
4. The adult's body and social position, the role of preschool teacher, is not neutral. The preschool has both positional and relational power. The teacher's own body is used as a learning tool to validate black, brown, and white skin color. All of the research participants can be seen as important role models for the children of color. This identification with the preschool teachers contributes to the creation of a positive self-image and identity development for children of color. This is an important point to keep in mind in relation to the white teachers who also have the positional and relational power to validate whiteness. Whiteness in the dominant society has greater symbolic power on an interpersonal and societal level (ref). Children of color who cannot identify with white preschool teachers run a greater risk of experiencing disidentification of self (ref), due to a lack of representation of people of color, and positive role models, and the ubiquitous validation of white normativity. Majoritized white children do not run the same risk of disidentification of self.
5. Race and racism in early years is relatively sparse, even more so in the Nordic context. This study is a vital contribution to the theoretical development and empirical studies about race and racism in education and how educators are central to forming positive identifications and understandings of self with regards to race.

## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

“Just like everyone else, and yet different” – Counter-stories of National Minorities in Norway in Encounters with the Educational System

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In this paper, we explore the perspectives of individuals belonging to national minorities in Norway in encounters with the education system. Jews, Romani/Tater, Roma, Forest Finns and Kvens are officially recognized as national minorities in Norway, ensuring rights for protection and promotion of their languages and cultures (COE, 1998). The core curriculum firmly states that all education should impart knowledge about and respect for the rights of the groups. A recent large-scale population survey reveal that individuals from national minorities frequently experience discrimination, prejudice and racism (NIM, 2022). Inspired by critical race methodology, we ask what stories are told by the national minorities themselves, and how they challenge common narratives of absence, victimization, or deficit (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Following Toft (2021), we argue that centering agency, positive experiences and diversity among minority groups, are key to enabling educational narratives that promote anti-racism.

While Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have ratified the COE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Iceland has signed but not yet ratified. The Convention obliges the countries to protect and promote the minorities' languages and cultures, and to pursue intercultural education in curricula to foster knowledge and tolerance. However, research on the experiences and perspectives of the minority groups in education, is scarce across the Nordics.

Critical race methodology is a theoretically grounded approach to research that foregrounds race and racism, with an explicit goal of dismantling social injustice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The empirical material forming the basis for the paper, are semi-structured interviews with 19 individuals that identify as part of one of the five officially recognized national minority groups. In analyzing the material, we deliberately look for how individuals express agency, self-determination concerning identity, and speak back to racist discourses and prejudice they encounter in society through the methodology of counter-storytelling.

Most of the participants have experienced that their cultures and histories were either absent or presented in superficial and derogatory manners in school. However, for some, the mere presence of their cultures in curricula is connected to experiences of acknowledgement and pride. A major finding is how the participants in different ways express a clear pride in having an identity that is particular to them, whilst also claiming acknowledgement for being part of the greater, Norwegian community. The findings offer pedagogical contributions to the field of anti-racist education, highlighting how counter-stories of minorities can be used as a pedagogical tool (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Global partnership collaboration in Teacher Education

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Internationalisation at home as virtual exchange gives students firsthand online learning experiences of interacting with other students all over the world, while academic staff collaborate with colleagues from different cultures, regions, and countries. Students were offered new exchange options online by virtual collaboration with students abroad in collaboration with HEIs (Beelen, 2011; Beelen & Jones, 2015, Custer & Tuominen, 2017; Mundel, 2020). The aim of our presentation is to take a point of departure in critical virtual exchange (CVE) as proposed by Hauck (2022), and to draw examples from our own Global South/Global North partnerships to explore benefits and challenges involved in fostering students' glocal awareness and critical interculturality through VE.

We aim to establish partnership models with universities and schools to develop international teacher education practicums that foster multicultural and global learning outcomes for student teachers. We aim to cultivate more competent teachers equipped to thrive in the future global classroom. The class-to-class Virtual Exchange (VE) model aims at integrating VE into the regular courses at each partnering institution and engaging students in online, collaborative, project-based learning through a series of pedagogical activities spanning several weeks (O'Dowd & Dooly, 2022). Each VE project is designed around a real-world, glocal theme relevant for the participating students in each class. During the project, students work in transnational groups with a focus on collaboration, critical (digital) literacies, and intercultural interaction.

During the paper presentation, we will explore developing these partnership models as a collaborative research endeavour with our partners in the global south. We will strengthen both physical and virtual exchanges for employees to improve the internship exchange offer and resolve. This knowledge will be invaluable for educators who seek to teach students from diverse nationalities, languages, and cultures, particularly in classrooms with heterogeneous student populations.

Teacher training programs in the Nordic countries have a longstanding tradition of offering student teachers practical experience in the Global South as part of their teacher education. Partners in the Global South emphasize that this offers student teachers a valuable opportunity to apply their pedagogical knowledge and skills in a different cultural context. Research also finds that student teachers acquire intercultural competence and professional development from teaching and participating in cultural settings different from their own (for ex. Steele & Leming, 2021).

This practicum experience also facilitates the development of intercultural communication skills and fosters a global mindset among student teachers as integral components of their teacher education (Deardorff and Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017; Deardorff, 2020). Through reflection on their experiences from diverse cultural perspectives, student teachers can deepen their understanding of their learning and development, as emphasised by our partners in the global South. To enhance the student teachers' reflections on their practicum in the global south, we will develop a partnership model with our collaborative institutions and enhance both physical and virtual exchange in our South- North collaboration. We like to discuss gesturing towards decolonising the curricula in Nordic countries by the critical virtual component in the partnership collaboration with the global South.

Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Managing diversity: (not) talking about racism in ECEC leadership teams

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The aim of this paper is to investigate how racism is (not) thematized and talked about in early childhood education institution leadership teams in a Norwegian context.

The research is based on a theoretical framework following Foucault's ideas on power/knowledge and discourse (Foucault, 1980), and the reproduction of discourses that allows the production of racism and racialized identities. We also draw on perspectives from critical multiculturalism and whiteness studies, to explore how head teachers talk about leading pedagogical work, and how racism and racialization affects young children and teachers in early childhood institutions.

We conducted two focus group interviews with five head teachers of kindergarten in a multicultural area in Oslo, Norway. The first interview was conducted in August 2023, the second in August 2024.

The analysis is inspired by "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach (Bacchi, 2009). The aim is to probe the assumptions underlying various definitions of the category "diversity" and to bring silences into the open for discussion. Bacchi draws on Foucault's understanding of discourses and challenges the "givenness" of categories like "diversity". Power is seen as productive rather than possessed, and it should be studied in its effects rather than its source and who holds "it" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 38). Our concern is firstly to explore different representations of diversity and analyze the effects of these representations.

Preliminary findings indicate that there are two different representations of diversity:

1. Diversity is part of everyday life. This understanding of diversity includes a focus on consciousness and peoples' mindset and values, and an acknowledgement of power relations.
2. Diversity as an area of focus. One example of this representation is this quote from one of the head teachers; "we have focused on diversity for three years, and now we are done with diversity". In this representation, diversity is related to "others", and a continued emphasis on diversity is perceived as criticism of the current practice in kindergarten.

Moreover, our analysis shows that racism is not considered to be a relevant issue and is thus silenced in both these representations of diversity. The topic of racism is addressed by one of the head teachers, but we find that the others in the group evade the topic.

Racism is a theme that does not have much focus in contemporary discussions about early childhood in Norway, including early childhood education, but there is need for more knowledge on how racialization has an impact on young children's lives in educational institutions. Our study is a contribution towards the research on racism, diversity and diversity management in the Nordic educational context, and explores how head teacher's professional practice (not) thematizing racism, affects children's and staff's everyday lives in ECEC institutions.

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Pupils' perspectives and actions against racism in Finnish lower secondary schools

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This presentation examines the ways pupils resist racism and normative whiteness within the Finnish lower secondary schools. Despite the previous research acknowledging pupils' experiences of racism throughout their educational path in Finnish schools (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018), research on the ways pupils themselves aim to tackle racism remains scarce.

This ethnographic study is rooted in critical theories of antiracism and whiteness. We analyse youth's antiracist acts from perspective of 1) individual antiracism (Toraif et al., 2021). We add to this the exploration of acts for 2) interpersonal, 3) communal, and 4) political change (Aldana et al., 2019). Since agency and resistance are shaped by contextual power relations (Lanas & Corbett, 2011; Raby, 2005), pupils' intersectional positions and relations are also examined. The research is in the context infused with ideas of Nordic innocence, Finnish exceptionalism, and colour-evasiveness, that also shape the ways for resisting racism. Our research questions are: firstly, how do different pupils understand and utilise acts against racism in school? Secondly, what kind of ideas or recommendations do pupils have for antiracist education?

Our data is based in critical school ethnography conducted in six Finnish lower secondary schools. It includes observations (124 days) interviews with 14–15-year-old pupils (N=178) with diverse backgrounds, and photographs (N=291) produced by pupils about their understanding of racism and antiracism. We analyse interviews, field notes and photos through qualitative, reflexive content analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2021).

An expected result is that ideas and possibilities to resist racism are shaped by, for example, pupils' race, gender and status positions. The ways youth challenge racism and negotiate racialization varies from subtle to direct. The individual level includes recognition and self-reflection of one's position, power and privileges. The communal and interpersonal levels include peer support, allyship and solidarity in actions as well as affective solidarity. The wider antiracist recommendations outside of the school manifest in constructing counternarratives, such as ridiculing stereotypical assumptions of white Finnishness, or as criticism towards "adults in power".

By identifying the plural strategies youth use to resist racism and racialisation in the contributes to under researched topic in Nordic educational and youth research and help to reinforce antiracism in Nordic education.

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Proxies and the Absence of Critical Engagement: A Systematic Review of Swedish Educational Research on Racism, Whiteness, and Colorblindness

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This study explores Swedish educational scholarship's engagement with critical concepts such as color, colorblindness, blackness, whiteness, and broader articulations of race and racism. In the Swedish context, the recognition of race and whiteness in educational scholarship is particularly important given the country's colorblindness and reluctance to engage with racial issues (Hubinette & Lundström, 2011; 2013). By examining this literature, the study aims to understand how these concepts are addressed, identify gaps in the scholarship, and situate Swedish research within a broader Nordic context. Drawing on Critical Whiteness Studies (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1992; Roediger, 1991) and Critical Race Theory (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000), and aligning with the Second Wave of Southern Perspectives (SWaSP) framework, this research investigates how race, racism, and whiteness are framed and addressed in Swedish educational research.

To achieve this, a systematic review of 58 articles, book chapters, and dissertations was conducted, with sources selected from four electronic databases using carefully crafted keywords and search strings designed to build a relevant dataset. This systematic selection enabled a focused analysis of recurring themes, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches, while also assessing how issues of race and its proxies are discussed in Swedish educational scholarship.

Preliminary findings indicate a reliance on proxies for race and racism, such as linguistic and cultural diversity, to address racialized experiences in the scholarship without directly addressing race. This trend suggests that, rather than explicitly engaging with race, Swedish educational research often employs euphemisms or indirect terms to approach topics tied to racial identity and dynamics (Lundberg, 2015; 2021). Additionally, the study found that research on race and racism within Swedish educational scholarship is significantly limited compared to other fields, such as migration studies. This lack is compounded by an absence of foundational epistemological or ontological discussions about race, suggesting a hesitancy within the field to recognize race as a critical category of analysis.

Furthermore, it could be speculated that differences exist between Sweden and other Nordic countries regarding how race and racism are addressed in educational scholarship. While Swedish educational research appears to underexplore race, racism, and whiteness, emerging scholarship in countries like Finland, Norway, and Denmark may be engaging more directly with these issues (see, for example, Helakorpi, Lappalainen, & Mietola, 2020; Fylkesnes, du Plessis, & Massao, 2024; Midtvåge Diallo et al., 2023).

This study is relevant to Nordic educational research as it contributes to the ongoing discourse on race, diversity, and inclusion within the region. By highlighting the scarcity of research on race, racism, and whiteness in Swedish educational scholarship, it draws attention to a critical gap that affects both the representation of racialized experiences and the development of meaningful discussions on these issues. Through this systematic review, the study seeks to address these gaps, advocating for a more theoretically rigorous approach to examining race and racism in Swedish educational research. Ultimately, it aims to advance a non-color-blind, critical framework for understanding these issues within the Swedish context.



## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Maintaining racism and white privilege through depoliticization and decontextualization of racism in basic education

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In European education, racism is prevalent and structures school life. This is also the case in the Nordic countries (e.g. Arneback & Jämte 2021; Mikander 2023; Souto 2022). To act against racism in different spheres of society, there are legislation and policies from international to local levels. In this presentation, we analyze how racism in basic education is framed through these policies from the international to the local policy landscape. We draw from critical race and whiteness theories, feminist policy studies and critical policy analysis in education. Finland is used as an example country. We name five different policy levels which we elaborate: 1. international level, 2. national level, 3. municipal level, 4. school level, and 5. school staff level. We analyze 77 laws and policy documents. Furthermore, we analyze 83 interviews with school staff in the capital region of Finland. We show how policies depoliticize (Elomäki & Ylöstalo 2021; Wood & Flinders 2014) and decontextualize (Simola 2022) the question of racism in basic education. We claim that depoliticization and decontextualization takes place through universalizing equality, through individualizing racism, through non-performative statements of commitments of non-discrimination (Ahmed 2012) and through silence about racism. We also find some signs of resisting the processes of depoliticization and decontextualization. We claim that depoliticization and decontextualization in the policies maintain racism and white privilege. The presentation calls for a critical rethinking of the form of the policies and their further development in the Nordic countries as well as more broadly.

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Educating for unknowable futures: A systematic review of existing research

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Most refugees in the world today live in low- and middle-income countries with already overstretched education systems, struggling to provide access to quality education for local children. Refugees living in uncertain time and places need some form of stability, hope and protection. According to Dryden-Peterson et al. (2019), education can provide this, as it might give them prospects for the future. Traditionally the approaches to refugee education has been from a humanitarian, human rights or development approach (Burde, 2006). This paper maps the field of refugee education through a systematic literature review, with a focus on literature about education for Palestinian refugees. To systematize the review Covidence will be used, and is expected to problematize how most research done on refugee education is done from Global North countries which have not given enough attention to marginalized knowledge systems. The theoretical point of departure will be a decolonial approach, as opposed to the traditional approaches that Burde (2006) presents.

Through a decolonial approach the paper aims to map the research field within refugee education, with a focus on the distinction between refugees falling under the UNHCR mandate and the mandate of UNRWA. This distinction is rooted in the history of the international refugee regime (Albanese & Takkenberg, 2021). Over the last years there has been an increase in research exploring refugees and their education in the Global South, most of which falls under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) mandate (e.g: Arar et al., 2022; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). A significantly less amount of research has been conducted on UNRWA and their education mandate, which accounts for over 20 percent of the refugee population worldwide (Berg, 2020; UNHCR, 2024). As the world is facing a growing refugee "population", and Palestinian refugees comprise a huge amount of these, it is important to acquire knowledge about Palestinian refugees' education as UNRWA have offered education for refugees for over 75 years. To find the gap on research done on refugee education, especially UNRWAs educational mandate would be beneficial to similar programs in other parts of world, including the Nordic countries, as we are facing a growing refugee population due to multiple crises the world is facing today.

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## Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

### Intersectionally Cracking the Coloniality of Norwegian Monocultural Academia

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In recent years, social movements and researchers have challenged the intertwined gendered, classist, ableist and racialized colonial legacies constitutive of modern universities, calling for decolonization of higher education and research. Important examples from Norwegian context, are the *Students and Academics International Helpfunds`* call for acknowledgement of voices from the South, efforts to make room for critical race theory and black histories and perspectives, and resistance towards systematic exclusion of Saami knowledges. These calls origin from different perspectives, shedding light on systematic reproduction of coloniality and epistemic ignorance, upholding exclusion of other than dominant Western epistemologies and intellectual traditions (Kuokkanen, 2008).

This paper offers a theoretical-conceptual discussion of prevailing epistemic ignorance in Norwegian higher education, reproducing monocultures of knowledge that render the academy unwelcoming for marginalized bodies and voices, as well as unfit for grappling with current global challenges of social injustice, necropolitics, and ecocide. The analytical contribution of this chapter is a collective effort rooted in values like care, empathy, dialogue, and reciprocity to weave our knowledges together. In referring to epistemic *monocultures*, we are inspired by Shivas` concept of monocultures of the mind. As Shiva (1993) argues, the unquestioned dominance of the modern-western knowledge system as allegedly universal makes alternatives disappear, either by negating their existence, denying them the status as knowledge, or by erasing the space for them to flourish.

As an empirical backdrop for the theoretical discussions, we explore diversity within Norwegian academia (or the lack thereof) contextualized against public responses to decolonization initiatives from students and researchers alongside policies representing institutional diversity work in academia over the past decade. In the discourses, decolonization is frequently characterized as an alleged contamination to the purity of the Norwegian democratic identity, as it is described as a threat to freedom of speech, and “our” values of tolerance, freedom and democracy, and as a radical “ideology”. Thinking with Bacchi (2009), we analyze how the discourses are productive in actively giving shape to what is represented to be the problem. We further contextualize the debates within the framework of Nordic exceptionalist self-imaginary significant in Nordic nation states (Lóftsdóttir & Jensen, 2016). Our main argument is the importance of seeing the different perspectives that roam gender, class, ethnicity, and ability, as interconnected and intersectional, to gesture towards a “world in which many worlds fit” (Escobar, 2012).

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Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

At the cultural interface: Colonial ideas in Early literacy Policies

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At the cultural interface: Colonial ideas in Early literacy Policies

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Often, the modern literacy policies are treated as indigenous features of Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, problematising their epistemological and ontological roots reveals coloniality by opening us to the complex intersections of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Western Knowledge Systems (WKS). Nakata (2007) calls this site of intersections as the Cultural Interface (CI). At the CI, WKS are favoured and inform colonial ideas that define early literacy policies' (Nakata, 2007) purpose, instructional content and objectives. The consequences are the exclusion of IKS that are the basis for learner's social cultural environment, leading to low literacy skills' acquisition (Afolabi, 2022).

Focusing on Zambia, we investigate the continuity of colonial ideas in early literacy policies by Indigenous policy actors, USAID and the World Bank. We hope to challenge these actors to rethink early literacy policies. These actors' policy ideas are largely influenced by WKS, positioning IKS as inferior/apolitical when multicultural Sub-Saharan Africa is largely Indigenous. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (i) how colonial ideas were interpreted in colonial early literacy policies; (ii) how have these ideas evolved in contemporary early literacy policies and; (iii) what have been the positions they have endangered on Indigenous People and IKS.

Careful analysis of eight policy actors' interviews and documents using the Thought Ritual Process reveals that the main colonial idea is the assumption that Indigenous People lack knowledge that fosters civilisation. IKS become implicated in deficit models of *poverty*, positioning Indigenous People as poor/lacking in knowledge or unknowing or children. The consequence is simplified pro-poor early literacy policies focusing on gender, health and an emphasis on the technical ability to read Indigenous languages. This approach excludes the social-cultural environment of the learner, defeats the purpose of reading for comprehension, restricts the development of critical literacy skills, polarises literacy ideas and leads to oversimplification of literacy policies.

#### *Relevance to the Nordic Region*

Nordic countries such as Finland and Sweden are known to operate in the field of education influencing some of Zambia's education policies. Additionally, the OECD, with assessments such as PISA for Development in collaboration with the Bank, is also accused of contributing towards neglect of IKS. Therefore, this study provides insights into how global influences may perpetuate the marginalisation of IKS, encouraging a re-evaluation of literacy policies to promote inclusivity.

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Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

Negotiating boundaries of inclusion in basic adult education in Norway

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#### ABSTRACT:

In this paper, I foreground, discuss and reflect upon normative aspects of inclusion in basic adult education in Norway and answer the (preliminary) research question; What informs teachers' understandings of inclusion? And how do teachers negotiate their understandings of inclusion with other teachers (and with the students) in a field characterized by diversity in terms of ethnicity, age, religion, schooling background and sex?

The presentation will include findings from 14 individual qualitative in-depth teacher- interviews and 3 group interviews with teachers at two adult education centers in Inland Norway. The interviews are part of ongoing fieldwork at these two adult education centers and is therefore also a work in progress. Observations during fieldwork inform the analysis of the interviews.

Preliminary findings indicate that teachers in basic adult education in Norway experience tensions regarding normative underpinnings of inclusion, and that these tensions are not explicitly dealt with or foregrounded at the workplace. Thus, teachers must navigate between entangled dominant discourses of immigration, integration, inclusion and adult education in their own praxis by themselves.

The empirical material is further analysed by drawing on the concept of *Rhizome* and *mapping* by Deleuze & Guattari(1987) and decolonial theory, analysing how teachers' praxis and negotiations around the term 'inclusion' may produce *lines of articulation* and *lines of flight*.

The paper may contribute to the field of education in the Nordics by encouraging enhanced reflection about the purpose of basic adult education, and what socially and racially just pedagogies in adult education might be. The paper may further contribute by challenging ready-made answers and assumptions about normative underpinnings of inclusion of racially minoritized adult students.

#### KEYWORDS

Basic adult education, Inclusion, mappings, normative aspects of inclusion, discourse.

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# Posters

## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

Physics Teachers' Lived Experience of Informal Formative Assessment in Inquiry-Based Education

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In recent years, European education policy has shifted toward implementing Inquiry-Based Science Education (IBSE). This approach fosters interactive and dialogic classrooms, promoting the development of ideas. As competence-based education gains prominence in many national curricula, questions arise on how IBSE can simultaneously cultivate both subject-specific and generic skills, such as creativity and critical thinking, while inspiring curiosity and engagement in science and scientific issues (Dolin & Evans, 2017; Grangeat et al., 2024).

One suggested approach in conjunction with IBSE is Informal Formative Assessment (IFA) conversations, also identified as “on-the-fly”-assessments (Araceli Ruiz-Primo & Furtak, 2006; Nieminen et al., 2021). Research suggests IFA is a complex phenomenon, requiring teachers’ tact and expertise in crafting questions and fostering trustful social relations and environments where students feel safe to share their thoughts. Despite their central role, there's a notable absence of research exploring physics teachers' perspectives on IFA.

This study investigates physics teachers' lived experiences of informal formative assessment in inquiry-based education. Focusing on secondary school laboratory work (Gericke et al., 2022) we ask:

How do physics teachers experience informal formative assessment in inquiry-based education?

What challenges, opportunities and potential tensions become apparent in physics teachers' experiences?

A phenomenological approach and hermeneutic reflection will be used to reveal concrete lived experiences through crafting of anecdotes and themes (van Manen, 2014). Audio-recorded data collected through group conversations and individual interviews with a diverse sample of secondary physics teachers.

This study aims to deepen the understanding of the relationship between IFA and IBSE, identify potential tensions between different educational intentions and purposes of science education (Knekta et al., 2022), and inform future teacher education and professional development programs. It aligns with the growing emphasis on teacher autonomy and professional judgment in assessment practices, as highlighted by the new Swedish upper secondary school curriculum (Gy25).

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## Network: 1. Educational measurement and assessment

Seven decades of longitudinal questionnaire data for students in compulsory and upper secondary school – how can researchers use the data?

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Evaluation Through Follow-up (UGU) is Sweden's largest educational database, funded by the Swedish Research Council. The database is founded on nationally representative panels for eleven birth-cohorts (1948, 1953, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1998, 2004, 2010) encompassing 10% of youth born in each year who were resident in Sweden during grade 3 (see Härnqvist, 2000). The database integrates data from the population and school registers, cognitive testing of students in grade 6, and teacher and caregiver surveys. Students are surveyed in grade 6, 9, and upper-secondary school to gather data regarding their school experiences, social-emotional and psychological development, and ambitions for the future. For each construct UGU operationalizes, multiple items are used to gather data (see Svensson, 1971) allowing researchers to use diverse and sophisticated statistical methods to investigate social and educational phenomena.

The proposed poster will present an overview of the UGU database and highlight recently published studies conducted using the dataset, and the ways in which our data can be combined with other large datasets. Researchers will be invited to connect with the UGU data-team to discuss ideas and proposals for using the data in their own research.

The published paper chosen to illustrate the utility of UGU data, by Klapp et al. (2023), investigated students' psychological, cognitive, and social well-being in grade 6 in relation to achievement in grade 9 using CFA and SEM. Analyzing data pertaining to 17,000 individuals across the 1996 and 2004 birth cohorts, the study found statistically significant cohort and gender differences, with cohort 2004 being disadvantaged in all three well-being dimensions, and girls disadvantaged in psychological and social well-being. An offered explanation for the between-cohort differences in student well-being is the increased focus on results and grading during the period of the 2004 birth cohort's schooling.

The ongoing work of the UGU database is of particular interest to the Nordic research community as it represents a rich seam of longitudinal educational data spanning seven decades with which to explore various themes addressed within the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Researchers from the EU/EEA are welcomed to apply for use of the dataset, and the authors will be able to begin these discussions.

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# Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Exploring Dialogue and Dialogic Teaching through Aesthetic Learning Processes

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## Introduction

We examined how student teachers explore dialogue and dialogic teaching by making short films. The context of the study is an interdisciplinary Learning Workshop involving pedagogy, arts and crafts, and language arts (Norwegian and English). The aim is for students to experience how dialogic teaching can be explored across disciplines and in interaction with others through both sensing and thinking.

The theoretical perspective anchors dialogue and dialogic teaching in the sociocultural tradition (Alexander, 2018). The basic idea is that knowledge is created through interaction with the world around us. Meaning is created in dialogue by the conversation partners together (Alexander, 2018). In this context, aesthetic learning processes are interdisciplinary and involve the whole person. During the project week, the aesthetic acts as a knowledge opener to investigate the complexity of phenomena. Aesthetic learning processes are not only individual but also relational and collective, interacting with the environment (Austring & Sørensen, 2019; Illeris & Riis, 2023; Johannessen et al., 2023).

## Methodology

The data consists of 20 short films (5-7 minutes). We conduct a qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) of these films on different levels: how the students explore and express the subject-specific pedagogical content, and the students' expression competence, including how the films are made. The results are discussed within the theoretical perspective outlined above.

## Findings

Our analysis explores how students work with dialogic teaching through aesthetic learning processes. Preliminary results show that in several films, dialogue as a theme is kept open and invites further reflection. While students master the mobile camera as a tool, they find it challenging to use visual, auditory, and narrative devices in film to convey a nuanced message. There are opportunities for closer collaboration between subjects to help students not only with content but also with more subject-specific competence, enabling them to express what they want to convey. The project contributes to the further development of practical didactics.

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Crafted products from wood and textile materials: applying multi-materiality in higher education interior design course

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The ability and skill to work with various materials and process them into design products is one of the key areas of craft education both in basic education and in university teacher education. In crafts, however, materially divided working methods have also strengthened the gendered way of making. Since the FNBE 1993, efforts have been made to dismantle gender-dependence. As one result, and according to Finnish National Curriculum, craft is now defined as a multi-material subject in which activities based on expression, design and technology are carried out (FNBE 2014, 497). The holistic nature of the craft process from the ideation and design to the making is also emphasized.

By following the aim of a holistic craft process, our research topic as a teacher of crafts in higher education, is to examine a case of carrying out a multi-materiality course in design education of crafts along with analysis of students' experiences of it. The item of multi-materiality is widely discussed in recent craft research (Lepistö & Lindfors 2015; Kokko ym. 2020; Hilmola 2023). The data of the study is collected from an ongoing course, Dwelling and Interior (5 sw), which is a part of Intermediate studies of craft science in section of Craft, design and technology teacher education. In the course, the student learns to design and make a multi-part interior design product wholeness with using both textile and wood material. The user's point of view is emphasized to design artefacts based on a need (Hyysalo 2009). The design assignment also emphasizes originality; design is not a copy of a finished product but a new and unique one. The data of the study consists of material craft objects and student's reports written along with our reflections as teachers.

Results of the study give a new contribution and knowledge of multi-materiality applications in higher education craft and design. The significance to Nordic educational research is to achieve knowledge benefiting the curricula work among the era of art, craft and design. From NERA networks, our presentation is connected to Arts, Culture and Education.

Keywords: craft, design, design education, multi-materiality

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Learning circles: New music teachers' challenges in music education

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Research topic

Learning circles has shown to contribute to the professional development for new teachers, by facilitating the discussions on new teachers challenges in a collaborative, inquiry-based setting, where both student teachers and new teachers participate. (Frederiksen & Halse, 2023).

This current study is interested in exploring the topics the new teachers bring to the Learning circles, when all the participants are music pre-service students and new music teachers.

Newly qualified as well as experienced music teachers experience burnouts and choose not to teach the subject (Holst et.al, 2020, Lyhne et.al, 2021). Therefore, it is interesting to learn what the new teachers themselves present as challenges in the Learning circles, especially regarding specific music pedagogical and educational themes. These challenges have not yet been adequately highlighted, and this study aims to address this context.

Can this mono disciplinary learning circle bring knowledge about what typical themes new teachers face? And give us an understanding of these themes? Additionally, can this project contribute to supporting professional development?

Research questions:

*What are the pedagogical and educational themes that new music teachers choose to bring to the learning circle? How can these themes contribute to an understanding of how to support the professional development of the newly qualified music teachers?*

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework behind Learning circles builds on a socio-constructivistic understanding of learning, thus the dialogue is collaborative and inquiry-based, and autonomy and reciprocity is seen as cornerstones of professional development (Tynjälä et al., 2019, Frederiksen & Halse, 2023).

Research design

The learning circle consists of 4 new music teachers, 4 finishing preservice music teachers, one facilitator, and one observer.

Data comprises of participants logbooks, observations on the questions asked in the learning circle, 2 final group interviews (new music teachers and music students separate), facilitators and the observers research notes.

Analysis strategy is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), initially an open coding, following a thematization, focusing on the understanding the pedagogical and educational issues of the new music teachers.

Expected findings

This analysis is in its' early stages. We expect to find themes that are specific for new music teachers and music education in schools, as well as general themes for all new teachers.

We experience a significant identity crisis in the field of music education in Denmark (Juellund 2024). This study contributes to an understanding hereto and is a possibility to discuss with other Nordic countries.

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Network: 2. Arts Culture and Education

Social support in learning a musical instrument: teachers' views

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The aim of this study is to examine the social support a student gets from a teacher when learning to play a musical instrument. Social support refers to the informational, emotional, and instrumental support perceived to be available for the student (House, 1981; Väisänen et al., 2017). In musical instrument learning the teacher support, for example, as advice, constructive feedback, encouraging, trust, praise, and listening to the student's opinions and views is shown to contribute ea. to students' autonomy and task-focused behavior (Käyhty et al., 2024, not yet published). Yet, less is known about the discourses associated with the given support and the social support that is perceived as important in teaching.

Basic education in the arts is goal-oriented after-school-hours teaching provided in the local art schools primarily for children and adolescents. 86% of Finnish municipalities provide basic education in the arts, and the teaching follows a national curriculum (TPO ry, 2024.) In Helsinki, there are 24 educational institutions that have an approved curriculum for basic education in the arts in music (the city of Helsinki, 2024).

The following research questions were addressed:

1. In what ways do instrument teachers feel they support their students, and what kind of social support is perceived as important?
2. What kind of discourses are associated with the social support given?
3. In what ways do the forms of social support appear in teaching?

Participants

For this study 30 instrument teachers who teach in music schools with an approved curriculum in Helsinki were interviewed. The research was carried out as a semi-structured interview (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). The teachers represented diverse instrument groups from woodwinds to string instruments and from percussion instruments to Finnish kantele.

Preliminary results

Trust, enabling experiences of success, the importance of encouragement, and meeting the individual needs of each student were seen as core qualities of high quality support. The teachers emphasized the importance of immediate and honest feedback. Moreover, positive feedback was perceived to help maintain students' motivation.

Conclusions

The research gives a good idea of what kind of support instrument teachers feel their students need in today's musical instrument education in Helsinki music schools. Social support has not been studied in this way in the context of instrument teaching before neither in Finland nor internationally (Käyhty et al., 2024, not yet published). The research topic is well connected to NERA Arts culture and Education network.

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# Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

### Network: 3. Early Childhood Research

#### MUSPRO – Music, sports, and prosocial behavior

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**Aim:** *MUSPRO – music, sports, and prosocial behavior* study is a two-year follow-up study that examines the impact of regular music and physical activities on children's social-emotional and cognitive development. In this poster, we introduce the research protocol in detail.

**Theoretical framework:** The benefits of physical education for maintaining well-being, especially from an early age, have been highlighted in previous studies (Pate et al., 2019). Similarly, the benefits of music education in children's development have received increasing attention in educational research (Tervaniemi et al., 2018). In addition, studies on supporting children's social-emotional skills in Finnish early childhood education show that there is a need for intervention research in the field (Määttä et al., 2017).

**Methodology:** This ongoing study is carried out in ten Finnish early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers, from which 115 four-year-old children were recruited for the study. The ECEC centers were block-randomized to either music, physical education (PE), or control groups. As part of the ECEC center's everyday life, the children in the music and PE groups participate in weekly activities planned and guided by the professionals of the research group. The children in the control groups participate in their ECEC center's normal weekly activities. The interventions last two academic years. Children's social and cognitive abilities, as well as music perception skills are measured three times during the study; at the beginning of the study, after one year of intervention, and after two years of intervention.

**Expected results:** Our hypothesis is that regular music activity promotes children's social-emotional skills and executive functioning. The baseline and first year results will be introduced in a separate abstract.

**Relevance to Nordic educational research:** Supporting children's social-emotional development in early childhood education is a current development and research topic not only in Finland but also internationally. Despite the benefits of music activities in children's development and learning, the need for music education in Finnish schools is still questioned. If our research shows that weekly music activity plays a role in supporting children's social-emotional development, its use should be increased in early childhood education and school settings and the training of ECEC staff in this area should also be given greater emphasis in teacher training and further education.

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# Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

## Network: 5. The Curriculum Research Network

Subject pedagogy in partly integrated worldview education curriculum process

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University of Helsinki, Finland

Research topic/aim

Profiling worldview education in modern societies is very debated issue in Europe. The research and development project called Odysseus organised by the University of Helsinki Normal Schools (Viikki Normal School and Helsinki Normal Lyseo) and the Department of Education of the Faculty of Education of the University of Helsinki responds to the pressure for change from both the practical curriculum work and research perspectives. The project will implement and study partly integrated worldview education from perspectives such as subject pedagogy and identification of core subjects matters. The purpose of this presentation is to present perspectives from subject pedagogy in the curriculum process.

Theoretical framework

As a result of increasing diversity, there has been a debate in Finland for years about the importance, core content and place of worldview education. The model of worldview education is often perceived as inappropriate to meet the needs of modern society and there are many practical arrangements in Finland that combine different subjects. According to a recent study commissioned by the Ministry of Education (see Salmenkivi & Åhs 2022), the model will face increasing pressure for change in the future as the population becomes more diverse, and future directions are also being considered by a development group set up by the Finnish National Board of Education (Finnish National Board of Education 2022).

The debate often focuses on the integration of two subjects with different pedagogical traditions. Although religion and culture, worldview and ethics can be seen as subjects aiming at the same goal; a general education in terms of beliefs and values, however, the perspectives for achieving this are different.

The methodological framework of the project is participatory action research (see e.g. Reason & Branbury 2008), based on the work of a multidisciplinary team. In line with the action research approach, the working group developed a curriculum for the training schools that partially integrates the different subjects. (ks. esim Reason & Branbury).

### 4. Expected results/findings

During the process, it was found that in the case of Evangelical Lutheran religion and culture, worldview and ethics, it was easier to combine the contents, while more challenges arose in terms of combining the different subjects of religion. Within the different subjects of religion, it was found that the curriculum is interpreted in very differently within the subjects. However, integrated contents and also contents which were not possible to integrate were found and those are presented in the posted. In addition, during the curriculum process there was much discussion about what a pupil's own faith actually is and what faith education in school should look like.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

In Nordic countries worldview education is organized in different ways. In all other countries there is a common subject expect in Finland. However, discussion about the ways to organize worldview education is ongoing, and our curriculum is one, unique way to teach religious and worldview education.

# Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

## Network: 6. Educational Leadership Network

### Principals' leading practices in Swedish municipal adult education—a practice-based approach

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Despite extensive research on adult education and educational leadership in the Nordic countries and worldwide, there is limited research on educational leadership within the context of Swedish municipal adult education (MAE). MAE is an essential component of the Swedish education system, serving 363,000 students in 2023. In addition to its objectives related to democracy and personal development, policy assigns a distinct role to MAE in labour market integration and skill provision, regionally and nationally. Nevertheless, government reports and prior research consistently indicate that the MAE system has quality issues. These issues revolve around governance, organisation, and teaching—three interrelated domains that shape the context and influence the everyday practices of MAE principals leading the work in their local schools. While MAE principals have responsibilities and dilemmas in common with their counterparts in other school forms, the labour market objective is a distinct contextual precondition of MAE that uniquely influences the principals' everyday practices aimed at fulfilling the MAE objectives. These practices involve leading students' learning and teachers' professional development, as well as educational administration and evaluation.

This presentation aims to share initial findings from an ongoing multi-sited case study on the practices of MAE principals. Additionally, it seeks to engage with colleagues for feedback and discussions on research design and methodology.

The study is part of a research project aiming to answer the central research question: *What characterises, enables, and constrains the principals' leading practices within MAE?* The methods for data generation include document analysis, participant observation, shadowing, and interviews. The empirical data will be analysed using the framework of the theory of practice architectures (TPA). Adopting a practice-based approach could provide valuable insights into the daily activities and practices of MAE principals, complementing existing studies such as policy analyses and interview studies.

The results of this exploration will contribute to a deeper understanding of the preconditions that affect what MAE principals do, as well as why and how they do it. This understanding, in turn, will inform and aid practitioners in reflecting on and developing their practices related to school development, quality, and equity.

# Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

## Network: 7. Value Issues and Social Relations in Education

### Elementary School's Cross-Age Buddy Programs

Markus Leithe-Lajord

Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

The research topic for my poster is Cross-age buddy programs in the elementary school. Some sort of cross-age buddy programs are highly common in the Norwegian school system, but it is a highly understudied topic. As a part of my doctoral thesis I am exploring What characterizes the elementary school's buddy programs practices, and what factors are of significance in how they unfold.

The theory of practice architectures is my theoretical framework. The theory of practice architectures emphasizes the *sayings, doings* and *relations* in a *practice*, for an example a *cross-age buddy program practice*, and which arrangements it is that are enabling and constraining them (Kemmis et al., 2014, s. 33-34).. With the theory of practice architectures as my theoretical framework I can use it as a lense, to "zoom" in and out when I am studying the characteristics of the cross-age buddy programs.

The project is done as a single case study, where I am currently doing participating observations and interviews with both the children and the teacher. Conducting a single case study will allow me to spend as much time as possible with the research participants where the practice takes place, a method and rationale that aligns with the theory of practice architectures's philosophical assumptions and has often been used by other researchers that are using the Theory of practice architectures (Grootenboer & Edwards-Groves, 2023, s. 54).

By emphasizing the particular aspect of a single case – not to differentiate it from other but to observe its unique qualities – we can attempt to understand the case in itself, and then apply this knowledge to interpret similar cases (Stake, 1995, pp. 7-8).

The study's expected results will be addressed through the research questions:

1. What characterizes the interaction between the elder (mentors) and younger children in the cross-age buddy programs
2. How do the mentors perceive their role and execution of their role in the cross-age buddy program, and how is their experience reflected in the school's cross-age buddy program?
3. How can the school's work with its cross-age buddy program enable and constrain their practices?

As the numbers of students, in both the Norwegian and other Nordic countries, whom struggle to succeed in what they experience as a more and more demanding school environment, we ought to share knowledge of different ways we are organizing different matters in our educational system.

This study is relevant to Nordic educational research as different cross-age practices are carried out, to some extent and in different ways, in the Nordic school context, and by generating and sharing more knowledge regarding this topic we can hopefully draw on each other's insight and expertise to expand our competence.

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# Network: 8. Gender and Education

## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Preschools as a degendered place? - Swedish Preschools Educators Understanding of the Gender Equality Task?

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#### Research topic/aim

The aim is to problematize and create an understanding of preschool educators' perception of the gender equality task in three preschools in one municipal in Sweden. The equality mission in Swedish preschools emphasises that all children shall have the same opportunities for development, learning and play without being limited by gender.

Children's constructions of gender are described in research as both reproducing traditional gender patterns and as transgressive (see, for example, Hellman 2010, Ärleman Hagser & Pramling Samuelsson 2009). Other aspects related to the equality mission concern age and heteronormativity (Sotevik, Hammaren, and Hellman 2019). Hellman (2010) describes it as a heteronormative matrix influencing preschool activities. Warin and Adriany (2017) emphasize the need for pedagogues to be gender sensitive and able to challenge traditional performances of gender.

#### Theoretical framework

Intersectional theory (Crenshaw, 1991) is used to understand how different narratives in educators' stories and statements are related to and mutually constituted in relation to various power structures (Phoenix, 2024).

#### Methodological design

A narrative approach (Phoenix, 2024) was used to analyse educators' narratives about possibilities when considering the preschool's gender equality work. The data consist of letters and focus groups interviews.

#### Expected results/findings

The preliminary results show a strong narrative about preschool as a gender-neutral place that is isolated from the norms and power structures of the adult world. It is described as a protected environment where children can be children without being influenced by adult norms and gender roles. This includes the use of gender-neutral language and materials and an attempt to degender through language, actions, and artifacts. External threats to this degendering comes from the surrounding society and care-takers. This gender-neutral approach can lead to the invisibility of power structures and the omission of important discussions about power and gender equality.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

For Nordic educational research, it is essential to clarify the understanding of how gender equality is perceived within preschool settings. This involves examining how systematic development related to this task can lead to meaningful changes and a deeper understanding of gender and equality in preschool education.

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## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Teachers as (de)constructors of gender segregation of their profession

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Teaching is a gender segregated profession in Nordic countries, particularly at the lower levels of education, which means that the profession is dominated by female teachers. This study critically contributes to discussions on gender segregation and feminization of teaching, which have been widely discussed topics in the field of education for decades (de Salis et. al., 2018; Persson, 2021; Skelton, 2012). In these discussions female majority of teachers has been viewed disadvantaging particularly boys and single-parent families.

The data set of the study comprises interviews conducted with class teachers (n=55) and subject teachers (n=50) working in primary and/or secondary school. The interview data of the study has been produced as part of the project "School well-being, learning support and segregation of teachers" funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in years 2022-2024. The data set was analysed with Faircloughian discursive reading.

The study examines how do teachers construct discourses about teacher's gender and illustrates how these discourses either challenge or reinforce gender segregation within the teaching profession. The preliminary findings illustrate that the discourses constructed by Finnish teachers maintain gender segregation of teaching profession, when teachers represent gender as two oppositional essences, and devalue femininity, but also when they represent gender as meaningless in schooling practices. However, teachers additionally constructed a discourse, which recognized gendered practices of the profession and deconstructed the gendered power relations in the mundane practices. In our presentation we contemplate how binary gendered norms could be made visible and deconstructed for instance by approaching caring as professional and something can be studied, not as innate and related to womanhood.

## Network: 8. Gender and Education

### Cracking the Gender Script: Teenage Girls' Resistance and Feminist Inquiry

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University of Akureyri, Iceland

The limits of boys' and girls' gender performativity has been identified as gender script, which Sara Ahmed (2010) refers to as "happiness script" (p. 59). These provide instructions for what subjects must do to be happy or which objects, termed by Ahmed as "happy objects" will bring happiness. Thus, subjects' happiness depends on how well they follow the gender script and stay within the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Feminist subjects who refrain from aligning with the gender script and criticize its norms may risk their social position. They are referred to as feminist killjoys and wilful subjects. Being feminist and, therefore, wilful reflects the uncertain ground for collective politics translating subject's emotions, dismay, or anger towards social injustices. The position of the wilful subject is understood as a place of political tension as well as a place for political claims (Ahmed, 2010, 2014, 2017). Research on girls' resistance to pressure to conform to gender norms, sexism, and traditional feminine ideologies has suggested that such resistance is often an individual endeavour, given the difficulty of resisting the normative gender script in social groups (Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; McRobbie, 2008). Even so, examining the different approaches that students employ to challenge normative constructions of gender in school settings and society remains important

This poster presents two interconnected studies. Firstly, an interview study on how four Icelandic teenage girls claim discursive space in their compulsory school where the dominant discourse sustains traditional gender performances and (cis)heteronormativity. Also, how the dominant discourse positions the girls and how they resist such positioning. The girls tried to find cracks in the (cis)heteronormative discourse. As they claimed discursive space for alternative gender performances they were positioned as being difficult, wilful subjects—as feminist killjoys—for in addressing those cracks they dared to disturb the dominant discourse on legitimate femininity.

Secondly the poster presents how these findings resulted in a cooperation between the researcher and three young Icelandic feminists. The researcher and the girls conducted a collective inquiry, a feminist analysis of Barbie the movie also addressing cracks in the movies gender script, disturbing the idea of a grand feminist endeavour, questioning who get to define what constitutes legitimate femininity.

The findings of these studies contribute to initiating and developing important dialogues between researchers and youth about the persistent gender system, giving rise to youth voices, participation and their perceptions about how to crack injustice and promote a just system for all. The status of gender equality in the Nordic is questioned.

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# Network: 9. General Didactics

In the Nordic countries research have shown the need of new didactic models illustrating the complex teaching and learning situation in today's digitized school (Erstad et al., 2021; Krumsvik & Almås, 2009; Mård & Hill., 2023). The didactic theory in the study is based on the extended didactic triangle, which includes the school, the surrounding society and world, as well as the teacher who designs teaching using digital learning resources (DLR). Teachers' didactic intentions form a cornerstone of this approach (Hudson & Meyer, 2011; Öhman, 2014). Didactic choices are not made in isolation, but within a historical, cultural and societal context. This context is crucial for analytically understanding both the motives behind these choices and their impact on teaching with DLR. The relationship between teachers' instruction, their didactic choices, and the learning that occurs cannot be separated from the surrounding environment, including the historical, political, and institutional conditions of a digitized and globalized society.

Against this background, the purpose of this study is to introduce a new didactic model that reflects the current period of transformation, highlighting the key elements most relevant for teachers in today's digital classrooms. The developed didactic model is based on findings from a life-history study involving six upper secondary school teachers (Gleisner Villasmil, 2019) and two questionnaire studies with 243 upper secondary school teachers in Sweden (Gleisner Villasmil et al., 2023; Gleisner Villasmil, 2024).

The findings show that teachers' active didactic choices are an important part of the didactic theory, and Figure 1 presents the new didactic model incorporating DLR in today's digital school. The model is based on the extended didactic triangle, surrounded by a cloud symbolizing the digitized world. The inner circle in the didactic triangle illustrates the driving force or hub of teachers' didactic choices with DLR. These include teachers' didactic convictions, a strong subject interest, a willingness to help students, and a high or medium competence in using DLR in teaching. Outside the inner circle, there are didactic positions that emerge regarding the teachers' didactic use of DLR, and external influencing factors. This model provides an in-depth perspective from a teacher's viewpoint, complementing the extended didactic model (Hudson & Meyer, 2011) and enhancing the understanding of the didactic choices teachers must navigate in a digitized world, society and school.

*Figure 1. The new didactic model incorporating DLR in today's digital school*

The model also illustrates how teachers use DLR to structure their teaching and to provide teaching materials. They incorporate DLR creatively to motivate students' learning, and it serves as an important complementary resource for providing feedback and facilitating interaction with students (Gleisner Villasmil, 2024).

# Network: 10. Higher Education



## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Developing An Approach to Sustainability in Higher Education: Exploring the Inner Development Goals

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It is becoming quite clear in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that Planet Earth is facing a series of human-induced existential threats; war, climate change, inequality, intolerance are all now played out from the local to the global. The UN has taken a large step forward in securing the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), intended to challenge and combat the underlying causes of much of the existential threat humans have fostered. However, whilst the SDGs offer a 'roadmap' at a macro-scale they are less applicable to the individual or even organisational level. Understanding this paradox, that it is individuals who need to meet the challenges posed by acute threats, the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) have started to emerge as a way of exploring and developing skills which individuals will need if they are to engage successfully in the processes needed to meet the challenges the planet now face due to our mismanagement.

The IDGs (IDGs. 2021) are characterised through five dimensions, split into 23 skills, which together offer a framework for personal reflexivity and development to encourage positive engagement with the problems we face. The dimensions are:

Being – relationship to self

Thinking – cognitive skills

Relating – caring for others and the world

Collaborating – social skills

Acting – enabling change

Based on recent consideration of how seminar rooms can act as a positive meeting point for the SDGs and IDGs and students in higher education (Wood, 2024), I set out reflections on recent work at the Nottingham Institute of Education, Nottingham Trent University. We have begun to develop approaches to help students explore the IDGs in a meaningful context, using wicked problems (Bentley & Toth, 2020)) in workshop contexts to find possible solutions to difficult questions, whilst reflecting on the personal skills which we need to develop to successfully engage with the complexity and ambiguity presented by questions of sustainability and positive change.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### Igniting Engagement? The Impact of a Mandatory Sustainable Development Course for University Teachers

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#### Research Topic

The aim of the study is to examine how a mandatory sustainable development course for teachers can influence personal attitudes and interest in sustainability issues, as well as their work with sustainable development in teaching. Specifically, the study investigates whether, and if so, how, participants perceive the course to have affected:

their attitudes toward and interest in sustainability issues,

their work with sustainable development in teaching.

#### Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in Transformative Learning Theory, which posits that true learning occurs when individuals are challenged to question their existing beliefs and interpret the world in new ways. This theory was chosen for its relevance to adult learning and its emphasis on how adults can transform their previous perspectives, values, and assumptions through critical reflection and new experiences.

#### Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with 16 participants and a survey distributed to all 246 participants approximately one and a half working months after course completion. The survey comprised single-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended questions, organized into clusters exploring potential changes in (i) interest, (ii) engagement/action, (iii) teaching and assessment, and (iv) collaboration with colleagues. Additional data were collected on respondents' institutional affiliation, age, gender identity, and teaching duties. The semi-structured interviews, conducted with teachers of varying levels of teaching experience and course responsibilities, focused on aspects related to teaching and professional roles.

Qualitative data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, while quantitative data from the survey were analysed with odds ratio, Spearman rank correlation, the Mann-Whitney U-test, and the Kruskal-Wallis test.

#### Findings

The findings, based on 86 survey responses and 16 interviews, indicate that the mandatory course had a positive impact on both personal and professional levels. The balance measures from the survey suggest the course had the most substantial effect on inspiration for new teaching/assessment elements, followed by increased personal interest and engagement in sustainable development, with the least impact on collaboration with colleagues. Interviews revealed that the course has provided teachers with an increased sense of readiness for action. However, some challenges remain, with the most prominent being the lack of networking and cross-disciplinary collaboration, both internally and externally, and the integration of sustainability perspectives into course planning and teaching.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

These findings suggest that a mandatory course can provide a foundation for fostering positive impacts on both personal and educational levels by enriching teaching content. While potential drawbacks of a "mandatory" format may exist, these may be outweighed by the benefits of many colleagues taking the course simultaneously, thereby facilitating discussions within teaching teams. However, challenges remain in achieving sustainable development in teaching practices. Future efforts should focus on fostering collective and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Through

transformative learning, teachers not only gain a deeper understanding of sustainability issues but are also inspired to make changes in their teaching and assessment practices. This is reflected in an increased sense of readiness to act and motivation to incorporate sustainability into their teaching.

## Network: 10. Higher Education

Fiction, book talk and reading logs – a way to discuss gender equality

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There is a risk of cultural reproduction of stereotypical gender patterns if subjects such as gender equality are not a part of planned school activities (Ocio, 2023). Therefore, student teachers need to become skilled within the area (Acar-Erdol et al, 2022). One way to support student's learning is through including fiction in their training (eg. Bean & Harper, 2006; Mottart et al, 2009). Supportive and focused structures are needed when using fiction as part of teacher training (Höijer et al, 2024; Sumara et al, 2006), for example through reading logs and book talks (Chambers, 2014; Edvardsson, 2019). The aim of this study was to explore the different aspects of gender equality that were noted in reading logs.

Based on social constructionism (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009), a central understanding was that students socially construct how they perceive gender equality and that they have agency and capacity to negotiate these meanings.

This study was based on SoTL (Poole, 2018) and started with general observations which resulted in a structured project investigating the use of fiction in teaching gender equality. The data consists of 12 group reading logs from workshops with 97 student teachers. A thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2022) investigated how gender equality was constructed in relation to family-, working- and community-life.

Stereotypical patterns and societal structures of gender roles were noted in the reading logs. For example, traditional roles for women and men in a relationship and in professions, the concept of family, and societal norms and expectations.

The findings show that fiction, book talk and reading logs provide a way to discuss gender equality in teacher training.

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## Network: 10. Higher Education

### The Relationship Between Thinking Style, Career Anxiety And Career Decision-making Difficulties In High School Students

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#### Abstract

**Research Topic/Aim:** This study investigates the interplay between thinking styles, career anxiety, and career decision-making difficulties among high school students in the context of China's new college entrance examination system. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of how students' cognitive approaches influence their career planning and to offer psychological and educational support tailored to their needs.

**Theoretical Framework:** The theoretical underpinning of this research is rooted in Sternberg's concept of "mode of thinking," which has been widely used in the field of education. The study posits that thinking styles, shaped by various factors including culture, gender, and education, significantly impact academic performance and are likely to influence career planning. It also considers the role of career anxiety as an important factor affecting students' career planning and the decision-making process.

**Methodology/Research Design:** The methodology employs a questionnaire survey administered to first-grade students of a key high school in Beijing. The General Thinking Style Questionnaire, Career Anxiety Questionnaire, and Career Decision Difficulty Questionnaire were utilized, covering various dimensions of thinking styles, career anxiety, and decision-making difficulties. Data were collected from 197 valid respondents and analyzed using SPSS26.0, employing independent sample t-tests, analysis of variance, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

**Expected Results/Findings:** The study anticipates that high school students will exhibit medium levels of career anxiety and career decision-making difficulties. It is hypothesized that there will be no significant correlation between thinking styles and career anxiety or the total score of career decision difficulty. However, specific thinking styles, such as task-oriented thinking, are expected to be related to career choice anxiety and lack of preparation in career decision difficulty. The study also explores the mediating role of lack of preparation in the relationship between task-oriented thinking style and career choice anxiety.

**Relevance to Nordic Educational Research:** The findings of this study are relevant to Nordic educational research as they provide insights into the psychological and cognitive factors influencing career planning among adolescents. The Nordic region, with its emphasis on student-centered education and vocational guidance, can benefit from understanding the role of thinking styles in career decision-making. This research could inform the development of educational interventions that foster reflective thinking and reduce career anxiety, thereby enhancing students' career planning capabilities.

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# Network: 12. Inclusive Education

## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

### Moving Towards Inclusion in Physical Education: Supported by Co-Teaching and Special Education Knowledge

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#### Research Topic/Aim

In Denmark there has been an initiative since 2012 to increase the inclusion of children with special needs in public schools. Despite these intentions, achieving inclusion within physical education remains a considerable challenge. Children with special needs are generally less physically active at school and during leisure time than their peers. Part of the reason lies in the complexities of the PE setup, which is often overwhelming, noisy, loosely structured, and filled with unfamiliar objects (Bentholm, 2017). Consequently, many children with special needs are either exempted from physical education or participate minimally.

Prior research shows that collaboration among teachers can increase participation for children with special needs.

Based on these conditions our research project “Engaging Physical Education” has investigated the following question:

*Can a new organizational collaboration model between physical education teachers contribute to the inclusion of more children with special needs in physical education?*

#### Theoretical Framework

We understand inclusion theoretically as comprising presence, acceptance, active participation, and achievement (Farrell, 2004). Thus, we view inclusion as an integration of both social and academic participation. We utilize co-teaching (CT) to conceptualize and develop collaboration, where CT is a structured form of teamwork involving two teachers in the planning, implementation, and evaluation PE, with teaching centered around six different structures (Murawski, 2018).

#### Methodology/Research Design

This project employed design-based research -a method widely used in educational research to develop new instructional practices. This approach is practice-intervening and is characterized by being collaborative, theory-driven, pragmatic, and application-oriented (Amiel & Reeves, 2008). Over one school year, we collaborated with six schools and twelve teaching teams, organizing five workshops interspersed with observation and feedback sessions. The workshops focused on co-teaching and collaboration, special education pedagogy, and adaptations in physical education.

#### Findings

The project demonstrates that structured collaboration through co-teaching, combined with enhanced knowledge of special education and instructional adaptations, holds the potential to promote inclusion in physical education. However, this requires that teachers have time and capacity to plan, conduct, and evaluate instruction collaboratively. The project also reveals that teachers face differing structural conditions and professional backgrounds, which significantly impact these efforts.

#### Relevance to Nordic Educational Research

It is crucial, through a solid scientific, educational and didactic foundation, for teachers to build inclusive communities in the classroom that support the educational and developmental growth of all children. This approach may address the challenges of inclusive education, which are evident across the Nordic countries.

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## Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Support in vocational teaching. An ethnographic study in upper secondary vocational school in Sweden.

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The purpose of the thesis is to investigate how extra adaptations and special support are communicated, organized and implemented in vocational teaching in Swedish upper secondary school. Education in Sweden which is covered by the Education Act, shall promote the learning and development of all students. Students who are at risk of not achieving the educational goals shall be given support to succeed in their education (SFS 210:800). Vocational education takes place both in school and in workplace, support in vocational subjects needs to be understood from both arenas.

Previous studies show that support in the school environment is generally, rather than individually targeted to the student's needs, and the quality of support tends to vary greatly (Bolic Baric et al., 2016; Johansson, 2017). Other studies indicate that the school's goals are subordinated to the workplace's goals when students are at the workplace (Arneback & Nylund, 2017). Not all students receive the support in vocational teaching to which they are entitled (Paul, 2022).

The theoretical framework of the thesis is in process, but one possibility is Engeström's cultural activity theory, which can make visible how support is conditioned by contradictions that arise within and between interacting activity systems (Engeström, 2001). Another option is Grounded Theory.

Participant observation is conducted at two upper secondary schools, in vocational classrooms and to five workplaces where students with identified support needs have parts of their vocational training. The learning environment as well as communication and actions related to extra adjustments and special support will be studied. Individual interviews and focus group interviews will be conducted with vocational teachers, workplace supervisors and special needs teachers. Individual interviews will be conducted with the above, as well as with students and principals.

The knowledge contribution of the study is about how extra adaptations and special support are communicated, organized and implemented in vocational teaching in schools and workplaces. Although the thesis is conducted in a Swedish context, the contribution to knowledge is highly relevant to other countries' striving for a school for all (Ainscow et al., 2019).

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Network: 12. Inclusive Education

Chattin' with ChatGPT: Exploring Equitable Engineering Education

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### 1. Research topic/aim

ChatGPT has caused quite an educational storm since it was announced and made publicly available. Many discussions have become polarized debating whether it should be banned, or embraced, and celebrated. Such divisions are evident in our engineering educational experiences in which different professors take very different, often contrasting stances.

In this proposal we are more pragmatic. As identified neurodivergent undergraduate engineering students we explore and discuss *our* use of generative AI software (ChatGPT) in engineering education. We look to generative AI software with hopes for more equitable and inclusive education. As students who don't fit "traditional" learning models we seek differentiated support and explore how ChatGPT might offer this.

### 2. Theoretical framework

Our analysis is grounded in our experiences as students. It is also theoretically situated and guided by studies in Inclusive Engineering Education, including Mills, Ayre & Gill's (2011) "*Guidelines for the design of inclusive education programs*" and Chysochoou's (2021) "*Redesigning engineering education for neurodiversity*". The first author recently attended an engineering education conference in which ChatGPT was discussed as enhancing teaching and learning (without specific reference to Inclusivity).

We also draw on more recent 'positional' articles on ChatGPT including Frackiewicz (2023) "*The role of ChatGPT in supporting neurodiversity and inclusive communications*".

### 3. Methodology/research design

Our self-study explorations are guided by Duo-Ethnographic research methods (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2008, Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012). This approach involves two researchers talking about their experiences regarding a particular topic, in our case use of ChatGPT in engineering education. We interrogate each other and start to explore commonalities and differences in our expectations and experiences. In accordance with duo-ethnographic methods we convey these personalized perspectives separately, avoiding simple descriptions and labels (such as Inclusion and neurodivergence). Moreover, we include ChatGPT in these discussions, clearly indicating where (and what) it contributes to our methods.

### 4. Expected results/findings

Guided by Duo-ethnographic methods, this paper and poster presentation takes form of a conversation; an edited dialogue in which the authors - engineering students- discuss their educational experiences and experiments with ChatGPT. During these spoken and written exchanges we reflect on ways in which we become further aware of ourselves and each other and ChatGPT mediated engineering education. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations for Inclusive generative software assisted Engineering Education and recommendations for other neurodivergent engineering students.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

ChatGPT has received global attention in education, and specific attention in Nordic nations (see, for example, Myklebust (2023) "*universities adjust to ChatGPT but the 'real AI' lies ahead*").

More inclusive Engineering Education is of international concern.

# Network: 13. ICT & Education

## Network: 13. ICT & Education

Exploring Education Technology like *Interactive Boards* to make learning inclusive, collaborative and have a positive effect for pupil's from diverse backgrounds

Sona Palan

Malmo student/ Independent, Sweden

Aim:

The aim of this research study is to Explore Educational Technology like Interactive Boards - a study on Usage and Support in Nordic countries.

This paper aims to explore the use of Education Technology (Ed Tech) like Interactive Boards in educational institutions in Nordic countries. There is a rise in number of institutions using Interactive boards for teaching, learning and administration. It is seen how this form of (Ed Tech) support inclusivity, and benefit students and teachers from diverse backgrounds.

Theoretical framework:

Knowledge is constructed collaboratively in a constructive pedagogical approach between learners and instructors. Studies on usage on Interactive white boards by Lopez (2010) and Lerman and Zevenbergen (2007) discuss how teachers have integrated Interactive Boards into their practices. The Interactive Board provides good opportunity to groups of people belonging to diverse cultures, traditions and ethnicities Bourbour et al., (2015). It is beneficial for the instructor, as designing own activities, preparing resources in advance is possible, Egeberg et al., (2011) without a need to carry laptop to classroom.

Learning using an Interactive Board enables to learn better by employing more than one sense, namely auditory, online learning, visual, tactile, kinesthetics, thereby known as multisensory learning, Bourbour et al., (2015). Interactive Boards have touch points specifications where more than one person can work on it at the same time, with good quality audio and video resources. These enables to integrate learner's interests, encourage problem solving and critical thinking abilities. Certain brands of Interactive Boards are health and wellness centred, with care features like eye safety and air quality sensors to monitor toxic pollutants within classroom, make learning environment healthy.

Methodology:

This will be descriptive research using survey design method to investigate how Interactive boards can help support activities, teaching and make learning more inclusive in Nordic countries.

Expected results:

It will be seen that using Interactive Boards can be helpful in making learning inclusive, can help people from diverse backgrounds and be suited for inclusive activities. It can provide the instructor with more time to communicate, prepare lessons and material beforehand and focus on things which are important and interact with the learners.

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# Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

## Network: 14. Migration, Multilingualism, and Education

### Linguistic Landscape as a Schoolscape and Pedagogical Tool in Estonian Language Immersion Schools: A Case Study

Damir Nuriev

University of Tartu, Estonia

1:

This research explores the role of the linguistic landscape (LL) in an Estonian language immersion school, focusing on its potential as a pedagogical tool. Specifically, the study investigates how the visual language environment (schoolscape) supports second language (L2) acquisition of Estonian and fosters cultural awareness among students in early total immersion settings. Additionally, it examines the significance of the schoolscape for primary school teachers and students in the context of language immersion, particularly how the dominant presence of Estonian in the school contributes to language learning and cultural understanding. The study also explores whether students actively engage with the schoolscape and how it aids their learning experience.

2:

The study is grounded in the concepts of linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997) and schoolscape (Szabó, 2015), focusing on their sociolinguistic and pedagogical dimensions in educational settings. It draws on language immersion education theory (Baker, 2001) and Krashen's (1994) second language acquisition theory, emphasizing the importance of meaningful, continuous language input in an immersive context. Cultural aspects of language learning are also considered, following theories of cultural awareness in language education (Kramsch, 1993).

3:

This case study was conducted at Sinimäe Basic School, located in northeastern Estonia, where Russian is the dominant community language. The research employs ethnographic methods, including the photographic analysis of 260 visual signs, interviews with teachers (N=4), a focus group with students (N=1), and a lesson observation (N=1). The linguistic landscape analysis distinguishes between top-down (official) and bottom-up (unofficial) signs to explore the functions of different languages within the school.

4:

The research reveals that the dominant presence of Estonian in the schoolscape—visible in official signs, educational posters, and classroom materials—serves as an important pedagogical tool for primary school teachers. Teachers leverage the schoolscape to reinforce L2 acquisition, using it to immerse students in Estonian beyond formal lessons. The visual presence of the target language helps to solidify language structures, vocabulary, and cultural context in a natural, non-intrusive manner. This aids in cultural awareness as well, as students are constantly exposed to aspects of Estonian culture through linguistic and visual signs.

The students, particularly in primary school, pay attention to the schoolscape, though their engagement is often subconscious. Teachers report that students gradually internalize the language used on wall displays and other visual materials, helping to create a rich, immersive environment for language learning. However, the use of Russian in bottom-up signage reflects the students' linguistic reality, creating a balance between their home language and the target language. The schoolscape thus becomes a bridge between students' everyday experiences and the new linguistic and cultural environment they are being immersed in.

5:

This study contributes to the understanding of how linguistic landscapes function in multilingual, multicultural educational settings within the Nordic-Baltic context, particularly in language immersion programs. By exploring the role of the schoolscape in language acquisition and cultural integration, the research aligns with NERA Network 14's focus, offering insights into the balance between promoting a national language and accommodating students' linguistic diversity.

# Network: 15. Literacy Research Network



## Network: 15. Literacy Research Network

A survey-based study of lower secondary school teachers' perceptions reveals widespread literacy challenges in Swedish biology classrooms

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Sweden. <sup>2</sup>Department of Pedagogical, Curricular and Professional Studies, Sweden

Recent national and international assessments of student performance have highlighted the need for improved supportive literacy teaching. Initiatives undertaken to counter diminishing levels of student performance have largely fallen short of their goals, particularly in science, although the lack of data on literacy in the individual sciences complicate interpretations of these results. Literacy researchers advocate extended subject-specific instruction in order to support language development in all subjects in school. Reading and writing are key competencies in life as well as fundamental tools for learning. The present study seeks to assess the state of literacy in biology in Swedish lower secondary school (13–15-year-olds) through a digital survey targeted at teachers. One hundred and twenty-one biology teachers from all provinces in Sweden answered the survey. Background information correlated well with the Swedish National Agency for Education statistics on students' linguistics backgrounds in lower secondary school. The survey data were analysed with descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test, and Spearman's rank order correlation in SPSS. The results show that Swedish lower secondary school teachers perceive their students to struggle with literacy in biology and that the teachers do what they can under time-depleted conditions to assist their students. There were no significant differences between teachers who have, and have not, participated in governmental language-oriented initiatives. Teacher experience measured as years of service similarly did not indicate striking differences in the choice of teaching methods or perceived student performance. However, more experienced teachers are more likely to encourage students to collaborate on writing tasks. The study has its limitations, but one strength with the sampling method is the reasonably short time for collected data that allows a snapshot of teachers' experiences and beliefs about literacy in biology. Our data argue for subject-specific literacy instruction of students and teachers alike and call for a greater awareness of subject-specific literacy at all organisational levels in education.

Keywords: literacy in biology, literacy instruction, language-oriented initiatives, lower secondary school, teachers' perception

# Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

Network: 16. The Nordic Society for Philosophy of Education

On the interrelation of nature and education: a conceptual analysis.

Louis Waterman-Evans

UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway. Karlsruhe University of Education, Germany

This poster presents an overview of my PhD thesis on the topic of the interrelation of education and nature. The rationale for the focus on education and nature can be understood first and foremost as a personal journey based on my background as a teacher and hiking guide and the associated curiosity to better understand the interrelation of these concepts. The reason for analysing the interrelation of nature and education can also be situated in the present times of climate and ecological crisis, not to mention countless other legitimate agendas, that impose on education and call for a clear need to formulate robust educational responses. That is because education is commonly tasked with achieving these agendas: society faces a challenge such as sustainability, and more or better education should be enacted to realise the goal. What is problematic in such discourses is that the integrity of education gets forgotten, and education is reduced to functionalist and technical understandings drenched in economic and progressivist lingo. This critique is well rehearsed (e.g., Korsgaard, 2024) but, as Säfström and Biesta (2023) highlight, there is a need to move on and propose solutions. My thesis addresses this gap by taking a historical-theoretical journey to understand how nature and education are related in the forming of Pädagogik as an autonomous discipline.

The poster aims to show clearly the starting point of the discussion, steps along the way to build the argument and provisional finish, which opens new horizons and further questions for discussion. These steps can broadly be categorised as follows:

Creating space for the research question

Method and Methodology

Outlining an initial pedagogical perspective

Rousseau's Emile as the start of modern education

From Enlightenment to Romanticism

Schleiermacher's Pedagogy

Challenges and reinterpretation for the present day

Conclusion

The poster is relevant for Nordic educational research because of the need to formulate robust educational arguments within a Nordic context, as well as the importance of 'nature' in Nordic educational discourse, e.g., with reference to *friluftsliv*. The poster relates to the conference theme of *A Pedagogy of Hope* because the ultimate construction of pedagogy that I propose offers a promising trajectory for education that resists instrumentalisation and brings to the fore a strong argument following the logic of education.

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# Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

## Network: 17. Leisure-time Pedagogy

### Potentials of an Adventure Playground – Learning Affordances from Children’s Perspective

Maria Hammarsten

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#### Research topic

Adventure playgrounds in Scandinavia historically took their point of departure in teachers’ observation that children tend to prefer unredacted spaces that offer opportunities for initiative and creativity. During the 1950s and 1970s, they were popular in both Denmark (*skrammellegepladser*) and Sweden (*bygglekplatser*), but the number and design of such playgrounds have today been reduced due for various reasons, including austerity policies in pedagogical practice and safety considerations. Another factor may be the rebound of assumptions that learning can only happen when the children are in the classroom, and more general lack of understanding of the opportunities offered by outdoor education. The aim of the study at a Swedish adventure playground in an urban environment, is to explore children’s perspectives on the affordances that the adventure playground offers, with the following research questions:

How do the children describe the adventure playground and the ways they use it?

What discoveries do the children highlight in relation to the affordances that exist and based on the teaching that is given?

#### Theoretical framework

The data will be analysed through thematic content analysis, based on the theoretical framework of ecological psychology, with a focus on the concept of affordances.

#### Methodology

Data was collected through walk-and-talk conversations with 29 children, (the majority age 9) as well as through fieldnotes, and informal interviews with each child. The children were additionally given the opportunity to take photos of things that were important for them. The walk-and-talk conversations started with the question: *Tell me about this place, the adventure playground?* The child decided both the pace of the walk, as well as what they wanted to talk about, photograph, and show. After that, an informal interview with a questionnaire was conducted with each child.

#### Expected results

This is an ongoing study, and the results have not yet been analysed. Preliminary results suggest that the children described, photographed and showed most features of this relatively small playground. They valued both freely building structures using a wide variety of scrap materials, and the sections of the playground devoted to planting. Imagination, play, observing and learning from peers played an important role.

#### Relevance to Nordic educational research

There are relatively few studies researching the learning affordances for children of these playgrounds. This study therefore aims to provide knowledge about children’s learning experiences, that could be useful for the design of outdoor spaces for teaching and learning, as well as for training educators on how to integrate these spaces in their teaching practice.

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# **Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education**

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

### Well-Being of Parents of Children with Intellectual Developmental Disorders in Japan: A Comparative Study with Nordic Countries

Mahito Katsuura

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This study explored how well-being is formed among parents of children with intellectual developmental disorders (IDD) in Japan and compared it with that in Nordic countries. In a previous study, the well-being of parents of children with IDD was shown to be lower than that of parents of typically developing children (Minnes et al., 2015). Although the well-being of parents raising children with IDD involves both positive and negative aspects, it has been pointed out that their well-being can influence the children's well-being (Nelson, Kushlev & Lyubomirsky, 2014) and has a significant influence on child-rearing. This study defines well-being for parents of children with IDD not as an endpoint that has been achieved and completed but as a process of trying to moderate positive and negative emotions in rearing (Griffin, 2021). Based on this perspective, we discussed the following questions: "How do parents of children with IDD make sense of their child's appearance?" and "How do they adjust the positive and negative emotions that arise within their children?" Joint interviews were conducted for each set of parents (a father and mother) who were raising a child with IDD. After viewing the eight scenes of the childcare situation in a nursery school in Japan, we decided to examine how each parent made sense of their child's appearance through the interviews. The narratives of the parents arising from viewing the case were recorded ad verbatim, and the author analyzed and discussed what was understood as meta-observations. The parents tried to find their child's "uniqueness" in terms of the character caused by the IDD traits and the character cultivated in the family life. In this way, the parents tried to achieve an equilibrium between positive and negative emotions and to maintain their own well-being. In Nordic countries, the well-being of parents of children with IDD is enhanced through improved services and developed systems based on the idea that children are raised in society. By contrast, in Japan, the narratives in this study suggested that the well-being of parents of children with IDD could be maintained from an ambivalent perspective.



Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

*Beyond Boundaries: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Family-School-Community Collaborative Education*

Qi Li, Shen Wu

ECNU, China

**Abstract :** Family, school, and community are the core environments for students' lives and learning, and their close cooperation is crucial for the comprehensive development of students. In China, the concept of family-school-community collaborative education has been proposed to promote the all-around growth of students. Through structural and process analysis, current practices in collaborative education face issues such as insufficient participation, loose structure, unclear processes, and inefficient methods, which limit its in-depth development. The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) offers new possibilities for addressing these challenges. This paper explores how to leverage AI's learning capabilities, flexibility, efficient processing power, and decision-making reasoning to break down barriers among participants, promote diverse participation; achieve human-machine collaboration at the structural level to build an integrated intelligent governance system; enable interconnected interactions through comprehensive data at the process level; and achieve efficiency and precision through intelligent decision-making, thereby opening up new prospects for family-school-community collaborative education.

**Note:**The family-school-community collaborative education method is a systematic educational model designed to foster comprehensive and balanced student development, but several issues in current practice limit its in-depth progress. This study proposes that the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) technology offers new ideas and possibilities for addressing these challenges. The application of AI technology helps to achieve equal participation among students from diverse backgrounds and abilities, promoting the diversification and inclusiveness of education. By solving the existing problems in family-school-community collaborative education, we can better harness the power of education to cultivate the next generation capable of meeting future societal challenges, and promote the values of equality, justice, and democracy in education, which aligns with the NERA2025 conference theme.

## Network: 18. Families, Institutions and Communities in Education

An analysis of self-evaluation practices in Danish folk high schools and their relationship to school values

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### 1. Research topic/aim

The purpose of this presentation is to clarify the practice of self-evaluation at Danish folk high school and its relationship to school values. Folk high school Act requires each school to show its school value on the school's website, and to evaluate itself every two years. It was found that there are at least 4 types of school value description in my research in 2017. Furthermore, when the school values of each school were surveyed in 2024, it was found that 25 schools had revised their own school values since 2017. I presented these findings at the NERA congress in 2017 and 2024. On the other hand, the current state of evaluation based on school values has not been made clear. Therefore, I will use case studies to clarify how self-evaluation based on school values is conducted and analyze the relationship between the implementation of self-evaluation and the types of school values.

### 2. Theoretical framework

4 types of school value I showed in 2017 are as follows;

1)mainly educational philosophy, a view of education or a view of religion. 2)mainly educational policy, educational supply, or educational environment. 3)Educational policy including Expected students' ability. 4)Educational policy including Community contribution.

And, previous surveys have shown that self-evaluation methods include dialogue, discussion, and questionnaire methods. One of the analyses planned will be to combine types of school values with methods of self-evaluation.

### 3. Methodology/research design

There are now 73 folk high schools in all around in Denmark in 2023. The survey here will be conducted by collecting information from websites and conducting interviews. Some schools publish the results of their self-evaluation on their websites. The survey will be conducted by collecting information from websites and conducting interviews with principals. The website survey will explore trends in self-evaluation at folk high schools. Additionally, the interview surveys conducted so far with principals will be used to clarify the specific methods, significance, and results of self-evaluation through case analysis.

### 4. Expected results/findings

It is assumed that self-evaluation is conducted at all schools. However, the method of implementation, whether or not the results of self-evaluation are made public, and how they are used are expected to differ from school to school. Regarding the relationship between self-evaluation and the types of school values, it is thought that the more specific the school values are, the easier it is to set up items for self-evaluation.

### 5. Relevance to Nordic educational research

There is very few research on the contemporary issues of Danish folk high school. This presentation contributes to studies on Danish folk high school, especially to management and evaluation of the folk high school. Furthermore, result of this study is useful not only for folk high school in other Nordic countries but also for management of adult education center in other countries.

# Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

### Teacher Identity (Re)construction in Practicum within the Norwegian Context: Insights from Interactional Ethnographic Inquiry

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Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

Main purpose of this research project is to explore how pre-service teachers (re)construct their professional identity during their practicum experience in Norway. This study seeks to understand the classroom dynamics focusing on the essence of their lived experiences and their impact on the development of teacher identity. Pre-service teachers' experiences in teaching practicum hold significance when it is combined with reflection on this experience. This investigation is grounded in an interactional ethnographic approach to explore how they make sense of their evolving professional identities within the real-world context of teaching practice. It will also help gain nuanced insights into identity negotiations through hands-on experiences, mentor feedback, and self-reflection in social and cultural contexts. This is a pilot study which is conducted prior to the main research in the Norwegian context. The participant is a pre-service teacher who is a second-year student at the Department of Teacher Education at a state university in Norway. Data is collected through a (1) classroom observation and (2) post-teaching meeting, both of which are held in a public primary school (grades 1-4), and (3) stimulated recall interview which is conducted after practicum. The classroom observation is video-recorded to capture the participant's in-class interaction. It enables the researcher to track classroom interactions and conversational exchanges which occur in a natural context. Then, the post-teaching meeting between the pre-service teacher and mentor is audio-recorded. The conversation between the pre-service teacher and mentor will include mentor's feedback, pre-service teacher's reflections and insights after the teaching process. Afterwards, stimulated recall interview protocol, prepared based on the videorecording, conducted with the participant demonstrating specific moments from the teaching session and requesting their reflection on the experience. It will give a chance to the participant to recall their thoughts of activities as they occur during the teaching process. The research questions are (1) "How do the classroom interactions influence the identity development of pre-service teachers in a real classroom setting?" and (2) "How do pre-service teachers experience the process of teacher identity formation during their practicum?". Conversation Analysis is used to analyze the video recording of the practicum teaching, focusing on the interactions that have a potential to contribute to the identity construction. Additionally, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is applied to the interview data to examine the participant's experience and self-reflections. Findings from the pilot study are preliminary and it is anticipated that it will explain how pre-service teachers make meaning of their practicum experiences and its effect on the development of teacher identity throughout the process. This research is also expected to reveal how pre-service teachers (re)construct their professional identities based on their classroom interactions in a natural setting. The inquiry is relevant to Nordic educational research as it aims to address key issues in teacher education such as teacher identity formation and classroom interaction in practicum. Since Nordic countries are known for their emphasis on reflective and community-oriented teaching practices, it is significant to examine identity construction in practicum to guide more resilient, reflective and socially aware educators.

## Network: 19. Teaching and Teacher Education

Extruction – a pedagogical act of not acting.

Leif Inge Magnussen<sup>1</sup>, Herner Sæverot<sup>2</sup>, Glenn-Egil Torgersen<sup>1</sup>

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We introduce a new term, "extruction", to cover the action a teacher performs when he or she refrains from instructing (Werler 2017). We define extrusion as an inductive way of working where the teacher, as an active choice, steps back to promote student-centeredness and student competence to develop and apply knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations. Extruction then describes a pedagogical action, or a pedagogical practice, that involves not acting, but is nevertheless a consciously didactically justified action.

In order to shed light on the term and its significance for pedagogical practice, we have chosen to see non-action as part of a tension in which instruction as an active action will be a counterpoint. After an introduction to the concepts, we will discuss how such a possible polar tension between the two pedagogical actions relates to deep learning and the relationship between experiencing for oneself and being explained.

Next, we discuss two approaches to a teacher's intervention in learning processes in light of an example related to outdoor education and snow cave excavation. Outdoor education is also a separate elective subject in primary school (UDIR 20021, NMF01-02) and a subject offered in upper secondary school (UDIR 20021, IDR07-02). We have spoken with a teacher educator in outdoor education about his understanding and relationship to the phenomenon. Finally, we will link the usefulness of the concept of extrusion to the subject renewal in light of the need to learn how to learn, but also to be able to put into words what happens when a teacher, through an active choice, acts by not acting.

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# Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

## Network: 20. Mentoring, Guidance and Counseling

### Embracing Neurodiversity in Teacher Education: Arts-Based Perspectives and Future Pathways for Individual and Universal Support

Stina Burke

Department of Educational Sciences, UTV, MID SWEDEN UNIVERSITY, Sweden

### Embracing Neurodiversity in Teacher Education: Arts-Based Perspectives and Future Pathways for Individual and Universal Support

I plan to create a double-sided poster: one side will have a structured academic layout, and the other an organic, handmade version. This duality symbolizes the tension between authenticity and conformity in academia, challenging the notion of "Don't judge the book by its cover." By presenting research through an arts-based lens and demonstrates how Arts-Based Research (ABR) can offer an engaging format.

#### Research Topic

This future study examines the role of pedagogical guidance in the professional development of teacher students, particularly those with executive difficulties and/or negative emotional tendencies. These students may face challenges in maintaining sustainable learning environments. The study aims to explore how tailored pedagogical guidance and adapted support mechanisms can foster inclusive, sustainable environments, reducing stress and enhancing students' confidence in their professional abilities. Additionally, it will investigate whether increasing self-confidence through individualized guidance improves students' ability to address work-related challenges. Ultimately, the study will increase understanding and acceptance of individual differences.

#### Theoretical Framework

The study draws on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and social constructivism to develop inclusive support strategies. UDL emphasizes flexible learning structures for diverse needs, while SDT supports autonomy and self-efficacy in fostering motivation and well-being. ABR complements this framework, employing symbolic, handmade gifts as reflective tools to highlight the relational and transformative aspects of the research process.

#### Methodology

This mixed-methods study will integrate Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) to derive theoretical insights from observational and reflective data. The study involves developing a needs-mapping tool tailored for teacher students. An intervention will provide individualized pedagogical guidance based on the needs identified through this tool. Audiovisual recordings and stimulated recall interviews will analyze how pedagogical guidance influences professional development. Reflexive journaling will enable the researcher to document and examine personal and academic challenges encountered during the doctoral journey.

#### Expected Results

The study is expected to validate a needs-mapping tool to identify support requirements for teacher students with executive difficulties. The study aims to produce recommendations for adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable learning environments that enhance student well-being and professional growth. Additionally, using symbolic gifts is anticipated to provide nuanced insights into the nature of relational mentorship in academia.

#### Relevance to NERA

This study contributes to Nordic educational research by addressing the need for inclusive and sustainable learning environments for teacher students. The pedagogical guidance aligns with Nordic values of equity, diversity, and social sustainability in education, providing insights relevant to implementing Agenda 2030 goals for inclusive education and decent work environments.

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# Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

## Network: 21. Politics of Education and Education Policy Studies

### Developing an Interactive Map for Sustainable Education Policy Analysis

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<sup>3</sup>National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

In this presentation, we introduce an innovative interactive map developed as part of the HORIZON2020 research project STRIDE (<https://stride-research.eu>). This map is designed to explore and visualise factors influencing educational policy development and student performance, with a strong emphasis on equity, inclusion, and resilience. By integrating comprehensive datasets and policy information, the map serves as a significant resource for researchers, policymakers, and educational stakeholders aiming to understand the complex relationships between educational reforms and student outcomes, and access a wide range of relevant indicators.

More specifically, the interactive map enables users to make cross-country comparisons using key indicators sourced from European and international educational databases. Users can access downloadable data and review detailed reports on education policies and reforms. The tool incorporates longitudinal data starting from 1999, presenting it through accessible visualisations, including descriptive statistics and graphs, to aid in the intuitive interpretation of trends over time.

A notable feature of this map is its capacity to illustrate the timing and types of policy reforms, which supports tracking their implementation and evaluating their effects across educational levels and different regions.

Users can filter data to view the number and types of reforms by country, year, educational level, and reform status (completed or ongoing). Hovering over a country will display a summary of reforms enacted that year, and clicking on specific icons will provide detailed descriptions of each reform. Additionally, reforms that have been positively evaluated can be highlighted, offering insights into effective policies that may be considered examples of best practice.

The map also links policy reforms with key educational indicators over time, allowing for an analysis of their potential impacts. For instance, a reform aimed at reducing dropout rates can be analysed in conjunction with the “Out-of-School Rate” indicator, an established Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) metric known as SDG Indicator 4.1.4, which measures the proportion of children and youth not enrolled in school. This helps reveal how policies influence student enrolment and retention, providing a basis for evaluating their success in achieving educational targets.

This tool supports the development of sustainable, data-driven educational strategies by facilitating the analysis of regional disparities, highlighting relationships between policy changes and educational outcomes, and helping identify long-term trends. By making educational data transparent and accessible, the map aids in informed decision-making and contributes to the formulation of policies that promote equity and inclusion in education systems.

Overall, the map empowers stakeholders to conduct comprehensive policy impact analyses, identify effective practices, and contribute to the creation of resilient educational reforms aligned with sustainable development goals.

# Network: 22. Post- approaches to Education

## Network: 22. Post-approaches to Education

Digital musicking – a post-qualitative inquiry into experimental musical expressions emerging between a loop station and 1-3-year-olds in a kindergarten context

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The intention with this poster is to unfold my PhD project visually.

This PhD project is contextualized within teaching and teacher education, focusing on music in early childhood education. The overarching research question explored in this project is: What may materialize in the matter of digital musicking when a loop station and 1–3-year-olds meet each other in a kindergarten context?

The research material informing this project is produced over time, through numerous encounters between loop station and the 1-3-year-olds in a Norwegian kindergarten placed in central Oslo.

The project is founded in post-qualitative (MacLure, 2013; St. Pierre, 2021) and performative (Barad, 2003, 2007; Fels, 2015; Haseman, 2006; Østern et al., 2023) approaches.

The post-qualitative approach rejects pre-existing research design, methods, processes, procedures or practices (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 163). This opens up for not-yet traveled paths to explore *what may materialize* and *what might be* (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 164), acknowledging that a process will unfold and materialize differently in different projects. This is one element I would like to explore further in the poster presentation.

In the context of music, I think with music philosophy concepts like ‘musicking’ (Small, 1998) and the avant-garde (Cage, 1961), where playful expressions could be understood as aesthetic and musical possibilities. This will be about being willing to listen to creative, inventive, exploratory, and unexpected expressions as musically potent and creating spaces for the unorthodox and experimental. “It’s not about being in time with a metronome and in harmony with a tuning fork, it is about being in time with life and in harmony with the moment” (Knudsen, 2008, p. 290).

These contributions enable ways of working with music in the kindergarten that create spaces for creative and inventive exploration with and through technology.

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# Network: 25. Critical Race, Racism and Whiteness in Education

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An introduction to SAMLA: Network for Research and Teaching of Small Saami Languages

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This poster presents the emerging Network for Research and Teaching of Small Saami Languages (SAMLA), which aims to support research and revitalization of small Saami languages, in the intersection between language research and language education. The ultimate goal for all SAMLA activities is the benefit of language learners of South Saami, Lule Saami, Skolt Saami and Inari Saami – all critically indigenous languages in our Nordic region. SAMLA will commence in early 2025, depending on funding.

Small Saami languages (2000 speakers or less) have related histories and face similar (yet unique) challenges, and some challenges are different from the ones faced by larger minority languages. This calls for a focus aimed specifically at the needs of researchers and teachers of small Saami languages. The education of language teachers is a vital part of language revitalization efforts, and in many parts of Sápmi language researchers and teacher educators are the same people. SAMLA gathers researchers from Finland, Sweden and Norway within the fields of South Saami, Lule Saami, Skolt Saami and Inari Saami. Through workshops, seminars and guest lectures SAMLA contributes to building more connected research communities within these fields.

SAMLA further supports professional development for teachers and emerging teachers of small Saami languages. We provide a space for working and emerging teachers for meeting, storying, and sharing of experiences. We hold designated workshops for teachers to voice and compare institutional needs and concerns, and discuss possible solutions. Further, SAMLA supports professional learning through seminars and panel discussions with researchers both from the Nordics and internationally.

The aim of this poster presentation is to spread awareness of the work of SAMLA and the knowledge and experience which is gathered through SAMLA's activities. In addition to presenting SAMLA for a wider academic audience and the public, the results of SAMLA's activities will be presented to decisionmakers in our respective academic institutions, aiming to affect each institution's ability to fulfil their goals of implementing Saami and indigenous perspectives; and to policymakers at local, national and cross-national levels.

